

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER ISSUES IN THE HAITI EMERGENCY

Only by taking into account the different needs of women, girls, boys and men make will our humanitarian response be effective. Experience from past natural disasters indicates that gender issues go unrecognised and/or unaddressed to the detriment of the affected populations. In responding to the disaster in Haiti, we must keep in mind that disasters make existing inequalities even worse. Vulnerable groups with less resources and/or political power will not receive the help they need unless **we work to understand and respond to their specific needs and ensure that EVERYONE is involved in the humanitarian response.**

Gender is a cross-cutting issue in the humanitarian cluster coordination system. The Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) assists clusters to adopt a gender-responsive approach that meets needs equally and recognises the different capacities and vulnerabilities of women, girls, boys and men. It is the **responsibility of all clusters** to ensure access to and benefit of their services to all segments of the population.

Take these 3 immediate actions to ensure that women, girls, boys and men get access to and benefit from the Haiti humanitarian response:

A **SSess NEEDS:** The needs of women, girls, boys and men are different after an emergency so special care must be made to assess the risks, capacities, and needs of each of these groups. Ensure that women and men are part of any needs assessment teams and that the needs of all portions of the affected population are assessed.

B **E ALERT TO RISKS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE:** In times of crisis, all forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence can be exacerbated. Prior to the earthquake, Haiti documented high prevalence of gender-based violence, so increases should be expected. Each cluster should design measures to prevent violence and put in place systems to respond to needs of survivors.

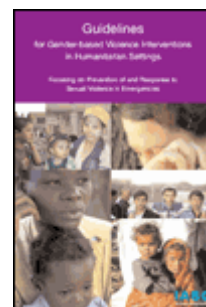
Ensure regular communication with the affected population to inform them of what they are entitled to receive so as to reduce the possibility of abuse by deliverers of humanitarian assistance. Everyone must take seriously and report exploitation and abuse by those responding to the crisis. Remember — we all have a code of conduct!

C **OLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA BY SEX AND AGE:** All efforts should be made to collect data on who has been affected, including deaths, injuries, displacement, and who is receiving services. This is critical for appropriate targeting of services and effective delivery of assistance.

For more details, please refer to aspects of the ADAPT and ACT framework for gender programming found in the IASC Gender Handbook and use the GBV guidelines.

<http://gender.onerresponse.info> and

<http://gencap.onerresponse.info>



The Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) is deploying a Gender Adviser to Haiti to ensure coordination of gender and GBV programming. Victoria Rames will be deployed with the support of UNFPA but all other IASC members are urged to include her into coordination efforts. Contact email: rames@un.org and gencap@un.org

Immediate Concerns: How to Address Gender in your Cluster or Sector

CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT

Identify specific risk factors faced by women, girls, boys and men in camp and camp-like settings and incorporate this analysis in security provisions (e.g. appropriate lighting in areas frequently used by women and girls, safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, additional policing, etc.) Take specific actions to ensure vulnerable groups such as single or child-headed households get special support. Ensure equal representation of women and men in community-based decision-making structures and provide capacity-building sessions in knowledge and skills to undertake community leadership roles. Work in partnership with displaced women, girls, boys and men to identify and strengthen their capacities and mobilise their participation in all aspects of camp life. Share information in the local language so all the population can understand.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

In overcrowded collective centres, the risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence and exploitation will increase. Ensure that special measures have been taken to provide separate accommodation for unaccompanied girls, boys and young women away from adult and adolescent males to prevent sexual violence. Ensure that adequate privacy is offered to all.

PROTECTION

Amnesty International, in a 2008 report titled *Don't Turn Your Back on Girls – Sexual Violence Against Girls in Haiti*, noted that sexual violence was pervasive and widespread. As indicator of the impunity of rape, only in 2005 was rape declared a criminal rather than a moral issue, and there is a very low level of reporting, investigation and prosecution of cases. With the challenges of upholding law and order in the aftermath of the earthquake, we can expect the situation to become even more difficult. Our initiatives must aim to prevent sexual violence, and also to remit cases to the appropriate authorities if and when they occur. It is essential that protection actors identify how to strengthen local capacity for social support to survivors of sexual violence. Protection actors must work with other clusters to ensure that protective approaches are included in their planning and programming as per IASC GBV Guidelines.

HEALTH

Life expectancy in Haiti is the lowest in the region (men: 51 years, women; 54 years). Of every 100,000 live births in Haiti (2000), 523 women die in childbirth. These high rates are seen as related to unsafe abortions and the failings of the national health care system. The following steps are critical for gender-responsive health care in this disaster;

- Ensure sex and age disaggregated data are collected and a gender analysis applied including data on those with specific priority needs (including physical and mental disability)
- Ensure women are included in planning and implementation of health sector activities
- Implement the MISP – Minimum Initial Services Package for reproductive health in crises - including providing care for survivors of sexual violence

WATER AND SANITATION

It is essential that water and sanitation actors consult women and girls on the location of sanitation facilities to ensure that the route is safe; that latrines be well lit, lockable from the inside, and offer privacy. As soon as possible, put in place separate latrines or similar facilities for females and males – not directly next to each other – given the heightened risk of violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls.

NON-FOOD ITEM DISTRIBUTION

Be aware that the strongest get the NFIs first which leaves many without support often putting them in desperate situations. Be mindful of the family unit will be very different and NFI distribution should be tailored to meet the changing family make up.