

# Dignity Kits

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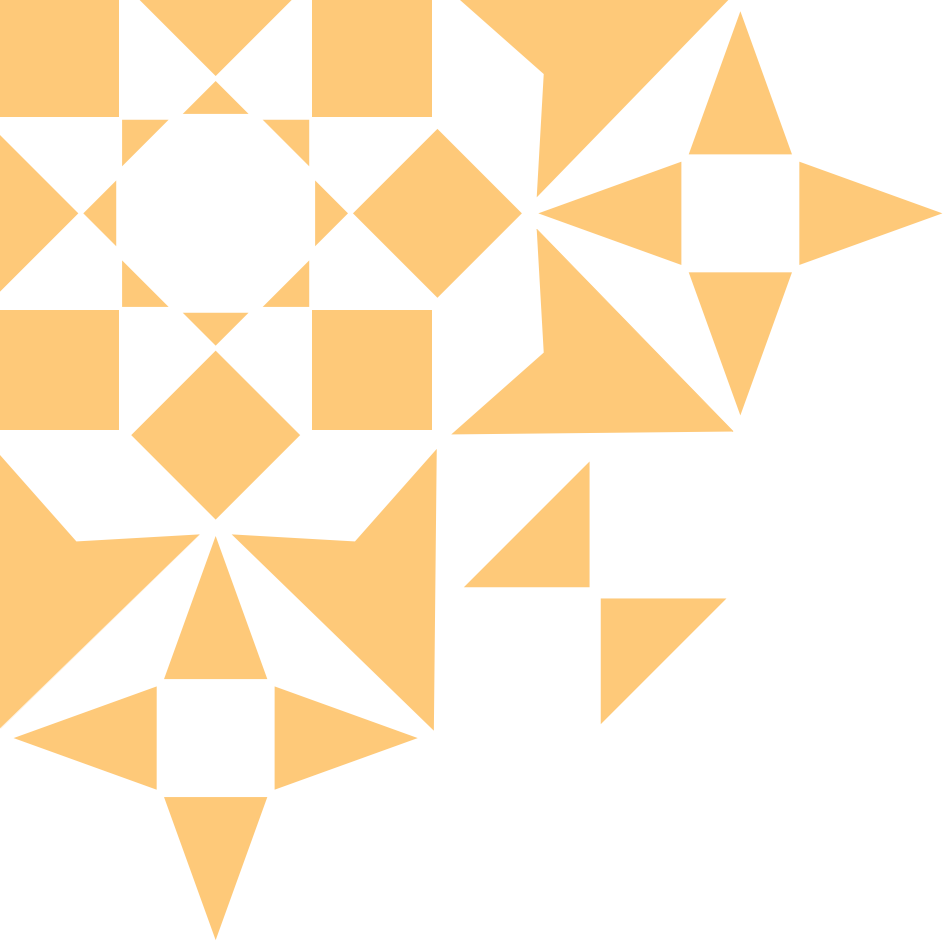
# Guidance Note



**Global Protection Cluster**

GBV Sub-Cluster Turkey (Syria)





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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

This guidance note was developed by the GBV Sub-Cluster (GBV SC) Turkey (cross-border operations in Syria) to support best practice and facilitate a standardized but context-specific approach to the development and distribution of dignity kits. Guidance is based on input from, and experiences of, GBV Sub-Cluster members (Turkey cross-border) as well as UNFPA Dignity Kit Programming Guidelines 2012.

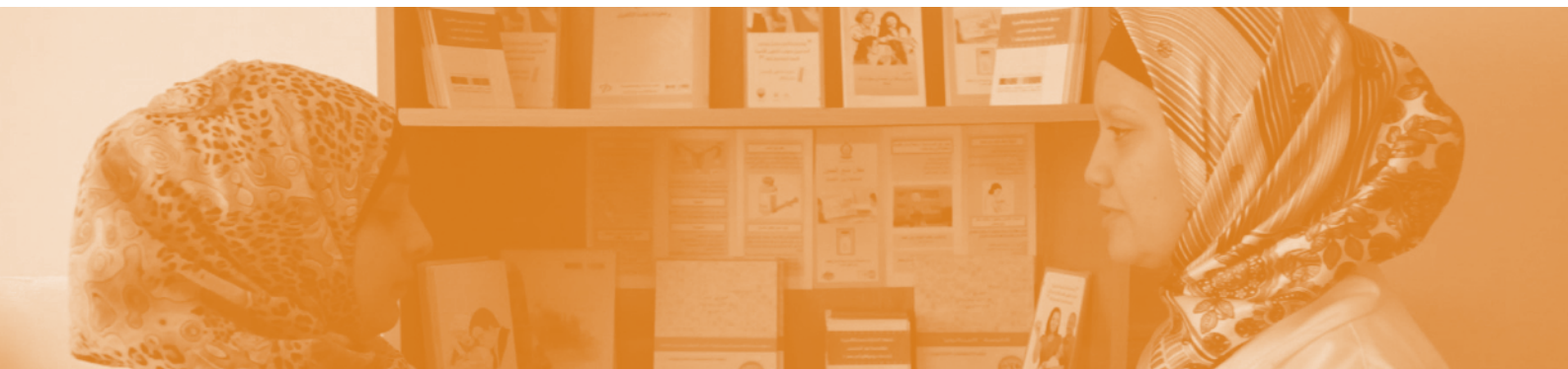
### GBV Sub-Cluster (GBV SC) Turkey

The GBV SC is a coordinating body with the objective to reduce risks and mitigate consequences of GBV experienced by women, girls, boys and men in Syria. It works to facilitate multisectoral, interagency action aimed at prevention of GBV, and to ensure a principled approach to the provision of accessible, prompt, and survivor-centered services to survivors of GBV. The GBV SC focuses on populations affected by the armed conflict in Syria reachable through cross-border operations from Turkey into Syria.

### Overview of Dignity Kits

Dignity kits contain hygiene and sanitary items, as well as other items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls of reproductive age in particular communities. Generic hygiene kits help people improve cleanliness (with items such as soap, sanitary materials, toothbrushes and toothpaste). Whilst dignity kits are similar to basic hygiene kits often distributed at the onset of emergencies, dignity kits serve a broader purpose and so contain a wider range of items.

Dignity kits help women and girls maintain their dignity during humanitarian crises. Preserving dignity is essential to maintaining self-esteem and confidence, which is important to cope in stressful and potentially overwhelming humanitarian situations. Supporting women's self-esteem and confidence also assists them in providing care and protection to their children.



## Dignity kits contain hygiene and sanitary items, as well as other items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls

Dignity kits focus on promoting mobility and safety of women and girls by providing age, gender, and culturally appropriate garments and other items (such as headscarves, shawls, whistles, torches, underwear, and small containers for washing personal items) in addition to sanitary supplies and basic hygiene items.

Dignity kits are designed in partnership with affected communities to ensure the most appropriate items are included, and distribution is carried out in a manner that minimizes the risk of GBV against women and girls.

### **Dignity kits help women and girls by:**

- Contributing to the psychosocial and physical wellbeing of women and girls, by including items such as intimate wash and pads,
- Improving mobility of women and girls by providing specific sanitary items. In some contexts, mobility can also be enhanced by including items such as headscarves or abayas, without which women cannot be seen in public,
- Allowing budget substitution for families to purchase other important items, such as food,
- Contributing to the protection of women and girls, by including items such as flashlights and whistles, so that women and girls do not have to walk in the dark and can call for help,
- Providing information about hygiene, reproductive health, GBV related issues, and services through the inclusion of health and protection information.

### Translating 'Dignity Kit' from English to Arabic

A note on language: In English, international definitions and technical guidelines use the term 'dignity kit'. However when talking with communities about such items, it is best adapt the language to the local environment. For example, it was noted by some partners that in Arabic the term 'dignity' has a very specific, strong meaning that might make communities uncomfortable and so an alternative name could be more appropriate in conversations in communities.

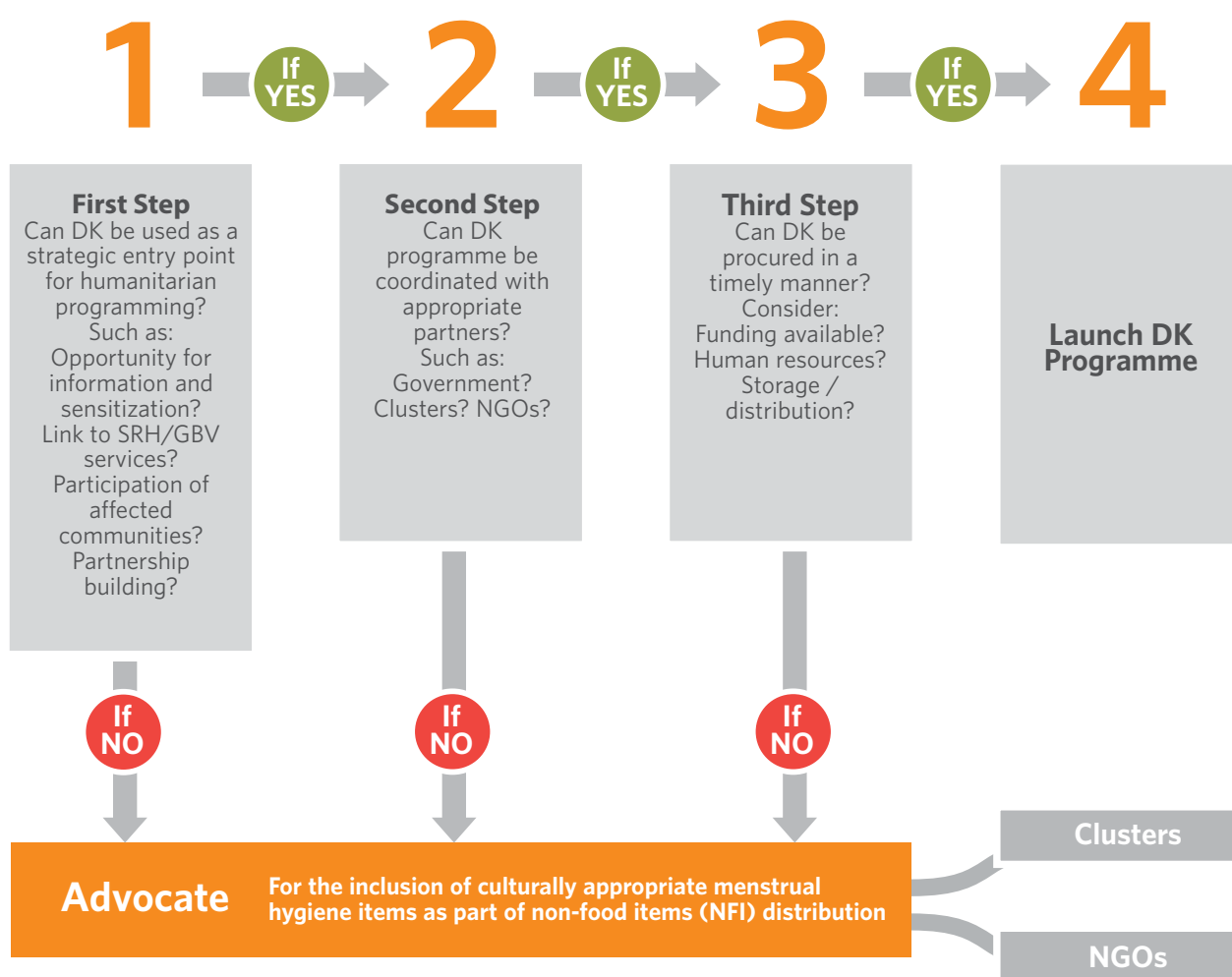
## Dignity Kits in GBV Programming

**Dignity kits can be used in the context of GBV programming in a number of ways, including:**

- As an entry point to begin working with women to identify the GBV risks in the community, and to advance GBV prevention and response programs,
- To raise awareness during distribution, encouraging communities to engage in discussions on important topics such as preventing and responding to GBV,
- To share information on where women can access GBV services. In particular, distribution of dignity kits can be focused on reaching women at risk; GBV survivors, pregnant and lactating women, to ensure women know where and how to access available services,
- To provide additional support to GBV survivors, if distribution is carried out in collaboration with GBV service providers,
- Assembly of dignity kits can be set up as an income-generating activity for women affected by crisis. In addition to the important economic support, bringing affected women together for kit assembly also presents opportunities to organize awareness raising sessions, educational chats, or group counseling sessions.

## Decision Tree for Dignity Kit Programming

The following decision tree aims to support organizations to identify program design and implementation that best fits their capacities and the context.



**Dignity Kit Decision Tree**

# 2

## DIGNITY KIT PROGRAMME PLANNING AND COORDINATION

### Best Practice Approach

The GBV SC approach prioritizes the development of country-specific dignity kit plans that include the implementation of common standards for development and distribution. The GBV SC advocates for a coordinated response among members of the GBV Sub-Cluster involved in distributing dignity kits and the WASH cluster involved in distributing hygiene kits.

**In terms of common standards, the GBV SC promotes dignity kit programming that considers the following:**

- Responds to the specific needs of women and girls,
- Procured and assembled locally (if possible),
- Content selected in consultation with local communities and specifically women and girls,
- Customized to meet the hygiene needs of affected populations, i.e. including culturally appropriate and context specific items,
- Distribution coordinated with other humanitarian organizations.

### Sector Coordination

Organizations that deliver, or are planning to deliver, dignity kits are expected to coordinate the intervention through the GBV SC. Importantly, coordination helps to ensure better planning, to avoid duplication, and to identify gaps in aid distribution. Coordination enables organizations to leverage existing information gathered by others in the sector, on matters such as specific needs, mapping, and identification of vulnerable populations.

Because there are limitations on the materials available in some areas of Syria, it would be also useful if agencies share information on what they were able to procure locally through the GBV SC.





## Always keep in mind the principle of 'do no harm'

It is essential that organisations liaise with the GBV SC about their plans to distribute dignity kits, coordinate the location and identification of target population and share precise (planned and completed) distribution data. A GBV SC regularly compiles a Dignity Kit Tracking Sheet. This tool allows for disaggregated data analysis for programme accountability and improvement.

For actors providing both hygiene and dignity kits, or who are covering areas where other actors are providing hygiene kits, coordination on contents of kits should be discussed so as to avoid duplication of materials and to ensure coverage of essential female sanitary items.

It is best practice to distribute dignity kits at regular intervals throughout an emergency. Always consider including newly displaced people on the beneficiaries list. It is also important to maintain contingency stocks in case of new displacement and emergency if secure storage can be assured.

Always keep in mind the principle of 'do no harm'. Dignity kits entail distributing items to a small number of people. Potential risks should be assessed and all measures taken to eliminate them. It is important to ensure that humanitarian interventions, and the environments in which these are provided, do not further expose people to physical hazards, violence or human rights abuses. It is also essential to have clear prioritization framework when selecting beneficiaries, if this can be done in a safe and transparent manner.

# 3

## DIGNITY KITS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Integrated Needs Assessment

An indispensable step of dignity kit program development is to assess the needs of women and adolescent girls affected by crises. Through understanding communities' particular needs and preferences, culturally appropriate and context specific items can be included in customized dignity kits.

If information is not available on the needs and preferences of a target community, a needs assessment is recommended. Ideally, questions to inform the development and distribution of dignity kits should be integrated into other humanitarian assessments, to protect against communities being over-assessed.

If such information is not already available through other assessments or safety audits, organizations with trained staff should organize focus group discussions (FGDs) or surveys with affected women and girls, or ask the relevant questions informally, e.g. during camp or community centre visits. It may be necessary to talk with men in separate FGDs or engage community and religious leaders through other forums, to ensure their support for the planned dignity kit intervention.

When arranging FGDs, or other forms of assessment, it is important to ensure that participants give their informed consent to be part of discussions. Group facilitators need to ensure that FGD participants are aware that their participation is entirely voluntary, that they are clear on the purpose of the discussion and how the information they contribute will be reported and used, and remind them that they are free to leave the discussion at any time. If GBV issues will be discussed, it is imperative that there be a clear referral pathway in place for any survivor who discloses violence. If services are not available or if those leading the FGD are not aware of services, questions related to GBV should not be initiated in the context of that discussion.

On completing a needs assessment, organizations should analyze the information gathered to decide if dignity kit distribution would be worthwhile and feasible. Results and locations of various assessments should be shared with the GBV SC so that all organizations can benefit from these.



## Questions for Dignity Kit Needs Assessment

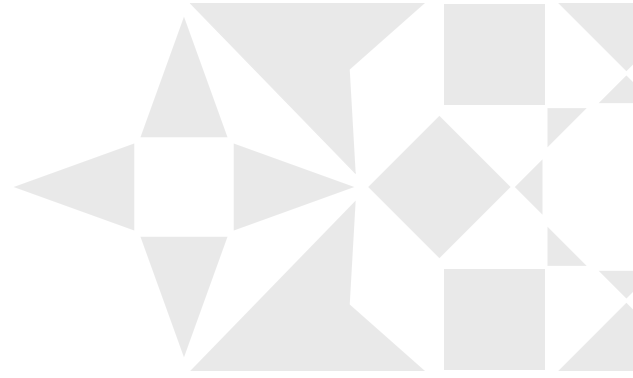
**The following questions may be helpful in planning how to assess the need for dignity kits, in FGDs with women and girls, or in informal discussions.**

- What are the basic hygiene products that you need to stay clean and healthy?
- Do you have what you need for washing your body? (If not, what would be useful?)
- Do you have what you need for washing clothes? (If not, what would be useful?)
- What kind of items would help you to move around more freely and to spend time outside your shelter? (probe: hijab, praying clothes)
- Do you need any specific clothing items to carry-on your daily tasks?
- Is there any other item you need for your daily life here (in the camp/shelter/gathering centre)?
- What items do you miss from home that, if you had them, would provide comfort?
- What types of sanitary materials do you usually use during menstruation? If the answer to the question on types of sanitary materials is reusable cloth, also ask:
  - Do you have a safe access to water to wash the cloth?
  - What kind of packaging would you like items to be in? What is more useful? (bag, pack, bucket)

An indispensable step of dignity kits program development is to assess the needs of women and adolescent girls affected by the crises

# 4

## DIGNITY KIT CONTENTS



### Dignity Kit Contents

**Assessments should be the main source of information to define the contents of the kits. While there is no standard content, the five items most commonly included in dignity kits are:**

- ✓ Sanitary pads
- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ Hand soap
- ✓ Toothbrushes
- ✓ Toothpaste

A number of other hygiene items are also often included in the kits. The appropriate items should be identified in consultation with affected women and girls. Specific items can be included to address cultural needs or protection concerns. Useful items could include:

- Abaya
- Headscarf
- Praying clothes
- Sandals or flip-flops
- Hair brush/comb
- Gel-Shampoo
- Hand cream/lotion
- Nail clipper
- Tweezers
- Towel
- Cotton socks
- Fleece blanket
- Washing powder/laundry soap
- Flashlight (torch)
- Whistle

To identify relevant, appropriate content of dignity kits, organizations should consider the following basic parameters: relevance of the items, cultural sensitivity, context, environment, quantity, frequency of distribution, and price. For the case of Syria, where the security situation is ever changing, it may be useful to involve security staff in reviewing and approving the contents of the dignity kits. Checking the final contents of the kits is also very important. In the experience of organizations working in this context, this has helped prevent problems.



## Basic parameters: relevance of the items, cultural sensitivity, context, environment, quantity, frequency of distribution, and price

With regard to choosing appropriate quantities of each item there is no one standard solution. SPHERE standards are that the contents of dignity kits should last for at least one month.

Another important consideration is that women and girls are typically the primary caregivers of their extended families and they tend to share the contents of the kits with their families. It is advisable to include larger quantities of some items, such as toothbrushes and underwear, to support multiple family members.

Providing extra items in the kits may also minimize the risk of backlash by male family members or others, against those women and girls who have received the kits. Providing a range of sizes of underwear/clothing items in each kit can be useful, to enable women to interchange items with others in their household according to fit.

### Culturally Appropriate and Context Specific Items

Examples of culturally appropriate items, identified on the basis of focus group discussions with affected women and girls, are headscarves and abayas, which are important for women to be able to move around in public spaces in some Muslim contexts.

Context-specific protection items include flashlights (torches), whistles or potties. The majority of sexual violence incidents happen at night, mainly because of poor shelter and inadequate lighting within the IDP camps. Culturally adapted dignity kits may also mean not including certain items (which can be identified through needs assessment).

A GBV SC organization member involved in dignity kits programming in Syria reported that women and girls find it very useful to receive a set of praying clothes, which can improve women's freedom of movement by allowing them to move around dressed in a culturally acceptable way. These sets are also easy to wash and transport which is convenient in displacement settings.

### Sanitary pads or reusable cloths

Find out whether women are used to using sanitary pads or reusable cloths to know which to include in dignity kits. Dignity kits are often distributed in areas where women use cloths, not sanitary pads, for menstrual hygiene. When this is the case, including reusable cloths (always of dark color) is generally the best, most culturally appropriate option. It also presents the advantage of being a longer-term solution (no need to replace the cloths as often as sanitary pads), avoids the issues of where and how to dispose of pads, and of the potential environmental consequences of trying to dispose of non-biodegradable items. However, providing cloths in dignity kits assumes that women and girls have access to safe water and a place to hang the cloths to dry. This should be considered when assessing which sanitary items to include in the kits. It is important to remember to include washing powder/laundry soap in the kit, especially when providing reusable cloths.

## Environmental Considerations

Keep environmental considerations in mind when choosing dignity kit contents. Avoid unnecessary waste (e.g. plastic wrappers). Consider including solar-powered flashlights (torches) rather than battery-powered, as batteries will run out quickly. If batteries are supplied, consider how they can be disposed of safely.

## Dignity Kit Packaging

The packaging for a dignity kit might also be able to be a useful item. For example, many organizations have used buckets as containers for dignity kits; once emptied of its contents, the bucket can be used for cleaning babies, washing clothes, fetching water, or carrying other goods. Preference should go to multipurpose buckets that hold at least 10 litres of water.

Ask women about which kinds of packaging they prefer. Find out if it is appropriate and acceptable to display logos on dignity kit packaging (In some areas in Syria this may not be appropriate, or safe).

UNFPA packages dignity kits in fabric backpacks that can be re-used. Furthermore all kits also come with a bucket, which was found to be an important item in feedback from women.

# 5

## DIGNITY KITS PROCUREMENT AND STORAGE

### Local Procurement in Conflict Contexts

When possible, local procurement is preferred. An assessment should be made of the availability and reliability of local capability before sourcing from outside the area. Reputable local or regional transporters and freight forwarders have valuable knowledge of local regulations, procedures and facilities, and can help to ensure compliance with the laws of the host country and expedite deliveries. In a conflict environment, the vetting of service providers should be especially rigorous.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that sourcing locally does not cause or exacerbate hostilities and do more harm in the community. Transparent contracting procedures are essential to avoid suspicion of favoritism or corruption. In order to maintain an audit trail, sufficient procurement documentation and forms (waybills, stock ledgers, reporting forms, etc.) should be available at all locations where goods are received, stored and dispatched.

When considering dignity kit assembly as a potential income-generating activity for women, it is important to look at whether all of the materials are available locally and whether the organization has the capability and capacity for supply chain and distribution management.

In the context of Syria, remote management can represent an additional challenge to both identify and monitor local suppliers. Transparency and performance of suppliers should be evaluated by humanitarian organizations and the supplier shortlists altered to reflect evaluation results. Packaging and distribution staff may need training. Spot checks prior to packaging and distribution can help to ensure that the kits contain the exact planned contents.

### Storage Considerations

When selecting a warehouse for storage of dignity kits, consider the following factors: security, capacity, ease of access, structural solidity, and absence of any direct threats. The storage of dignity kits is not generally problematic, as most items are non-perishable or have long shelf lives. (Exceptions may be toothpaste, which has 24 months shelf life.)



In many areas of Syria it has become challenging to keep stock, including dignity kits, for any period of time due to the security risks. Some organizations have managed this by keeping stock in Turkey, then transporting dignity kits across the border when it is time to distribute them.

**When selecting storage for dignity kits, attention should be given to:**

- Location: Ensure appropriate road access for the largest vehicles that may need to come to the warehouse. Avoid warehouses situated in low-lying land.
- Accessibility: If possible, locate the warehouse in a place where the kits can be easily received and distributed.
- Security: In many situations, security guards are employed to reduce looting or theft.
- Capacity/space: Warehouse facilities must have sufficient capacity for both storage and handling. Ideally, space should be evenly divided between the two. Plan the warehouse with staging areas for preparing shipments (issuing) and unloading deliveries (receiving).
- Roof: There should be a slanting roof to allow water run-off. The roof should be extended over the windows to give extra protection from rain and direct sunlight.





# 6

## DIGNITY KITS DISTRIBUTION

### Considerations for Safe and Appropriate Distribution

In both camp and non-camp settings, distribution of dignity kits runs a risk of increasing women's vulnerability. Receiving a dignity kit can be very embarrassing for some women and girls, especially in conservative communities. And so some women may be hesitant about collecting dignity kits.

When organizing distribution, consider potential safety and security risks, specifically GBV related risks, and seek to devise ways to address these.

There are a number of ways in which organizations distributing dignity kits can ensure that distribution is safe and appropriate, and that the kits go to targeted women and girls. These include:

- Including women in the process of selecting the distribution points and dates,
- Providing information prior to the distribution (what, when, where, how) so women and girls can plan to collect their dignity kit safely and discretely,
- Organising the distribution in a discrete place, by women staff to women/girls beneficiaries. If other distributions are taking place at the same time (food, shelter, etc.) designate a separate space for dignity kits,
- Avoid locations a long way away from shelters as these may increase GBV risks,
- Encourage women to create collectives, to stay together during the kits collection journey,
- Consider if the time of distributions allows women to be back at home before dark,
- Audit dignity kit distribution as part of safety audits, if trained staff are available,
- Select a security focal point for the distribution,
- Prepare the activity tools (distribution list, pre and post activity survey etc.) to ensure attention to gathering disaggregated age and gender data,
- Ensure the distribution personnel know the referral pathways and services available so that they can provide information and assist GBV survivors if necessary.



- Make sure all the people distributing the dignity kits are aware about appropriate conduct and are knowledgeable and competent in handling confidentiality and disclosure.

### IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings

Extensive guidance on how to integrate GBV risk mitigation measures in humanitarian action can be found in the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (<http://gbvguidelines.org/>). The purpose of the Guidelines is to assist humanitarian actors and communities affected by armed conflict, natural disasters, and other humanitarian emergencies to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions for the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) across all sectors of humanitarian response.

## SOURCES

IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, 2015 <http://gbvguidelines.org/>

UNFPA: Reproductive health kits management for field offices 2012 [http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/RH%20Kits%20Guidelines%20For%20Field%20Offices%20\\_En.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/RH%20Kits%20Guidelines%20For%20Field%20Offices%20_En.pdf)

Sphere Handbook 2011 <http://www.spherehandbook.org>



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