

# EMERGENCY WATER AND SANITATION

## Key messages

- Disasters and emergencies precipitate a situation where water and sanitation infrastructure is destroyed, over burdened or is non existent.
- In emergencies, even the modest investments in water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion programmes can have a significant impact on the health of a population.
- Disasters cause loss of production and provision of services due to disruption and increased cost of goods and services.
- In refugee and IDP camps, many deaths are attributed to lack of proper WatSan facilities and hygienic conditions than on any other cause.
- Preparedness is the key to timely and effective response in emergencies.
- Emergencies present an opportunity for rehabilitation and long term development programmes.

## Why guarantee the supply of WatSan facilities

To protect public health from:

- Unhygienic conditions.
- Contaminated water; and
- Spread of vectors.

To help communities to:

- Secure development and economic activities.
- Protect the investment in WatSan infrastructure.

## What to do in acute emergency phase - general

- Leading a rapid assessment of the emergency situation through existing staff (emergency response teams) and partners who are already in position and familiar with conditions at the site of the emergency.
- In consultation with partners, deciding whether or not the deployment of existing resources is sufficient to adequately address the emergency situation.
- Temporarily re-directing project equipment, materials and staff to respond to the emergency.

## Others related to WatSan and HP

- Assess the vulnerability of critical components.
- Define how systems will operate during emergencies.
- Develop a plan for restoring services promptly during the emergency.
- Ensure that water supplies are protected from contamination.



- Ensure there is at least a minimum amount of water for drinking, cooking and personal and domestic hygiene.
- Ensure people have enough water containers to collect and store water cleanly.
- Ensure people have sufficient cooking utensils, equipment and fuel to cook and store food safely.
- Ensure that people have the knowledge they need to avoid disease.
- Ensure that defecation trenches are dug below the water point.

## Response steps in water supply

### Community response steps

- A mandatory water conservation decree is issued, placing limits on water use.

## What a volunteer should do

1. Ensure the availability of a minimum safe drinking water supply taking into account the privacy, dignity and security of women and girls.
2. Ensure provision of bleach, chlorine or water purification tablets, including detailed user and safety instructions in the local language.
3. Ensure that the community has jerricans or an appropriate alternative, including instructions on handling of water and disposal of excreta and solid waste.
4. Make sure that those who are providing water supplies are in dialogue with women and girl representatives to determine the best modes, times, locations and/or distribution points for water supplies.
5. Provide group demonstrations on how to use bleach, chlorine and water purification tablets.

## Response steps in sanitation

- Ensure there is the provision of 1 latrine per 50 users dropping to 1:20 as soon as possible thereafter.
- Ensure that there are separate facilities for men and women.
- Latrines for women must be lit at night.
- Latrines and bathing cubicles for women must have a roof covering.

## Response steps in hygiene promotion

1. Ensure there is mutual sharing of information and knowledge between you and the community members.
2. Mobilize the communities for concerted action.
3. Ensure that essential supplies and facilities are provided.
4. Assist the community to discuss ways of reducing high-risk hygienic practices.
5. Help the community to come up with ways of using water and sanitation facilities. Also help them come up with ways of maintaining the facilities.
6. Ensure all the communities participate in hygiene promotion activities.

## What the volunteer should do

- Focus on a small number of risk practices e.g. how to control the diarrhoea disease.  
Your messages should highlight the priority hygiene practices such as:
- Wash hands with water and soap, or when not available, use ash after contact with faeces.
- Ensure safe disposal of adults' and children's faeces to prevent infection and contamination – i.e. clear scattered faeces.
- Control open defecation and shallow trench latrines.
- Repair toilet facilities and/or build temporary family or communal latrines.

## Involve specific participant groups

- Involve fathers, mothers, children, older siblings, opinion leaders and other influential persons and groups in the affected community.
- Identify primary child caregivers and those who influence and make decisions for them.
- Involve these influencers in the different stages of a health promotion initiative.
- Identify the motives for adopting positive behaviour through working with the various participants from affected areas to discover individual views of the benefits of safer hygiene practices.
- Keep hygiene messages positive i.e. people learn the best when they laugh and pay attention longer if they are entertained.
- Assist the community to perform a ranking exercise by asking them to rank their health needs and priorities on a numerical scale prepared earlier.
- Guide a discussion on the relevance and appropriateness of their choices.
- Assist the community to form Focus Group Discussions to help determine what motivates people in the affected community to adopt safe practices and barriers.
- Help the communities to develop behavioural objectives such as prevention of diarrhoea diseases through hand washing with soap or ash after contact with faeces and safe disposal of adults and children excreta.
- Keeping water clean and safe.
- Handling food safely.
- Safe household refuse disposal.

## Immediate action (to be refined following rapid assessment)

- Clean up and control free defecation.
- Direct defecation, communal facilities.

### Medium term actions

- Improved communal or family latrines.
- Community participation.
- Sewerage systems.

### Longer term actions

- Improved latrines.