



Have you read section A ?

# GENDER AND SHELTER IN EMERGENCIES

In the initial stages of an emergency where populations have been displaced, shelter and site selection are especially important for safety, protection and human dignity, and to sustain family and community life. Women, girls, boys and men have **different needs, roles and responsibilities related to shelter/houses**. Gender considerations have to be integrated into shelter planning and programme to ensure people affected by crisis benefit equally from safe shelter.

## Gender considerations in site selection

The site of the shelter should not pose additional protection risks to anyone in the population.

- Location of sites in close proximity to the border can expose the affected population to raids by armed groups, placing women, girls, boys and men at risk of abuse, abduction or forced recruitment.
- Site planning in general should ensure that basic services are easily accessible. Therefore, site planning should assign specific locations for service provisions. If basic services are not easily accessible, women and girls can be exposed to protection risks such as sexual assault during collection of firewood or sexual harassment of children as they walk long distances to school.
- Assigning sites for individual or communal shelters should take into consideration proximity to services. Close proximity to basic services frees up time for women, girls, boys and men to undertake other useful activities. Girls and boys will have more time to attend school, women and men to attend training courses and to participate in community activities.
- Spontaneous camps and communal shelters in particular have the disadvantage that they can become overcrowded quickly. Overcrowding can lead to increases in violence against women and vulnerability of young men to being recruited for gangs or by rebel groups.

## AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING, INCLUDING HOUSING, IS A HUMAN RIGHT FOR EVERYONE

- UDHR, Art. 25 and ICESCR, Art. 11 guarantee the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate to ensure health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. This right also implies continuous improvement of living conditions.
- In emergency situations, participatory planning must be undertaken to ensure the right to an adequate standard of living for people. Although emergency shelter per definition normally does not meet the criteria of “adequate housing,” a number of minimum human requirements are still applicable in the emergency shelter context, i.e. shelters should be designed in such a way as to ensure the right to privacy (Art. 12 UDHR, Art.17 ICCPR), the right to security of person (Art.3 UDHR, Art. 9 ICCPR), the right to health (Art. 25 UDHR, Art. 12 ICESCR) and the right to food (Art. 25 UDHR, Art. 11 ICESCR), etc.
- Planning must include assessing and ensuring that shelter distribution and allocation to families and households are made in a non-discriminatory manner, without distinction of any kind as stated above. The rights and needs of women, girls, boys, female-headed households, widows and other groups with specific needs should be addressed, possibly through the adoption of affirmative measures like targeted actions that positively impact specific groups.

## Gender considerations in design and construction

### Design of shelter, facilities and services

- In most communities, women bear the primary responsibility for household chores, and therefore the design of the sites and shelters must reflect their needs and should be undertaken with them.

- Separate facilities like bathrooms and toilets should be constructed for women and men. They should not be in isolated or dark, lonely areas where women and girls may be sexually assaulted.
- Sanitation facilities and other communally used areas should be lit properly.

#### Privacy

- Privacy is especially challenging in communal shelters and even individual family shelters sometimes do not provide adequate privacy.
- The privacy and security of families and individuals is essential, particularly during the night, when the risk of abuse and assault is high. Unaccompanied and separated girls are specifically at risk of abuse.
- Lack of privacy exposes children to sexual activity of adults, especially in communal shelters.
- In many communities and cultures women and girls expect to be provided with private spaces for changing clothes, etc.

#### Lighting

- Dark corners create opportunities for abuse. Increased and better lighting is critical to good site planning and shelter design. It reduces risks and improves security.

#### Supplies of construction materials and related issues

- In emergencies it is possible that some women and girls are unable to construct their shelters and find themselves dependent on men other than their family members for help in construction. Without any money or goods to hire someone, women and girls may be exposed to sexual exploitation. Aid agencies should be aware of this and undertake measures to prevent and/or address such situations.
- Pregnant women, the elderly, the disabled and other people with specific needs may not be able to build their own shelters and may require support.
- In cases where shelter construction is a paid activity/income-earning activity, opportunities should be identified for women and girls to benefit from this. In some instances young women and adolescent girls may want to learn and work on construction. In other instances, where such work is not socially acceptable for women, they could identify alternative means of participating in the programmes to address social taboos and changes in gender roles.

#### Gender considerations in shelter allocation

The allocation of shelter can be problematic if systematic participatory assessment and analysis is not undertaken with the community to identify and address the concerns and needs of women, girls, boys and men. Often protection risks arise because of the failure to understand the different needs of individuals. The specific needs of child-headed households and single young and elderly women and men must be met without creating further stress, danger and exposing people to undignified solutions.

- Sometimes, elderly persons, pregnant women, children, persons with disabilities, etc., cannot push their way to the front of a line and therefore have to wait for long periods before being allocated adequate shelter/housing or construction materials.
- Sometimes women and girls are forced into having sex in exchange for receiving assistance to construct their shelters or gaining access to shelter materials.
- Specific groups of the population can be put at risk if their shelters are located near the perimeter of the camp. Groups susceptible to violence should be placed where they can be most secure; for example, it can sometimes be near the centre of the camp.

#### Gender consideration in housing, land and property (HLP)

In the aftermath of a crisis the approach taken to shelter will depend on land use and ownership. HLP should be an integral part of shelter solutions as gender and access to HLP is a critical issue for post-crisis reconstruction and long-term stability and development. In times of crisis, groups with specific needs such as women and orphans are particularly at risk in a variety of ways. Widowhood, for example, leaves many women at greater risk during and after the crisis, as their rights as female head of household are often not protected by law (both legislation and customary law) or are disregarded altogether. The experiences of women and orphans during the crisis are compounded in many cases by their inability in the post-crisis period to access housing, land and property that is rightfully theirs.

Moreover, promoting gender-equal access to HLP can have a positive impact on rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes after the crisis. Access by women and groups with specific needs to HLP can catalyse and encourage populations to return to their places of origin, thus facilitating the return process itself. This calls for the development of gender-supporting mechanisms implying immediate measures addressing housing, land and property restitution, administration and dispute resolution for affected and displaced persons and conflict-affected communities.

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO ASK THE COMMUNITY TO ENSURE GENDER-RESPONSIVE DESIGN, SITE SELECTION AND BUILDING OF SHELTER?

### What are the population demographics?

- Total number of households/family members — disaggregated by sex and age.
- Number of single female- and male-headed families and number of families headed by children (girls and boys).
- Number of unaccompanied children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, the chronically ill, pregnant and lactating women.

### What types of materials were used for building shelters before/after displacement? Who builds the shelters? What were the different roles of women, girls, boys and men?

- What were the various roles of women and men in construction prior to the emergency?
- If women are not involved in shelter construction and/or decision-making on related subjects, how can they be supported to participate meaningfully in such activities?
- How are the shelter materials being distributed and allocated? What are the systems put in place for this? What are the impacts of these systems on women and girls? What systems have been instituted to assist persons with specific needs to build their shelters? What support will the community provide? How will the assistance gaps in shelter provision be identified? How will these gaps be addressed and monitored for their positive or negative impacts on the affected persons?
- Have any agreements been made with the local authorities and host communities on the use of natural and forest resources for shelter materials? Are there systems in place to prevent retaliation and physical and sexual assault on women and girls involved in collection of shelter materials from natural/forest resources? Are women, girls, boys and men of the affected community part of the various agreements and discussions with the host community/local authorities? Are there agreements on what the affected persons are allowed to collect?
- Are the types of shelter materials used suited to the local climatic conditions and environmentally friendly?

### What are the community practices and cultural patterns for household and care arrangements?

- What are the cooking, washing and household cleaning practices and what are their preferred locations — individual or communal? Are the designated areas safe? Well-lit? Easily reachable and accessible?
- Can the latrines, washing, bathing and sleeping facilities be secured with latches and locks? Are the rooms partitioned so that women, girls, boys and men have privacy to change?
- What are the division of labour and the wage labour practices of the community affected by crisis? Who works in the home, on the land or in jobs outside — in informal sectors?
- What are the systems and who is responsible to ensure that persons with disabilities and elderly persons with specific needs are assisted and provided with care arrangements? What actions will be instituted to prevent all forms of exploitation?

### Who may need targeted and affirmative actions to support them in shelter construction?

- Which groups (by sex and age) may not be in position to construct their own shelters?
- Are there elderly women and men travelling without family members or accompanied by children who require targeted shelter support?
- Have these needs been discussed with the community and how will the support be monitored to avoid exploitation of any nature?

### How should shelter/living spaces be allocated? How should shelter materials be supplied/distributed? How should shelters be constructed?

- How have unaccompanied girls and boys been accommodated? Are they being cared for and supported by the community? Are their living situations being monitored in a satisfactory manner by the community to assess their safety? Are their houses/shelters well located and not isolated?
- Has partitioning material been allocated to individual households to ensure privacy?
- Are there separate and safe shelters allocated for single women? Is this culturally appropriate or do single women need to be accompanied by a male relative? Have solutions for such groups been discussed with the group members themselves and agreed upon with the women and men in the community?

- Are there noticeable changes in family structures (e.g. many female- or male-headed households)? Have these resulted in changes in gender roles in relation to shelter construction tasks and decision-making?
- Who does household work and physical labour activities in the community? Where do they undertake these activities? Do they create protection risks for women, girls, boys and men? How does the community think the protection risks can be avoided?

**What are the cultural and community practices concerning shelter/houses? Are any specific shelters required for religious practices?**

- Who is the primary resident/tenant? Are women and men treated equally?
- Do cultural norms enable women and men to participate equally in decision-making on shelter issues? If not, are targeted and affirmative actions required to support women to participate in a meaningful manner?
- Are there discriminatory practices/policies which impact on women or men (e.g. in the allocation of land plots, shelter sites or rooms in collective accommodation)?
- What is the broad gender division of labour in productive responsibilities (e.g. agriculture, income generation activities) and reproductive responsibilities (e.g. household chores, child care), and is time allocated for each responsibility?
- How do religious affiliations and leaders affect women and men differently? Are they promoting equal treatment or are they discriminating?

**Who owns land and property? What are the laws governing land and property ownership during displacement and return?**

- What was/is the ownership of land and property (including housing) before displacement, during displacement and upon return for women, girls, boys and men?
- What are the protection mechanisms of land tenure and/or property rights (legal, customary, restitution mechanisms, etc.) for women, girls, boys and men?

## ACTIONS TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING IN SITE SELECTION, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND/OR SHELTER ALLOCATION

### Equal participation

- Undertake participatory assessments with women, girls, boys and men to define shelter needs and the most appropriate way to address protection risks and cover all concerns.
- Establish community shelter committees with equal participation of women and men and develop terms of reference for the shelter committees, which include the committee taking responsibility to address the gender and age concerns related to shelter.
- Monitor women's effective participation in decision-making on shelter and be sure that their needs are discussed and met.
- Plan meetings to discuss shelter-related matters with women and men together and separately at times when women and men find it convenient to attend based on their daily work or chores.
- Ensure that both women and men are comfortable with the venue of the meetings and that the setting makes women and men feel free and uninhibited in expressing their views/concerns.
- Discuss and provide community-based childcare during meetings so that women and men can participate.
- Ensure that consultations on specific needs include women and men of different age groups and backgrounds.
- Ensure equal participation of women and men in the supply and distribution and monitoring of the distribution of shelter materials.
- Identify those at risk of exploitation and develop mechanisms through consultation with them to reduce the risks during construction/shelter programmes.
- Ensure equal pay for equal work for women and men if incentives/salaries are included as part of shelter programming.

**Training and skills building**

- Work with the community to identify skilled women and men and adolescent girls and boys who can support shelter construction, from both the host community and the affected community.
- If traditionally men have been in charge of construction and women are interested in participating in construction activities, call community meetings to identify those women who are interested. Provide basic training in construction to give women opportunities to equally participate in the process. Women may be interested in clay wall making or brick making and training can be provided in these areas. The same is true for men if women have traditionally been in charge of building.
- Make sure that women and girls requiring support in construction due to their specific situation do not have to resort to asking others for assistance and become dependent on men for shelter construction or allocation as this can expose them to sexual exploitation, resulting in women and girls being forced to trade sex for shelter.
- In construction projects make efforts to divide labour and responsibility among women and men based on their particular preferences, and promote cooperation and mutual respect.
- Consider on-the-job training for women to develop their technical skills.

**Recognizing and addressing differences, including cultural differences**

- Provide adequate material for partitions between families and within individual family shelters.
- Provide privacy: A woman or girl should not be compelled to share accommodation with men who are not members of her immediate family.
- Work with people in the community to design a place for meetings; counselling services; skills training that covers the needs of women and men, female and male youth and girls and boys. Separate times and types of activities may have to be assigned to each group.

**Gender division of labour**

- Consider the load of ongoing women's and men's tasks that could be affected.
- Ensure that new infrastructure does not mean longer working hours for women or men.

**Meeting the needs of groups with specific needs**

- Assist the community to identify women, girls, boys and men with specific needs by sex and age with shelter construction needs and ensure that these needs are prioritized and met.
- Encourage the development of a community support system for people with specific needs in terms of shelter construction. Ensure the participation of women and adolescent girls and boys in the process.
- Conduct regular structured dialogues and discussions with women, girls and groups with specific needs on shelter issues to ensure that any protection concerns highlighted are discussed and resolved.
- Ensure that location, price and other resources necessary for using the shelter do not restrict poor women's or men's access.
- Ensure that location does not affect women's or men's marketing of goods or other income generation activities.
- Ensure that new shelters do not contribute to the unemployment of poor women or men.
- Ensure that new structures do not displace women or men from their current position.
- Focus on remedial measures for women or men who will be disadvantaged as a result of shelter construction.
- Monitor unaccompanied minors to ensure their protection in safe foster homes. Make sure they are not exposed to servitude or sexual exploitation in their new homes.
- When designing shelter, establish child-friendly spaces where children can meet and share their experiences.
- Make arrangements for lighting in communal areas and for individual use.

**Assessment/Monitoring**

- Monitor communal shelters (such as schools or community centres) for instances of gender-based violence or other forms of discrimination and abuse, and take necessary measures to prevent such incidents.

## CHECKLIST TO ASSESS GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING IN SITE SELECTION, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND/OR SHELTER ALLOCATION

The checklist below is derived from the action section in this chapter, and provides a useful tool to remind sector actors of key issues to ensure gender equality programming. In addition, the checklist, together with the sample indicators in the Basics Chapter, serves as a basis for project staff to develop context-specific indicators to measure progress in the incorporation of gender issues into humanitarian action.

<b>SHELTER – GENDER CHECKLIST</b>	
<b>Analysis of gender differences</b>	
1. Focus group discussion on shelter construction, allocation and design conducted with women, girls, boys and men of diverse backgrounds and results fed into programming.	
<b>Design</b>	
1. Single people, young and old, have access to dignified shelter.	
2. Public spaces for social, cultural and informational needs of women, girls, boys and men are provided and used equitably.	
<b>Access</b>	
1. Male and female heads of households and single women and men have the same access to housing and shelter supplies.	
2. Obstacles to equal access are promptly addressed.	
<b>Participation</b>	
1. Women and men are equally represented and participate in the design, allocation and construction of shelters and camp facilities.	
2. Women and men, adolescent girls and boys have equal opportunities for involvement in all aspects of shelter construction, receiving equal pay for equal work.	
<b>Training/Capacity building</b>	
1. Equal opportunities exist for training for women, girls, boys and men in construction skills training.	
2. Percentage of women and men trained in shelter construction.	
3. Percentage of women and men involved in shelter construction.	
<b>Actions to address GBV</b>	
1. Routine spot checks and discussions with communities to ensure people are not exposed to sexual violence due to poor shelter conditions or inadequate space and privacy.	
2. Mechanisms put in place to ensure people can report any harassment or violence.	
<b>Targeted actions based on gender analysis</b>	
1. The specific needs of girl- and boy-headed households are met.	
2. Where construction materials are supplied, female-headed households have direct access to materials and have construction skills training support.	
<b>Monitoring and evaluation based on sex- and age-disaggregated data</b>	
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.	
<b>Coordinate actions with all partners</b>	
1. Actors in your sector liaise with actors in other sectors to coordinate on gender issues, including participating in regular meetings of the gender network.	
2. The sector/cluster has a gender action plan, has developed and routinely measures project-specific indicators based on the checklist provided in the IASC Gender Handbook.	

## RESOURCES

1. Asian Development Bank (ADB). *Sectoral Gender Checklists: Urban Development and Housing*. Manila. [http://www.adb.org/Documents/Manuals/Gender\\_Checklists/Urban/default.asp?p=gencheck](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Manuals/Gender_Checklists/Urban/default.asp?p=gencheck)
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6. UN-Habitat. *Toolkit for Mainstreaming Gender in UN-Habitat Field Programmes: Kosovo Urban Planning and Management Programme*. Nairobi, Kenya, June 2003. [http://www.habitat.org/downloads/docs/1268\\_30583\\_Kosovo\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.habitat.org/downloads/docs/1268_30583_Kosovo_Gender.pdf)
7. UN-Habitat. *Toolkit for Mainstreaming Gender in UN-Habitat Field Programmes: Northern Iraq Settlements Rehabilitation Programme (SRP)*. Nairobi. [http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/1267\\_94527\\_Iraq\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/1267_94527_Iraq_Gender.pdf)
8. United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). *Participatory Assessment Tool*. Geneva, 2005. <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/450e963f2.html>
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## STANDARDS FOR EMERGENCY SHELTER

(Emergency Shelter Cluster - IASC)

INDICATORS	STANDARDS	
	UNHCR	SPHERE
Average camp area per person	≥ 45 sq metres <sup>1</sup>	
Average floor area of shelter per person in camps	≥ 3.5 sq metres in warm climates (cooking will take place outside) <sup>2</sup>	
	≥ 4.5 sq metres in cold climates (this figure includes area for in-house services such as bathing facilities or toilets, depending on socio-cultural habits)	
Percentage of households with “adequate” dwellings	100% <sup>3</sup>	

1. It is necessary to ensure there is sufficient overall camp space per person. This includes having sufficient space for all services (water, sanitation, etc.) while providing enough space for dignified living.
  - The recommended standard for surface area in a refugee camp is 45 square metres per person, including kitchen gardening space. The minimum standard is at least 30 square metres per person, excluding kitchen gardening space.
  - In a camp situation, it may be a disadvantage to have areas greatly in excess of 45 square metres per person as this will mean increased distances to services such as water, basic health unit, education, etc.
2. In addition to provision of physical protection against the elements, it is also necessary to provide sufficient floor space per person for dignified living.
  - To avoid sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), dwellings should allow for partitioning within the shelter to facilitate privacy. Also if entrance to shelters is opened to a common area (open space/area) to allow for visibility, it would be an added value for safety, as blind spots are avoided.
3. Because of variations in climate, local building customs and cultural values or concerns, universally “adequate” shelters are difficult to define. However, adequacy may be assessed by bearing in mind the following factors. An ideal shelter should:
  - provide a covered area that provides dignified living space with a degree of privacy;
  - have sufficient thermal comfort with ventilation for air circulation;
  - provide protection from the elements and natural hazards;
  - ensure that inhabitants, especially women or groups with specific needs, are not disadvantaged by poor accommodation design; shelter design is in line with customs, cultural values or concerns;
  - ensure that physical safety is a prime concern during planning and construction.