



OPERATIONALIZING BETTER PROGRAMMING INITIATIVE - DO NO HARM



People receiving assistance are the primary actors in their own survival and protection. They are therefore also the primary stakeholders of assistance and building a positive relationship with them is key to the success of any programme and community engagement initiative.

Often in our haste to support and deliver assistance, we overlook the capacities that local communities and affected people possess and, without meaning to, undermine their personal authority and control. Instead, we should take care to utilize and build on local capacities as much as possible.

Good programming and community engagement require a solid understanding of the local environment and of the role – both actual and perceived – that we play – whether we operate in a context with high levels of social instability, violence and conflict, or more stable and predictable settings. There is always a risk that our presence, activities, and community engagement can have negative unintended consequences.

To avoid unintended negative consequences (e.g. discrimination, exclusion or violence), maximize impact and ensure access we need to understand the *connections* in a community and how our presence and activities influence them, and integrate a *do no harm* approach into all aspects of planning and programming.

Effective information provision and participatory two-way communication with affected women, girls, boys and men ensures that we provide information that enables people to make informed decisions about their own lives and survival, and that there are means by which they can give us feedback on the quality and effectiveness of our assistance. At a minimum, people should routinely have access to information regarding their rights and entitlements, who is providing assistance to them, what the longer-term programme plans are and how they can get in touch or voice their concerns.

Accountability cannot be delegated to partners. *Indirect accountability* is no accountability in practice, without a clear and agreed demarcation of roles and responsibilities that are then monitored. Partners need to be involved in accountability processes, should be held responsible for their actions and should trust the partnership relationship enough to share concerns heard from communities.

Below are key actions and important aspects to keep in mind for assessments, planning, monitoring and evaluation, appeals, applications and reporting, for global surge mechanisms and technical areas. These are minimum actions to *ensure a do no harm approach, including being conflict-sensitive*. It brings together guidance from *do no harm* methodology, and approaches and concepts incorporating this approach. For further reading on Better Programming Initiative (BPI) – do no harm, or any of the topics mentioned, please refer to the relevant links provided under each section.

Operationalizing BPI – Do no harm / in a changing context is to be used by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and IFRC to integrate BPI in tools, guidance, assessments and activities.



PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Involve affected populations, including those from marginalized groups, in the design, monitoring and evaluation in all stages of programming.
- Integrate a *do no harm approach* into all aspects of planning and programming.
- All programming should consider the specific felt and observed needs of each segment of a community (for example according to gender, age, disability, ethnicity, language group, caste, socio-economic status or other diversity characteristic) and how they access assistance and information.

Useful resources

- [Project/programme planning guidance manual](#) (IFRC)
- [Project/programme monitoring and evaluation guide](#) (IFRC)
- [Global protection cluster](#)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



APPEALS, APPLICATIONS AND REPORTING

- Provide updated context and conflict information
 - › Why the situation exists?
 - › What are the specific vulnerabilities for women, girls, boys and men in this context?
 - › What threats would exacerbate the situation?
- Reflect a systematic context and conflict analysis, risk identification and mitigation.
- In contexts that are sensitive, insecure or experiencing conflict, provide information on (conflict) actors, causes, and dynamics.
- Provide results of the assessment of interaction between assistance and the context.
- Describe how community engagement and assistance are designed to follow a *do no harm* approach.
- Describe accountability mechanisms.
- Describe how feedback and learning will feed back into programme.

Useful resources

- [IFRC emergency appeals](#) (Intranet – FedNet)
- [IFRC Plans and reports](#) (Intranet – FedNet)



ASSESSMENTS

- Collect and analyse secondary data to understand the context and help collection of primary data.
- Base composition of the assessment team on findings of the context (e.g. age, gender, language, ethnicity).
- Collect primary data as deemed necessary. Make sure data is broken down by sex and age (avoid terms like *people* and *most vulnerable* without analysis).
- Remember to include *protection* as a sector and as a key element in relation to other sectors. Assume gender-based violence is taking place, even if no reliable data is available.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - › Why does the situation exist?
 - › Who are the most vulnerable and what are their distinct needs?
 - › Why are people vulnerable?
 - › How do different groups experience vulnerability?
 - › What threats would exacerbate the situation?
- Ensure that the following factors are included in data gathering (secondary and/or primary) and analysed in relation to each other.
 - › *Values* – what is important to me, to us and to others
 - › *Power* – how much access and influence an individual or group has relative to others
 - › *Wealth* – ownership of money and property, including land, often entrenching unequal levels of privilege and access to opportunity
 - › *Identity* – how people define who they are and how they define others
 - › *Systems and structures* – both formal and informal, that create and maintain social, economic and political differences between people and that enable or undermine social cohesion, development and transformation
 - › *Gender* – conflict and violence affect women and men differently; directly affecting their perspectives, perceptions and responses to conflict and violence.
- In sensitive and insecure and conflict contexts gather information on (conflict) actors, causes, and dynamics.
- Ensure that there is balanced representation from all key informant groups.
- Participation in assessment and decision-making should be representative of different interest groups including females and males of all ages to ensure that their point of view are heard and that their needs are met, and *that traditional power structures do not cause vulnerable or marginalized groups to be disadvantaged. Where necessary, carry out single-sex focus group discussions with same-sex facilitators.*

- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - › Are you being *inclusive* in your approach, and communicating with a *representative* selection of community members?
 - › How is your presence and actions being perceived – by whom and why?
 - › Are you non-intentionally putting someone at risk or increasing their vulnerability (safety, lack of dignity, discrimination, lack of access to services and information)?
- Inform and discuss the results of the assessments with the community.

Useful resources

- [Vulnerability and capacity assessment](#) (Intranet – FedNet)
- [Emergency needs assessment](#) (Intranet – FedNet)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



GLOBAL SURGE MECHANISMS

- Base composition of the team on findings on context (e.g. age, gender, language, ethnicity) to ensure access to affected populations.
- The team should be trained in Principles and Rules, Code of Conduct and IFRC Child Protection policy and have signed Code of Conduct.
- The team must be trained and have capacity on gender and diversity analysis and integration, and protection mainstreaming.
- The team must study secondary data before deploying and before arrival have a general situation awareness that includes: impact, nature of the disaster National Society capacity, regional capacity etc.
- Include *protection* as a sector and as a key element in relation to other sectors.
- When engaging with communities always work with the National Society, and ensure effective information provision and participatory, two-way communication with affected women, girls, boys and men including those from marginalized groups.

- Be *inclusive* in your approach, and communicate with a *representative* selection of community members.
- Observe and analyse how your presence and actions are being perceived – by whom and why and decide whether changes are needed.
- When participating in or engaging with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) cluster mechanisms or other coordination mechanisms, always ensure that a National Society representative is present.
- Consider the potential for conflicts and longer-term sustainability (based on context analysis in assessment) when bringing resources into a community and providing services.
- Ensure that you do not (non-intentionally) put someone at risk or increase their vulnerability (safety, lack of dignity, discrimination, lack of access to services and information).
- Do not duplicate or undermine the implementing National Society's capacity.
- Integrate capacity building of the implementing National Society in all activities, and ensure that there is an exit strategy for global surge support, and that handover takes place before the team leaves.
- Base assistance on the implementing National Society's policies, strategies, plans and capacity. Support improvement of the implementing National Society policies, strategies and plans, if deemed necessary.
- IFRC, supporting National Societies and the implementing National Society must coordinate and agree on standards for IFRC and the supporting National Societies, financed National Society staff contracts, recruitment and allowance of volunteers.

Useful resources

- [Protection in natural disasters](#) (Global Protection Cluster)
- [Communication package on protection](#) (Global Protection Cluster)
- [Protection mainstreaming](#) (Global Protection Cluster)
- [Women, girls, boys and men. Different needs – equal opportunities. Gender handbook for humanitarian action](#) (IASC)
- [Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings](#) (IASC)
- [Principles and rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent humanitarian assistance](#) (IFRC)

- [The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) (IFRC-ICRC)
- [Child Protection Policy](#) (Intranet – FedNet)
- [Gender and diversity](#) (IFRC)
- [Minimum standard commitments to gender and diversity in emergency programming](#) (IFRC)
- [The Sphere Project](#)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



SHELTER

- As part of your understanding of the context it is vital to analyse the political, social and economic dynamics of *land* in the area and country in which you are working.
- Consider the context in which you are working. Is it rural or urban?
- Consider all shelter options for both displaced and non-displaced populations and ensure that local building techniques are supported and replicated where possible. Assistance should be socially, financially and environmentally sustainable, safe and culturally acceptable.
- Assess how land and property are administered and managed, and how land and property are occupied. How do people prove they live somewhere? Are land titles and other documents given in the names of men and women, or only in the name of the head of household? How are land and property disputes resolved?
- Consider the different forms of tenure and how people perceive their security of tenure. A rapid tenure assessment should be carried out.
- The data gathered is more reliable and relevant if carried out in a participatory way, and vulnerable groups (identified in broader assessment and context analysis) are included. Because resident participation is broad, elites in a settlement do not exercise undue influence. Data is legitimate, because communities and official institutions have been involved and have approved the results. The impact is sustained because residents support the process and feel engaged. The results of participatory enumeration can lay the foundation for subsequent phases of development, and more appropriate, equitable and efficient land administration systems.
- When assessing needs, include specific questions on land and housing to cross-check answers obtained by the rapid tenure assessment. Questions must be context specific.
- Consider how you store, maintain and update the data, how you will resolve disputes, what level of ownership local authorities will have over the information, and how you will manage expectations?
- Consult and cooperate with local authorities and community leaders.
- Share your approach with shelter partners. Where possible, share findings and solutions with other agencies. It is important to establish a common methodology with other shelter partners.
- Ensure the provided options for shelter solutions do not compromise protection (e.g. presence of house partitions, free from any form of hazards or overcrowding, posting of signage in local dialect). Systems are in place to protect unaccompanied children and young women and specific actions are taken to reduce the risk of gender-based violence.
- Support affected populations in their preferred location for longer-term recovery – usually their own plot of land, community and neighbourhood.
- In displacement situations, plan location of shelter areas to promote a sense of community and reinforce community-based protection, while also preserving the privacy of the family unit.
- In camp settings, allocate space and structures for multi-functional women and child-friendly spaces.
- Prioritize groups and individuals that have specific shelter and settlements vulnerabilities and needs (e.g. unaccompanied children and young women, older people, pregnant women, person with disabilities, or certain marginalized groups that have difficulties accessing shelter due to cast, stigmatizations etc.). Assistance must be equitable and tenure must not be used as means of discrimination.

Useful resources

- [Working together for protection: housing, land and property](#) (Global Protection Cluster)
- [Housing, land and property](#) (Global Shelter Cluster)
- [Women, girls, boys and men. Different needs – equal opportunities. Gender handbook for humanitarian action](#) (IASC)
- [Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings](#) (IASC)
- [Rapid tenure assessment: Guidelines for post-disaster response planning](#) (IFRC)
- [‘Minimum elements’ for community-based land mapping approaches in post disaster context](#) (IFRC)
- [Participatory approach for safe shelter awareness](#) (IFRC)
- [The Sphere Project](#)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



NON-FOOD ITEMS, CASH, FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD

- Create a context-specific (protection) risk and benefit analysis. Consider whether cash-based intervention will create or exacerbate protection risks and benefits for individuals, households and communities, and to what extent new risks could be mitigated by affected communities, humanitarian agencies and duty-bearers (governments) and/or by complementary programme activities. Compare risks and benefits of cash, vouchers, in-kind, and no material intervention, e.g. limiting assistance to advocacy or services.
- Apply an age, gender and diversity lens to assessments, targeting, design, implementation, monitoring and accountability, to ensure that people with specific needs and protection risks are identified.
- Establish an accountability framework, not limited to the cash-based component of programmes, including a multi-channel feedback mechanism. Ensure that staff know how to deal with different types of feedback, includ-

ing referrals for psychological and protection services and support.

- Enable fair and representative participation of all sections of affected populations, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- Women, girls, boys and men benefit equally from livelihood opportunities/alternatives. Livelihood programmes should be tailored to the unique needs of the various segments of the affected community (e.g. female heads of households, adolescent girls and boys, displaced women and men, elderly person, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, etc.).
- Set targeting and selection criteria for project participants in collaboration with the communities.
- If you receive feedback from individuals or groups about cash, non-food items and/or food assistance programmes, be sure to try to use it. Being open to receiving feedback is a first step, receiving it may then be a sign that your communication systems are working, and then using it and giving feedback about how it was used will serve to improve programming and strengthen trust and relationships.

Useful resources

- [Cash and protection](#) (The Cash Learning Partnership)
- [Protection and accountability to affected populations in Iraq](#) (Food Security Cluster)
- [Shelter and cash](#) (Global Shelter Cluster)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



HEALTH

- Communities' needs assessment should include points on identifying the marginalized vulnerable groups, health need gaps, gaps in health service provision, information gap that exists within communities and groups and equity issues.
- Disaggregated data by age, sex, (remember to include; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

and intersex population, and disability and/or chronic diseases to better inform programme and policies. When collecting age-disaggregated data, ensure to disaggregate older persons (over 60 years of age), and not just club adults in one group.

- Consult and co-operate with local authorities and community leaders.
- Involve communities, both men and women including those from marginalized groups, in assessments, planning and implementation of projects, and set up feedback mechanisms supporting empowerment and developing platforms where their voice is amplified and heard.
- Be sensitive to social structures, including positions of authority and influence, and roles and responsibilities of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and other forms of diversity.
- Ensure Universal Coverage and equity (based on need), is inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Ensure female staff is included to allow for culturally appropriate services for women and girls.
- Facilitate cultural and social acceptable practices for psychosocial support to the affected communities.
- Work together with protection colleagues to inform communities, and local and national authorities, about the right to health and the link between health and human rights. Such activities could include information on the availability and location of healthcare services, general practices of good health, including sexual and reproductive health, and ways to reduce various health risks, such as risks faced as a result of gender-based violence.
- Advocate for putting in place, train in, and signing of a code of conduct for employed medical staff.
- Establish an accountability framework including a multi-channel feedback mechanism. Ensure that staff know how to deal with different types of feedback, including referrals for psychological and protection services and support.

Useful resources

- [Integrating gender and diversity into community health Guidance note](#) (IFRC)
- [CBHFA toolkit](#) (IFRC)
- [Guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings](#) (IASC)
- [Protection mainstreaming in health](#) (Protection Thematic Group)
- [IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability Guidance](#)



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- Ensure that needs assessment of water, sanitation and hygiene services include accessibility to vulnerable groups (identified in context analysis) within the affected communities.
- Disaggregate data by age, sex, disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population.
- Involve communities, both men and women including those from marginalized groups, in assessments, planning and implementation of projects.
- Be sensitive to social structures, including positions of authority and influence, and roles and responsibilities of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and other forms of diversity. It is important to meet not only with traditional community leaders but also those (women, children, elderly, and disabled) who may not be part of regular decision-making processes.
- Ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery is based on needs, is inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Ensure that all have access to the assistance; provide support based on needs and not simple geographic coverage. Avoid any form of direct or indirect discrimination. For example, if sanitary facilities are placed and constructed without ease of access to a person in wheel chair, the service is not provided right. The service or assistance provided must be safe and not expose people to hazards.

- Analyse and take into consideration gendered division of tasks within households and communities and the different needs of women, girls, boys and men in water provision, sanitation and hygiene.
- Respond to the specific hygiene needs of women and girls of reproductive age by addressing their needs in the design and construction of toilets and washing facilities and by the provision of culturally-appropriate hygiene kits'.
- Consult girls and women in priority at all stages of the project, particularly about the physical placement and the design of water points, showers and toilets in order to reduce time spent waiting and collecting water and to mitigate incidences of violence.
- Ensure that evaluation and translation teams include female staff, and are otherwise context appropriately comprised.
- Establish an accountability framework including a multi-channel feedback mechanism. Ensure that staff know how to deal with different types of feedback, including referrals for psychological and protection services and support.
- Water sites, distribution mechanisms and maintenance procedures are accessible to women and children, including those with limited mobility.
- Communal latrine and bathing cubicles for women, girls, boys and men are sited in safe locations, are culturally appropriate, provide privacy, are adequately illuminated and are accessible to those with disabilities.
- Encourage an equal representation of women and men in the committees and in trainings so that all users have an equal mastery of facilities. Involve men in hygiene maintenance and in hygiene programmes.
- Consult and cooperate with local authorities and community leaders.
- Coordinate with other water, sanitation and hygiene service providers and organizations working on related issue like health and shelter to agree on standards, and avoid duplication.

Useful resources

- [The International Federation software tools for long-term water and sanitation programming](#) (IFRC)
- [PHAST step-by-step guide](#) (WHO)
- [WASH Programmes: Quick guide on how to address protection](#) (Global Protection Cluster)
- [Gender in water, sanitation and hygiene promotion: Guidance note](#) (IFRC)



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