

Protection of children in emergency shelters

*A practical guide for people living and
working in temporary shelters*



Save the Children
UK

Children are always at risk of abuse and neglect. During disasters this risk is increased, so we must be even more alert to children's needs.

All people staying in the shelter should be treated with equal dignity and respect.

GENERAL ISSUES

Do... Discuss child abuse and protection related issues with children and adults regularly.

Do... Give special care and attention to unaccompanied children to gain as much information as possible about them, and try to arrange reunification with their families where possible.

Do... Provide games and recreation facilities for children.

Do... Arrange common living spaces for all members of a family to stay closer, if possible.

Do... Adolescent girls should be allowed safe place to stay with whomever she feels secure and comfortable (e.g. with mothers) and should also be provided a separate and restricted place to ensure their privacy (e.g. maintaining menstruation hygiene).

Do... Ensure separate sanitation and bathing arrangements for women and men.

Do... Restrict entrance of unknown people into the shelter centre to help prevent children being enticed by strangers to go out of the centre, and also discuss with the children about the potential dangers of going off with strangers.

Do... Create a child-friendly environment where children would feel encouraged to openly share any problems and voice their concerns.

Do... Discuss with children potential risks of accidents (e.g. fire, candles, matches, kerosene stoves, open roofs and railings, electrical switches and wires etc) and try to keep these out of their reach if possible.

Do... Arrange adequate and adjustable light where possible.

Do... Arrange the display of emergency contacts and phone numbers.

Don't... Keep children at risk of sexual abuse.

Don't... Commit or even tolerate any kind of child abuse, including physical abuse, psychological abuse or neglect.

Don't... Use children for political purposes.



HEALTH

Do... Arrange regular health check-up of the shelter-dwellers by health workers.

Do... Follow the essential drug list suggested by World Health Organisation when prescribing treatment and medication to the shelter-dwellers, including children and also patiently explain the dosages and directions of use of the distributed drugs



Do... Use soap containing carbolic acid to control snakes. Also make arrangements for immediate transportation of snake-bitten dwellers to proper medical facilities and ensure display of the list and address of such medical facilities in the shelter.

Do... Promote cleanliness and hygiene in the shelters through

- o advising people to properly wash and clean old clothes received as aid before using them;
- o providing water and soap containing carbolic acid or Neem for people to wash their hands and feet before entering the centre;
- o ensuring proper littering, especially disposal of used sanitary napkins and children excreta.

Do... Arrange TT vaccinations and other antenatal facilities for ensuring safe delivery of the pregnant women.

Do... Make necessary arrangements to control diarrhoea, worms and scabies.

Do... Make arrangements to control insects and mosquitoes through using mosquito nets, tarpaulins where possible, but staying away from burning coil and spraying insecticides to the most extent possible as those can be harmful to children.

Do... Make sure that relief items are gender appropriate and specific to their needs (e.g. sanitary napkins be provided to women and girl for their use in menstruation).

Don't... distribute medicine without advice from a registered doctor.

Don't... accept donations of medicine that are out-of-date.

FOOD

Do... Arrange safe and pure drinking water and safe in-date food (e.g. biscuits, blended food etc).

Do... Arrange at least 3 meals daily for all the children depending on their age, health and needs.

Do... Give children priority during food distribution.

Do... Consider appropriateness of aid items before accepting donations. For example, companies may seek to donate nearly out-of-date/expired food items (e.g. milk powder) for children. Again powder milk, if provided, would require clean water and cooking utensils to prepare.

Do... Notify the shelter authority of any relief package being received beyond their knowledge

Don't... Take photographs of food distribution for publicity

Don't... Delay food distribution and keep the people standing in queues for undue formalities

ATTITUDE

Do... Treat people residing in the shelter as respected citizens.

Do... Consult the shelter-dwellers about the appropriate time to close down the centre and make them return to their homes. Do not necessarily use a 'first come, first go' policy as the low-lying areas that get inundated first by flood water would often be the places where flood clear up last.

Don't... Discriminate between any children at the centre (e.g. between registered and non-registered children, group and non-group members).



MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

Do... Maintain and regularly update records of the name, age and sex of all people staying in the shelter.

Do... Give particular attention to the children with disabilities and special needs to make their comfort a priority.

Do... Share centre-related information with the residents including children, e.g.

- o the rules of the centre;
- o the times of food distribution;
- o the schedule of how long the centre is planning to stay open and when it will be closed down.

Do... Try to establish a routine for the children with regular meal times, structured play times, bed times etc.

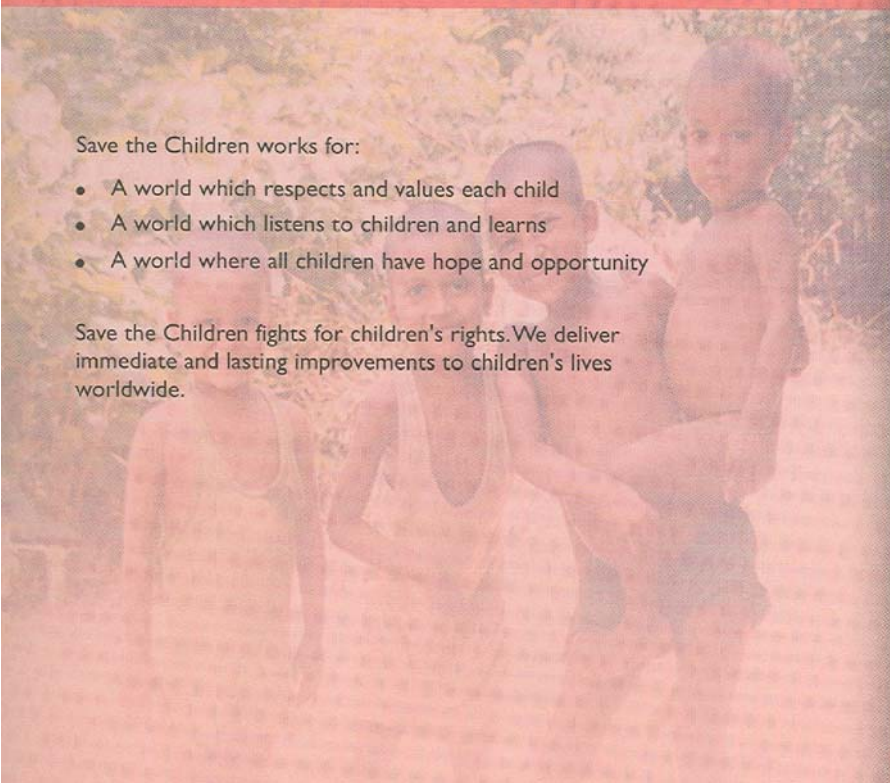
Do... Form a children's committee to ensure their participation in the management of the centre and relief distribution.

Do... Arrange for poultry and livestock to be kept in a place distant from where children are staying.

Do... Give the people option to keep windows and doors open or closed as needed.

Don't... Make children carry out any hazardous or strenuous work (e.g. cooking, going outside the shelter to get water, cigarettes etc). It should be borne in mind that children are not servants of the adults.





Save the Children works for:

- A world which respects and values each child
- A world which listens to children and learns
- A world where all children have hope and opportunity

Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

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