

**PROTECTION RISKS AND ACTIONS IN EMERGENCIES
PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**

PROTECTION RISKS/ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

As with all disasters, there is a need for active protection monitoring by government and non-government humanitarian actors as part of their emergency relief activities in evacuation centres and disaster-affected areas. There is also a need for prevention and response measures to be implemented to ensure that affected communities - along with humanitarian actors responding to the emergency - are aware of key protection risks, ways to reduce these risks, and steps to respond effectively when they occur.

The Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster (PHPC) has compiled the following list of protection issues/actions for consideration by responding agencies operating in disaster-affected/prone areas, and/or in evacuation centres.

- **Non-discrimination**
 - Non-discrimination in access to evacuation centres (eg nearest evacuation centre available to all, regardless of the community or religious/ethnic groups that you are from)
 - Non-discrimination in delivery of assistance/relief except based on need

- **Identifying the most vulnerable and assessing their specific needs according to age and sex:**
 - Develop standardised process/form to support consistent age and sex disaggregated data collection
 - Identify specific vulnerable individuals/groups (including injured, sick, people with disabilities, minority groups, older people, unaccompanied children etc)
 - Link identified vulnerable individuals with appropriate care and support services (through information-sharing and referral with relevant actors)

- **Safety & security:**
 - In selecting evacuation centres, ensure that basic facilities and safety measures are in place (eg lighting, separate secure bathing/toilet facilities for men and women, safe access to centres and facilities for all evacuees including children/older people/people with disabilities)
 - Clarify police presence, roles and responsibilities in evacuation centres (eg which evacuation centres have 24 hr police presence / is there consistent guidance regarding the role of police in these centres / advocate for male and female police presence in evacuation centres)
 - Clarify processes for managing evacuation centres (eg is there consistent guidance for NGOs, school administrators, police and other managers of evacuation centres regarding their roles and responsibilities / are managers aware of protection risks and ways to prevent and respond to them)
 - Develop key communication messages regarding safety in evacuation centres and disaster-affected/prone areas (eg protection messages targeting affected population and highlighting risks for key vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities etc)

- **Referral of protection concerns**
 - Identify key government and non-government local referral agencies for a range of protection concerns including:
 - Mental health & psychosocial support for distressed disaster-affected individuals/families
 - Safe shelter, medical and psychosocial support for survivors of violence and abuse
 - Access to assistive devices and support for disaster-affected people with disabilities
 - Check capacity of identified referral agencies to engage in activities targeting the disaster-affected population
 - Disseminate information on referral options to first responders and to disaster-affected people

- **Child Protection**
 - Need for psychological first aid and psychosocial support for disaster-affected children/parents/families
 - Need to monitor coping mechanisms and risks associated with distress and frustration, including increase in family stress, violence and resort to negative coping mechanisms. Prevention and response activities are needed including:
 - Child-friendly spaces and recreational activities for children in evacuation centres
 - Key communication messages for parents and children to promote positive coping strategies
 - Referral options for incidents of violence/abuse

- **Information dissemination:**
 - Ensure that information on the disaster situation, relief activities and protection prevention and response measures is being provided in multiple languages and in various forms (eg print, radio etc) in order to maximise reach

- **Opening/Re-opening of evacuation centres:**
 - Use of schools as evacuation centres should be a last resort - where possible, alternative locations should be used to avoid interfering with children's access to education
 - Clearly identify who is responsible for registration, management and coordination of relief in evacuation centres

- **Evacuation/relocation of disaster-affected/prone individuals and communities**
 - Ensure respect for human rights in the process of relocating/evacuating people from disaster-affected areas to evacuation centres (eg. if there are people refusing to leave high risk areas - why are they refusing to leave, and what happens to them if they refuse to leave?)

- **Closure of evacuation centres:**
 - Ensure that clear and timely information is provided to evacuees regarding closure of centre
 - Before closing evacuation centres, it is essential to check that evacuees are relocating/returning to safe locations with adequate shelter, access to potable water and other basic services
 - Assess/monitor conditions for disaster-affected population in areas of relocation/return following closure of evacuation centres
 - Monitor coping strategies/mechanisms for disaster-affected population on return (eg. how are people coping? Are there indicators of increase in substance misuse, family violence, crime, exploitation or abuse?)
 - Consider long-term options for land allocation where displaced families are not able to safely return to their places of previous residence