



Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster
Support Team

Tipsheet

Protection and Shelter



December 2022

Humanitarian protection¹ is about ensuring the rights, safety and dignity of conflict/disaster affected populations are upheld. There should be a particular focus on groups that face marginalisation and challenges accessing support during disasters such as: women, children, Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Persons of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), older persons and persons living in remote areas etc.

Disasters affect people differently. Pre-existing inequalities are exacerbated by crises. At risk groups face additional risks of violence and barriers to accessing services. It is important to ensure that these groups are actively involved in discussions and decision making about disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Three Ways to Keep Protection in Mind



Meaningful Access:

*This is about making sure that **EVERYONE** can access the assistance you're providing in a non-judgemental and non-discriminatory way.*

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- TIP 1** Ensure that humanitarian shelter assistance is accessible and is able to be used by everyone. E.g. older persons, persons with disability, women, children etc. – i.e. Can everyone safely reach everything (e.g. the toilet and sink) and move around the distribution site (e.g. are shelters/settlements wheelchair accessible)? Are shelters and washrooms gender inclusive, and lockable? Is there a place to safely prepare/store healthy food?
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- TIP 2** Ensure that no groups or individuals are being refused access to shelter assistance. specially groups who may face exclusion or marginalisation e. persons of diverse SOGIESC.
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- TIP 3** Consider timing, location, weight, recipients and contents of emergency shelter and essential household item distributions:
- Timing: ideally, kits would be delivered at a time to ensure that children do not skip school for distributions; and it is still light, so that it's safe for women and girls.
 - Location: consider lighting, distance from homes and terrain of those affected. Is it shaded, steep/far? Can an older person or Persons with Disabilities or child make that journey carrying the shelter assistance items?
 - Weight: consider weight and shape/size of shelter assistance. Can everyone carry it, or will there be a need to assist with transportation?
 - Recipients: wherever possible, distribute to individuals rather than households. This ensures women and children can access the items, rather than only the male. Ensure that less traditional family units are also supported, such as persons of diverse SOGIESC who may live with friends rather than relatives.
 - Contents: ensure that the shelter assistance meets the needs of everyone.
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- TIP 4** Ensure all assessments are gender and protection sensitive. Feel free to reach out to the Protection Cluster for advice. Ensure data is disaggregated by sex, age and disability.
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- TIP 5** Provide information on distributions through a range of communication methods (e.g. poster, radio, loudspeaker, TV, newspaper, digital platforms etc). Wherever possible, translate into local language.
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Risk Mitigation:

This is about minimising the risks of violence and other dangers, in and around designated shelter facilities, distributions and services.

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- TIP 1** Have separate sleeping areas for groups who are at risk such as single women and unaccompanied children. Keep families together and have proper records and logs of persons entering and leaving shelter facilities.
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- TIP 2** Ensure that the shelters and pathways around are well-lit. Ensure sanitary/bathing facilities, and pathways to them are well lit, lockable etc. Coordinate with other clusters such as WaSH to achieve this.
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- TIP 3** Establish measures to prevent, monitor and respond to safety concerns e.g. security for the site, ensuring facility doors are lockable etc. Consult with communities about likely safety risks and ensure staff and community members are aware of processes to prevent and respond to these.
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Encountering Protection Concerns:

This is for cases where you witness violence or someone discloses an instance of violence to you. E.g. gender based violence (GBV), child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse, elder violence, tensions between ethnic groups etc.

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- TIP 1** Do no harm: if someone discloses violence to you:
- Listen to them. Do not interrupt, do not ask probing questions.
 - Say “I believe you”, “It’s not your fault”, “You are safe”.
 - Do not pressure them to do anything they do not want to do – e.g. go to the police.
 - Tell them you will need to refer their disclosure using the referral pathways i.e. you’ll need to connect them with a specialised and context specific service.
 - Seek their informed consent prior to making any referrals or linking them to other specialised and context specific services.
 - Connect them with further help from a specialised and context specific service provider (hotlines and referral pathways). Offer to stay with them while they call the hotline if they would like you too.
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- TIP 2** Know the referral pathways and hotline numbers (GBV, child protection and mental health and psychosocial support and services) before you head out to affected areas. Raise awareness amongst staff on the availability of these mechanisms.
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- TIP 3** Make sure all staff and volunteers have understood and signed the Code of Conduct for humanitarian workers and keep each other accountable.
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- TIP 4** Where possible, make sure all staff and volunteers have received training on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Child Safeguarding and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).
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¹ <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org> | <https://sheltercluster.org/pacific>

**For more information, contact: pacificprotectioncluster@gmail.com
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