

Remember and assist: Do not forget the groups that cannot keep distance

What all previous campaigns (SDG 6.2., 5 year drive for sanitation, etc.) could so far not “fix”, might now finally get priority?

The standards for refugee camps, agreed by agencies responding to humanitarian crises, were simply not designed to cope with a global pandemic <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>. They state that there should be one tap for no more than 250 people and 3.5 square meters of living space per person. A far cry away from 1 toilet per household and 1,5 meter distance.

And what about people living in slums? Shelters and Settlements? Migrant workers that live with too many people in small spaces and cannot go anywhere and probably also have no income?

Malnutrition and diseases like dysentery, cholera and typhoid are already a high risk, the COVID-19 comes on top of that.

Women are usually hardest hit during emergencies because they carry out most of the care work and are hence more vulnerable to exposure to the virus.

“While many nations are understandably focused on containing the spread of the pandemic among their own population, it’s crucial they don’t turn their back on millions of the most vulnerable people worldwide. The international community needs to mobilize huge resources behind developing countries to cope if we’re to honor the promise of “no-one is safe until we’re all safe”. (Oxfam and others). It’s important for them and important for us.

Read the responses and ideas from UNHCR:

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2020/3/5e7dab2c4/qa-access-health-services-key-halting-covid-19-saving-refugee-lives.html>

What all previous campaigns (SDG 6.2., 5 year drive for sanitation, etc.) could not “fix”, might now finally get priority because of the COVID-19 virus: provision of safe drinking water, toilets, hygiene products like soap, enough personal space, for all.

Now we finally seem to start understanding that **investing in water and sanitation is not a luxury but a necessity**. Again, the current situation makes the point that these basic services are important for and to all.

What can women’s organizations do? A few suggestions:

- make information available via email, flyers, etc. in local languages (translate) and using visuals
- provide training on hygiene and handwashing (repeat!)
- provide technical information to women how to build their own (eco-) toilet
- scale up soap production if your organization does that and provide also outside the direct community
- financially support local and international organisations that try to reach the most vulnerable women especially those in camps, etc.
- ask local refugee / migrants camps what they need/ how you can help
- look in your drawers and closets and donate protective material (distribution can be done by the coordinating agencies in country)
- figure out a mechanism to collect food and get it distributed locally or by one or two “middle” women to the local market

See also this overview published by our friends from WECF:

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and Huairou Commission:

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And the facts and figures published by UN Women – to remind us all even on the situation where life was still business as usual: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>