Displaced people

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CHAPTER 4: DISPLACED PEOPLE

Introduction

Displaced people are those who have left their normal living area because their lives or their livelihoods were in danger. They have moved to a new area to avoid further losses of life and property, and because of the risk of further disaster.

Natural disasters are one main cause of displacement. Hazards such as tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, windstorms and droughts may destroy or damage homes and livelihoods to such an extent that it is no longer safe or practical for people to remain at home.

Civil conflict may mean that the home area is no longer a safe place for people to work for their living, even though crops and livestock may flourish. If there is a threat to human life, then people move to avoid possible violence.

The local church is often the only community organisation and structure that can respond immediately to the arrival of displaced people. The purpose of this chapter is to equip the church to respond quickly and effectively to the basic needs of displaced
people over the first few days, so that the immediate threats to life and health are reduced.

Here are some of the problems that displaced persons typically face – problems you might discover when they arrive.

**Problems facing displaced people**

- They may be in a poor state of nutrition or health.
- They may have been unable to bring essential household goods or food.
- They may have no assets because of robbery or forced sale to raise money.
- They may lack identification papers and/or travel documents.
- They may lack access to land and employment.
- They may have limited access to markets in their new area.
- They may not be able to access the health, education or other social services available to local residents.
- They may be traumatised and in need of social support and/or counselling.
- Children may be separated from their families.
- Women and children in particular may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation or violence.
- Local communities may be hostile to the arrival of the displaced people and may be unwilling to share resources, particularly if those resources are scarce.
- Local governments may perceive displaced persons as a threat to peace and stability in the area and may seek to contain them in camps or other confined spaces.
Church response to displaced people

The church has significant resources to offer in response to the needs of displaced people.

Premises and equipment such as church buildings, a hall or a school can provide quick and accessible short-term shelter for traumatised people. The compound in which they are located offers added protection. Equipment and utensils (sometimes kept to feed large numbers at weddings or other celebrations) can now be used to feed the displaced families.

Volunteers provided by the church know where to find large quantities of food and other items at competitive prices. They can cook local food that people will eat, and they can organise distributions within the camp.

Church leaders are usually able to mobilise and motivate people into responding quickly. The response is driven also by the instinctive desire of believers to help those in need – an outworking of ‘Love your neighbour’.

Sometimes a committee is chosen to manage the work, consisting of wise, respected church members. This should include both men and women, and people with skills/knowledge relevant to the needs of the displaced (see Chapter 2, pages 39–41). Recruiting and managing volunteers is covered in Chapter 2, pages 41–45.

Local knowledge and language can help to guide people in making key decisions at critical moments in a complex and unusual social environment.

The church is able to offer emotional support and prayer for those who are bereaved and emotionally upset. It can help to heal painful memories and restore hope for the future. For believers, it can also offer fellowship and opportunities to share in the worship and prayer life of the church, demonstrating the wider unity of believers.
Code of conduct for churches

Some years ago, a code of conduct was drawn up by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Most major organisations involved in disaster relief support this code. The code was first developed to help NGOs provide fair and effective assistance for people in need.

The code has been adapted below to make it more appropriate to churches working with displaced people. All members of a church involved in a relief initiative should understand and follow this code.

**Principal commitments**

Churches following this adapted version of the code of conduct would be invited to observe the following commitments:

1. In a disaster situation, saving lives and reducing suffering (physical, emotional, spiritual) should be a priority concern for the local church.

2. Church assistance and support should be given to people of any race, belief, gender, religion or nationality, without bias or prejudice. Priorities should be worked out on the basis of need alone. (See Bible study on page 130.)

3. Church assistance and aid distribution should not be used to promote a particular political or religious standpoint. (In other words, it should not be used in any way to win conversions.)

4. Churches should not allow themselves to be manipulated to fulfil the agenda of a particular political group.

5. Churches should respect culture and custom even if it is very different from their own.

6. Churches should attempt to build local capacity to respond to future disasters more effectively.

7. Churches should seek to involve beneficiaries in planning and implementing any relief project.

8. Churches should seek to give assistance and support in a way that avoids making the beneficiaries even more vulnerable to disaster than they were before.

9. Churches should hold themselves accountable firstly to God, but also to those they are helping and to those from whom they have received resources.

10. Churches developing information and publicity materials should recognise that disaster victims are dignified human beings and not merely hopeless objects.
Case study

Tsunami response in the Andaman Islands

Following the tsunami of 2004, the Pentecostal Mission in the Andaman Islands worked together with some external relief agencies to deliver relief aid to 500 internally displaced people and provide 350 shelters.

Under the direction of the assistant pastor, the church provided cooking utensils and other equipment to feed a camp of 500 people at Midpoint School.

The women of the church organised themselves into shifts to provide three meals a day. There were up to 50 volunteers, both men and women and of all ages, helping to run the camp kitchen. This continued until other help arrived.

Responding to displaced people

In a disaster situation, a church may face a sudden influx of displaced people. These could come from within its own community (eg if they are displaced by a flood, or if their houses are damaged by an earthquake) or they could be from a more distant place (eg people who have moved because of drought or conflict). The points listed below show the main ways in which a church should plan its response, although it may not be possible for the church to cover all of them. Some needs should be urgently met in the first 48 hours.

Try to follow these steps, prayerfully seeking God’s guidance along the way:

1. Assess the situation carefully.
2. Register the displaced people.
3. Develop a plan to provide for physical needs, eg food, water, sanitation and shelter.
4. Develop a plan to provide for spiritual and emotional needs, eg prayer and counselling.

In the following pages we look at each of these areas in more detail.
Assessing the situation

When displaced people first arrive, carry out an initial assessment of their needs. A suggested format for needs assessment is given in Chapter 3, pages 82–83. The same chapter gives lists of possible resources which a church may have to respond to those needs (pages 86–88). Additional resources may also be required – see material on ‘Working with others’ (Chapter 2, pages 48–53).

The needs assessment and the church capacity assessment will provide answers to the following questions:

- Who are the people who are most in need of assistance? Are there sick or elderly people or pregnant mothers who urgently need help?
- How many people are at risk and/or in need of assistance?
- What type of assistance do different groups need, and for how long?
- What resources do we have (people, buildings, materials) which could be used?
- What can we do for ourselves, and what additional help do we need from others?

For more ideas on planning a response, see Chapter 2, pages 54–59.

As well as assessing the needs of the displaced persons, you may need to do the same for the host community, ie the resident population of the area, who themselves may be very poor. New arrivals will put pressure on natural resources (eg water, trees, pasture). There may also be competition for livelihood resources. Efforts to help the displaced people may need to include some provision for hosts also.

Registering the displaced people

The situation that you face may simply be that local people have been displaced from their homes and are living in a church or a school.

Keep a register of all arrivals - age, sex, origin, family status, health needs, profession etc
Sometimes, however, larger numbers may come from outside. It can become difficult to determine the exact numbers, particularly if they settle among local residents rather than in camps. Whatever the numbers, it is important to have a simple system of recording their names, where they are from, their sex and age. This will help in planning the amount of food they require and also in organising shelter and meeting other needs.

Registration may also help you to decide who are the most needy people, and those who are genuinely in need of help. It is advisable to involve local community leaders in this process, in order to reduce possible arguments and conflict.

Efforts to count the displaced are prone to error for the following reasons:

- The situation may be changing, and there may be new arrivals all the time.
- People may not be present when the registration process is going on. This may be a particular problem if the displaced people have a nomadic lifestyle.
- Some displaced people may try to misrepresent their household size, thinking that they will receive more food or other goods if they have more people in their family.
- Some people may try to be double-counted for the same reason.

In larger refugee contexts, UNHCR and the local government will probably try to carry out a registration exercise. This may be used as a general working number for planning purposes.

Clear communication and transparency are essential in order to ensure a smooth and fair process (see below).

**Communication**

Community members, leaders and government officials should understand the registration process and know why it is being done. Take time to explain things clearly to leaders and officials, and try to involve them as much as possible. If you do, they will have more confidence in the process and will be more likely to support it.

Get to those who can’t walk or are sick and record details, especially the medical/health details.
The process should also be communicated via a public meeting. Take time for greetings, courtesies and explanations. Make sure that these public meetings are held at times convenient for everyone, particularly women. It may be necessary in some cultures to have separate meetings for men and for women. Reassure people that the only purpose of the registration is for planning assistance for the community. Some cultures do not accept the practice of counting people. However, if the purpose is clearly explained and understood, resistance should be minimal.

The public meeting may also provide an opportunity to select a small committee to oversee the registration process and the subsequent distribution of materials. This committee should include representatives of the church, the community leaders and the displaced people.

In addition to the public meeting, you could place notices in public places (e.g., markets, schools and churches) and give copies to community leaders and government officials. The process must be seen to be fair and transparent (see below).

**The registration process**

A household is defined as those who eat together. Women should be registered as head of household. In polygamous societies register each wife as a household in her own right, and include the husband as a dependant within one of the households.

Make sure that the registration format will provide all the information needed for provision of relief goods. For example, register all children and record their names and ages. Household rations will be determined by household size, so try to cross-check information if possible.

If you have more than one registration point, begin registration at all points at the same time and complete it as quickly as possible. This will help to prevent double registration as people move from place to place.
Providing for physical needs

The needs assessment has helped to identify the priority concerns of the displaced people. The registration process has given information on exact numbers and has established which families or individuals are most in need of assistance. We shall now look at the four main areas of physical need: food, water, sanitation and shelter. Medical help may also be needed: this was briefly covered under ‘First Aid’ in Chapter 2, pages 63–66. Other medical help may be possible if your church members include doctors, nurses or health workers, but it is a specialised area beyond the scope of this publication.

Food

In general, it is far better for displaced people to receive food through what is often called a ‘food for work’ programme. This involves organising those displaced people who are able-bodied to provide labour for a community project. Food rations are given at the end of the day, according to the work done. Work projects can include planting trees, building terraces, digging irrigation channels or repairing an embankment. This has a number of benefits:

- It gives displaced people more dignity than a free handout.
- The community benefits from the tangible project completed.
- It can also be used to equip displaced people with new skills and knowledge which they can use in the future.
- Carefully chosen projects may help to reduce vulnerability to future disasters (eg building flood embankments or drainage ditches).
However, there are situations where free food distribution is necessary, particularly where displaced people arrive suddenly and in large numbers, or if they are in poor health. The need for food (and water) may be very urgent. General food distribution may also be appropriate in situations where, because of war, the displaced people are cut off from their normal sources of food. Also, if rates of malnutrition are very high, some form of therapeutic or supplementary feeding may be required, especially for children.


A general rule would be to allow 500g of grain (eg sorghum, maize, millet) per person per day plus 100g of lentils (or similar) and a little cooking oil.

**Practical details**

Once registration is complete, the church leaders (or the committee running the feeding project) should communicate how the food is going to be distributed. This includes:

- the place and date of distribution
- the level of entitlement due to each person (ie the quantity of food per person)
- the process of distribution (eg using packets or measured scoops of grain).

There are different ways of managing the distribution, but the process must be done in an orderly way and be seen to be just and fair. Food is given to each woman, as the representative of her household and the primary carer of her children.

Here are some suggested steps:

1. Food unloaded from a truck should be checked and recorded.
2. Scoops (one scoop per person) should be demonstrated to beneficiaries.
3. The food sacks should be arranged in an open but secure place, so that everyone can see them.
4. A member of the church leadership or committee, or a monitor, should read each name from the register in turn. On hearing her name, each woman comes forward
and is given the amount of food due to her household. She only has to count the number of scoops to be confident that she is receiving her full entitlement.

5 The committee member or the monitor marks the register to confirm which households have received their ration.

Throughout the distribution, committee members and church leaders should monitor what happens and take any necessary action, according to agreed guidelines, to resolve difficulties.

Here are some suggested questions for those monitoring the distribution process:

- Is the registration information accurate?
- Are the registered people receiving their entitlements?
- Are the systems running smoothly?
- Are committee members and volunteers confidently and capably fulfilling their responsibilities?
- Is feedback from the people receiving food generally positive?
- Is there a good mechanism to respond to community feedback?

**Water**

This is an overview of the principles of providing water in emergency situations. It does not focus on detailed design, but outlines the planning and procedures which are necessary for ensuring adequate supply. Alongside food, shelter, sanitation and medical aid, clean water is one of the highest priorities in a disaster situation.
Emergency water: points to consider

- How much water is needed? (See table below for daily amounts.)
- Where are the nearest/most convenient sources of water?
- How can they be protected from contamination?
- How much water treatment is required before use/consumption?
- What methods are available for water treatment?
- Are there enough containers for each family to collect water?
- Can we have access to large water storage tanks or places to store water?
- Can we find ways of teaching good hygiene practices, such as handwashing after using latrines?

Basic survival water needs

The table below shows guideline figures only. It is important to note that water quantity alone is not sufficient to ensure the health of displaced people. The quality of the water, good sanitation and hygiene education and the application of this teaching are also essential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survival needs: water intake (drinking and food)</th>
<th>2.5 – 3 litres per day</th>
<th>Depends on: the climate and individual physiology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic hygiene practices</td>
<td>2 – 6 litres per day</td>
<td>Depends on: social and cultural norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic cooking needs</td>
<td>3 – 6 litres per day</td>
<td>Depends on: food type, and social as well as cultural norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total basic water needs</td>
<td>7.5 – 15 litres per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Water sources and water quality

A disaster may contaminate or destroy the local water supply. Wells may be flooded, pipework may be damaged, and springs may run dry. The problem is often made worse by shortages of water containers. Safe drinking water and the ability to carry and store it are priority concerns.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Bottled water, or water in plastic packets. This is an expensive option, but might be necessary in the first day or two.

- Water tanker deliveries. These are usually arranged by government or rented by NGOs. They can work well if deliveries are frequent enough and water containers are available. It is more effective if plastic tanks or drums or large earthen pots can also be filled up.

- Donkey carts or pick-up trucks. This method is based on water drums carried by the traditional donkey cart, or by pick-up truck if the supply is more distant.

- Alternative sources. There may be springs, wells or hand-pumps in nearby villages, but residents may not welcome the competition for water, and delivery from these sources may be reduced if increased amounts of water are used.

- Filtration or purification – this is usually done at household level, using chlorine tablets, filters or sun sterilisation (see below).

- Rainwater harvesting. If there is rainfall, it can be collected from tin roofs or by using a plastic sheet, suspended by its corners, to channel water into a container.

The church can advocate on behalf of the displaced people for a fair distribution of water in the short term, and in the long term it can encourage the setting up of more permanent water supply sources which are clean and safe.
Water treatment (surface sources)

Some of the above methods require water treatment in order to make the water suitable for drinking. Contaminated water carries disease and is a major cause of further suffering and death. If the water is clear to look at, does not smell or have an unpleasant taste, and is disinfected, it is usually acceptable in the short term, but it should be tested as soon as possible. There are a number of water treatment options to consider, some short-term, others applicable as longer-term solutions.

**INfiltration Wells**  The sand and gravel deposited along a river act as a very effective water filter. Wells dug a short distance from a river bank will usually provide better-quality water than the river itself.

**Package Water-Treatment Plants**

Package water-treatment plants are highly mechanised, self-contained units which, though small and quick to install, are expensive, and require routine maintenance by a skilled person. They have been used successfully in Turkey and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as in Mozambique after severe floods. An NGO or government agency may be able to supply these, but people must also be trained to use them properly. Package plants are really only suitable for camp situations.
**Filtration**  Slow sand filters provide one of the simplest and most reliable forms of water treatment, but they occupy large areas of land, and require careful design and maintenance.

Small volumes of drinking water, suitable for households, can be obtained from domestic filters (shown on the right) that allow water to pass through ceramic filter ‘candles’. These might be available from local markets or from an NGO.

**Disinfection**

As a final precaution to ensure that water is pure, it should be disinfected. This reduces the number of bacteria present in the water to a safe level. Disinfection is most effective in clear water, and chlorine tablets are widely available. Some of the chlorine compound should remain in the water, increasing the likelihood that the water will remain safe to drink during distribution and storage. If the water is still cloudy it can be filtered through a cloth or sand filter.

**Low-cost method of disinfection**

In countries where there is a lot of sunshine, the heat and ultra-violet (UV) light of the sun can be used to kill disease-causing organisms. This method is becoming very popular because it is cheap and simple and requires little work. Research has shown that if this method is used correctly, the treated water is as clean as boiled water. The process is called solar disinfection (SODIS).

This method requires:

- clear plastic bottles of approximately 1.5 litres (those used for bottled water are ideal)
- water that is not too cloudy.

It is important not to use glass bottles, as they do not allow enough sunlight into the water. Plastic bottles have very thin walls which allow the sunlight to reach the water. Cloudy water should be left to settle and filtered before use.

Fill a clean bottle about three-quarters full, put the top on and shake it vigorously for about 20 seconds. This ensures there is plenty of air in the water, which reacts with the sunlight to help the purification process. Then fill the bottle to the top and place
it on its side in a place where it will receive direct sunshine for several hours and where wind will not cool it. The UV light and heat kill the germs in the water.

**Water quantity and access**

Here are a few more guidelines on water quantity and access to it. Local conditions may sometimes mean a lower target.

- The average amount of water available per person (for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene) should be at least 15 litres a day. People living with HIV need a larger amount.

- The maximum distance from any household to the nearest water point should be 500m. Water points should be located in safe areas that are accessible to all, regardless of class, gender or ethnicity.

- Queuing time at a water source should not be more than 30 minutes.

- The number of people per water source depends on how much water is delivered by the tap or pump. As a rough guide, there should be:
  - People per tap: 250
  - People per open well: 400
  - People per hand pump: 500.

- It should take no more than three minutes to fill a 20 litre container. Times should be set which are convenient and safe for women and others who have responsibility for collecting water, and all users should be fully informed of when and where water is available.

- Water sources should be well maintained and protected from contamination, eg by animals or from toilets close by.
Longer-term solutions

There are many ways of addressing longer-term needs for clean water. Some of these are considered in Chapter 7: ‘Drought and food insecurity’. Usually, these methods will require input from a water engineer, who could be either a church member, a local government person or an NGO worker. Some ideas include:

- capping wells to protect them from contamination
- protecting springs by installing gravel and sand filters, with clay over the top (A)
- building a fence around water sources to exclude livestock (B)

![Cross-section of protected spring](image)

![Protected spring with fence](image)
• raising hand-pumps (attached to tube-wells) onto a platform so that they are not contaminated by flood water (C)
• catching the rain falling on the roofs of schools and churches and storing it in drums, plastic tanks or large earthen pots.

Sanitation
Sanitation is another important physical need of displaced people and is essential to their health and well-being. Sanitation is usually allocated a much lower priority than clean water, but it is just as important in controlling many of the commonest water-borne diseases. Sanitation is the efficient and safe disposal of excreta, urine and refuse. Defecation on open ground is normally the main hazard to health among displaced people, because it can contaminate water supplies. Poor hygiene practices, such as failure to wash hands, are also a major contributor to disease.

Preventing defecation in certain areas
Displaced people may not have access to toilets, and often resort to open defecation in the fields, among bushes or behind buildings. Before toilets can be arranged, defecation should be restricted to designated areas, and not allowed to contaminate water supplies or food crops. For example, defecation should not be allowed on the banks of rivers, streams, or ponds which may be used as a water source. Also, defecation should not take place near shallow wells, or near crops which are soon to be harvested.

Keeping people away from such areas may not be easy, particularly where traditional habits make such practices common. It may be necessary to construct a physical barrier, such as a fence, which may need patrolling.

Immediate measures to control open defecation should not be solely negative: it is much better to designate areas where defecation is allowed than to fence off those where it is not.
Defecation fields and trenches

Please note that defecation fields and trenches are for emergency and short-term use only, before other toilet arrangements can be made. Some cultures may find these practices unacceptable, but in other locations it might be the only option available.

Defecation fields are areas marked out with fixed boundaries which displaced people can use for toilet purposes. The use of such fields helps to restrict pollution to one place and makes it easier to manage and clean the site. They should be located carefully so that they are easily reached by the community but do not pollute water supplies or sources of food. There should be separate fields for men and for women.

The defecation field should be as large as possible and divided into strips with string and pegs. A different strip can be used each day, and the excrement covered with soil at the end of the day. The area of the field farthest from the living areas should be used first, so that people do not have to walk across contaminated ground to reach the designated area. The area should be big enough to give 0.25 square metres per person per day.

Shallow trench toilets

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to have defecation fields. In these cases, just dig a shallow trench about 30cm deep for defecation. Once it has been used a number of times, it can be filled in and another trench can be dug.
**Trench latrines**

The ideal solution is to have one toilet (or latrine) per family. However, when displaced people first arrive, the numbers and length of stay are unknown. In such situations, trench latrines used as a community toilet are the best option. They are quick, cheap and easy to construct, and can provide some privacy.

A trench latrine is a rectangular hole in the ground. The hole should be dug as deep as possible (about 2m) and may be lined with stone, brick or timber (if available) where there is danger of collapse. It may be of any convenient length, usually between 5m and 10m, and up to 80cm wide. The trench is crossed by pairs of wooden boards on which the users squat. There is a gap between the boards. Preferably, each pair of boards is separated by a simple screen to provide privacy.

In wet weather a roof is needed to prevent the trench from filling up with rainwater. A drainage ditch should be built to divert surface water. Each day, the contents of the trench should be covered by a layer of soil 10–15cm deep. This will reduce the smell and prevent flies from breeding in the trench. When the bottom of the trench has risen to within 30cm of the surface, the trench is filled in and the latrine is closed.

A trench latrine system is labour-intensive and requires regular supervision. Not only must the contents of each latrine be covered each day, but new latrines must be prepared, old ones filled in, and regularly used latrines cleaned. A poorly maintained latrine will quickly become offensive and will not be used. There must be separate latrines for males and females.
Latrines must be at least 30m from the nearest water supply and deep enough to last a minimum of two weeks. However, if the water table is high, the pits should be less deep and be changed more frequently. Walls and partitions can be made of matting or plastic sheets to allow privacy.

People also need to be able to wash their hands after using the latrines, with water and soap, if available, or clean them with ash from a cooking fire.

**Standard pit latrines**

Pit latrines are dug to a depth of up to 6m (less if the water table is high) and usually have a concrete slab placed over the hole, with footrests. There is a semi-permanent shelter around the slab. As with other toilets, they must be at least 30m from the nearest water source to prevent contamination.

**Portable toilets**

Some countries bring portable toilets into use for large social or sporting events, or in the aftermath of a disaster. This is something to follow up with local government officials who may be able to help. In urban areas this may be the most practical solution, but renting such toilets could prove expensive.

**Use of plastic sheeting in emergency sanitation**

Plastic sheeting can be used to create simple screens to ensure privacy within a trench latrine (as noted above) or to build cubicles around pit latrines. It can also be used for a simple roof. Bathing shelters can be constructed in a similar way.

The materials required are:
- solid timber or bamboo poles, 3m (6)
- plastic sheeting 6m x 3m (cut in half)
- dome-head nails (1kg) or nails and battening.
Alternative wooden frameworks for toilet/washroom, covered by plastic sheeting, are also shown.

Community mobilisation

The safe disposal of excreta is primarily the result of good supervision and management, and this can only be achieved with the full cooperation of the community. It is essential, therefore, that the community is fully consulted at every stage and that the views of both men and women are taken into account.

The location and design of toilets are very important and must be decided before work begins. Women and girls are often reluctant to use toilets if they do not feel the area is safe. This is especially true where toilets are located at the edge of a settlement or in a dark place.

Building communal toilet blocks can save materials, but it can be harder to encourage ownership and keep them clean. Aim for a minimum of one latrine for 20 people.
Questions to consider

Here are some questions for the disaster management committee to discuss if they are planning to do sanitation work:

● Why should we build and use latrines?

● Are community members fully aware of the need for adequate sanitation at all times? A community that understands the importance of good sanitation will be more likely to see the need for emergency sanitation following a disaster.

● What would be needed to encourage good hygiene (eg a place to wash hands, and cleaning arrangements for latrines)?

● In the event of a disaster, who would be responsible for deciding where the latrines should be built? How will you make sure that the location for women’s latrines is private and safe?

● Where could building materials be obtained (timber, matting for the walls, etc)?

● Who would be responsible for digging pits and constructing temporary walls?

● How can children be encouraged to use emergency latrines and be kept safe?

● What are the likely difficulties in providing emergency latrines after a disaster? How will these difficulties be overcome?

● What problems could there be in ensuring the latrine is kept clean? How could these problems be avoided?
Shelter

Another priority for displaced people arriving in a new location is likely to be shelter, or somewhere to gain protection from rain and very hot sun. In many situations, people construct rough shelters from local vegetation, according to what is available. Sometimes, community buildings are brought into use.

Consider all the buildings in your community that could be used as emergency shelters. These could include churches, mosques, offices, grain banks and schools. Shelter arrangements may be needed for animals too.

If no such buildings are available, the church may be able to obtain plastic sheeting (from government sources or from an NGO) and distribute it to people so they can make emergency shelter.

Uses of plastic sheeting

Family shelter options

• creating basic family structures
• repairing damaged buildings
• extending or strengthening tents and shelters
• creating timber-framed shelters.

Sanitation and water supply options

• building latrines
• building wash rooms
• protecting water tanks.
Infrastructure and other uses

- fencing
- repairing schools and clinics
- rainwater harvesting
- making cholera beds
- building market stalls
- storing and drying food.

Plastic sheeting combined with other building materials

In any construction, the design and materials used must be appropriate to the local skills, climate and culture. Plastic sheeting may not be the only material available for the given job. There may be other, more appropriate materials available locally.

Basic shelters can be created in rural areas from local materials such as:
- palm, banana or other leaves
- thatch or other grasses
- adobe (sun-dried brick – particularly for walls).

Shelters can be created in towns and cities from materials such as:
- waxed canvas tarpaulin
- tarred sheet (or roofing felt)
- corrugated iron (CGI)
- plywood or fibreboard.

The picture on the right illustrates the combination of plastic sheet and local materials.
The structure has stone walls, wooden boards front and back, poles supporting plastic sheeting, and grass and twigs covering the plastic sheeting to protect it from deterioration caused by sunshine.

It is important to store plastic sheeting away from the sun and rain so that it doesn’t lose its quality and effectiveness. In addition, the sheeting should be stored in a way that makes it easy to count and distribute.

Family shelter repair kit following an earthquake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roof, walls, floor</th>
<th>One or two plastic sheets, depending on damage to be covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixings</td>
<td>• nails, 5cm–12.5cm (5kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• washers (500g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• rope (20m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• metal strap to nail over and strengthen timber joints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• binding wire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Possibly distributed to the community or to share between a group of families:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• saw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Waterproof covering for a bush pole shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roof, walls, floor</th>
<th>• plastic sheeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixings</td>
<td>• rope (20m) (for fixing sheeting)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Basic framework    | • bush poles  
|                    | • strong binding wire  
|                    | • woven grass mats  
|                    | • oil/diesel for termite treatment of poles |

Grass mats tied on top of the plastic will protect it from the sun. Mats can be used for the walls instead of plastic if the sheets are too small.
A very basic plastic sheet shelter for hot climates

This type of emergency shelter (with no ends) is a last resort when no other options are possible. It should be upgraded as soon as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roof, walls, floor</th>
<th>• plastic sheeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixings</td>
<td>• rope (20m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• binding wire or nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ground pegs (metal or timber)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic framework</td>
<td>• timber or bamboo for ridge pole (4m long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2.5m uprights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Various qualities of plastic sheet are available. The UNHCR has a recommended specification for the ideal plastic sheet to be used, which has reinforced bands, edges and eyelets. Plastic should be securely anchored to the ground on each side.

**Securing plastic sheet**

When plastic sheeting is connected directly to the ground, you will need 50cm of additional sheeting on each side which should be buried in trenches. See the diagrams (right) for suggested methods.

- Tent pegs do not spread the load. There is a high risk that they will be pulled out (A).
- Dig a trench and cover the end of the plastic with earth (B).
- Wrap the plastic round the rocks and bury it (C).
- Wrap the plastic round the timber and bury it with stones (D).
CHAPTER 4: DISPLACED PEOPLE

Firebreaks

Emergency structures should be placed so that the distance between them is 2.5 times their height, to prevent the spread of fire. There should also be firebreaks at regular intervals.

Providing for spiritual needs

Pastoral and spiritual support

As well as undertaking a number of practical tasks as described above, the church can provide pastoral and spiritual support. This can use the gifts and skills of church members who may not have the strength or physical capacity to undertake some of the heavier tasks.

Church members can meet with individuals and families who have been emotionally upset. They can listen and help them to share their experiences and, if appropriate, they can pray with them.

‘To listen to someone and their pain is one of the greatest acts of healing a Christian can do.’ (Anonymous)
Grieving

Here are some tips for supporting people who are grieving:

- Allow them to share their sadness and their memories of the person they have lost.
- Do not try to advise them or instruct them about what they should feel or do.
- Do not share your own experiences of grief.
- If appropriate, share relevant Bible passages.
- Offer to pray with them.

Here are some suggested Bible passages for use with bereaved Christians:


Sunday worship

The displaced people may include groups of Christians who would value an opportunity to worship together. The church may be able to welcome displaced people (if from outside) or allow its building to be used for separate services. This opportunity is important for spiritual comfort, and it also helps to restore some structure to the lives of the displaced people.

Sharing our resources

In some situations church members may be able to supply additional resources from their own homes to support the needs of displaced people. This is most likely where there are not many displaced people and therefore it is practically possible to share resources. These resources could include food, water,
blankets, cooking pots and clothes. In situations where there is an influx of displaced people into a town or city, the church members can befriend individuals and families in their own homes and church buildings.

**Burials**

The church can organise funerals and burials. This can mean anything from leading the service through to the practical tasks of supplying coffins, marking out burial grounds and digging graves. For those who are mourning the loss of loved ones, it is important to be able to bury their dead in a culturally and spiritually appropriate way.

**Helping children in post-disaster situations**

Almost 750,000 children are caught up in disasters annually and can be greatly upset by the experience of being displaced, losing loved ones and friends. The church can act to ensure the safety of children, and to help them to come to terms with their experience. In order to restore some regularity to the lives of these children, churches can offer ‘children’s club’ activities which help to rebuild their ability to play together, and to regain their sense of hope and social well-being. Clubs also provide them with an opportunity to learn, for example, about health. This will be especially important in situations where children have been separated from their families. In areas of frequent disaster, the church could consider having a small team of people trained to do counselling with children in a safe and supportive way.
Children who are severely traumatised may find it difficult to express – or even name – their feelings. This drawing exercise may help:

1. Give each child a large piece of paper and some coloured crayons. Invite them to draw a picture of their journey to where they are now and the experiences they had along the way, including times of fear.

2. When there are enough trained counsellors available, take time with each child to talk about what they have drawn and what they felt in each situation. Discussion in a bigger, open group will be too distressing for many of the children, so small groups are best. Ensure that counsellors allow children to discuss deeper feelings at their own speed.

3. In some situations where children have lost parents or close relatives, it may be appropriate to assemble a ‘memory box’ of all the things they appreciated about the person they have lost. When a child misses that special person, they can feel close to them when they open the box.

Children’s clubs in Haiti

In the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, Tearfund set up around 70 children’s clubs around Léogâne, some in association with local churches. One of them was led by sisters Françoise and Monette. They had 130 pupils aged from three to 14, two or three times a week.

They taught the children songs about healthcare and disease prevention and provided a safe place where children could be children again in the midst of the hardship. Françoise and Monette’s enthusiasm for the club and passion for children’s education made an enormous difference; the club became one of the most exciting places to be for the children of Gressier. It helped them to cope with the trauma of the earthquake and to learn important messages about health.
Child protection

In today’s world, there are people who try to exploit and abuse children, often targeting those who are vulnerable after a disaster. Children separated from their families are at risk of being abducted, trafficked, exploited or harmed.

Churches may be able to create ‘safe places’ for such children, in either urban or rural locations. They can ensure such children are looked after, given protection from people who wish to harm them (‘predators’), and where possible reunited with and reintegrated into their wider family. It’s important that churches have child protection policies and procedures in place to ensure that churches create a safe place for vulnerable children. (Refer to Tearfund’s Child Protection Policy for help: http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Child+development/Child+Protection+Policy.htm)

Restoring the environment

In an emergency, basic human needs have to be met, but the environment must be treated carefully. If displaced people overuse an area’s natural resources, it can cause serious damage and prevent long-term recovery. The picture shows bad practice!

If the displacement will last for some weeks, it is useful to make some assessment of the potential impact of displaced people on the environment. In particular, this means looking at the impact on local forests (if displaced people collect firewood and building materials), on pasture land (from grazing of animals), and on water sources. Once this assessment is made, the church, together with community leaders, can plan how these resources can be rationed or used or replenished in a way that does not permanently damage the environment.

Once the initial emergency phase has passed, a more detailed environmental impact assessment should be done, so that local resources – trees, water, pasture etc – can be well managed. (See Tearfund publication Environmental Assessment.) The assessment may result in the adaptation of some activities to make them ‘kinder’ to
the environment. For example, cement-stabilised mud blocks could be used instead of wood-fired burnt bricks.

The church may be able to help restore some areas of land by setting up tree nurseries or community tree plantations, which can improve the soil and reduce further soil erosion. This can be done during the crisis or after it, as part of rehabilitating the land.

**Case study**

The suggested code of conduct for churches on page 99 indicated that assistance should be given regardless of race, belief, gender or nationality. Here is an example of a situation where people from two religious groups helped each other in times of need, and helped to build long-term good relationships between the communities:

**Working together**

In northern Kenya, on the Ethiopian border, there was a community that regularly suffered severe droughts. The local Anglican church, with support from a Kenyan NGO, frequently coordinated food distributions for the whole area. This included a large number of Muslim communities. This action created good relationships with the Muslim community and led to a number of small projects to improve food security which they did together.

One year the Muslims received food aid from an Islamic relief agency which instructed the community that they should only distribute the food to Muslims. However, because of the good relationships between the two faith groups, the local Muslim community made sure that all the non-Muslims got the same amount of food as they did.
BIBLE STUDY


Background

The Good Samaritan is a story about dealing with prejudice. Jesus presents his listeners with a story of one individual's kindness to another person. The victim in the story is a Jew; the hero is a Samaritan. There were bad relationships between these two groups. His listeners would have been shocked and challenged because the Samaritan was showing kindness to a Jew.

Key points

• Jesus used the story to highlight the need for us to rise above prejudice and show compassion for those different to ourselves. He makes it clear that the command to 'love your neighbour' still applies, however great the historical, cultural, ethnic or religious differences may be.

Questions

1  Explore the reactions of the people in the story. Why did they do the things they did?

2  Why do we sometimes walk by on the other side (ie ignore the needs of others)?

3  How might this incident have changed the traveller's life?

4  Can you think of any similar examples that might occur in your community after a disaster?

5  In what ways do we, as a church community, feel and express prejudice? Are there subtle ways in which we are excluding people?

6  In what ways can churches ensure there is a fair and equal distribution of aid to beneficiaries who represent a number of different faiths and ethnic groups?

7  What challenges face churches if they work alongside other faith groups, and how could these challenges be addressed so that they could work together effectively?
Review of this chapter

- What are the causes of people being displaced?
- What are some of the problems displaced people face in a new area?
- Why is the adapted Red Cross Code of Conduct for churches important?
- Why is it important to do an initial assessment of needs when people arrive?
- What are some of the challenges in registering displaced people? How can these be addressed?
- Why is food for work a better approach than free food distribution?
- In what circumstances is free food distribution the only option?
- In providing food, water, sanitation and shelter, how should women be included in the planning and implementation of activities?
- What types of materials can be used for building temporary shelter?
- How many different ways can you use a plastic sheet?
- Name some ways in which the church can help children to deal with trauma and grief, and protect them from abuse and exploitation?
- How can the church help to protect the environment after a disaster? What are the environmental factors to consider when providing water, choosing a location for toilets and constructing buildings?