



## Guidelines for:

# Adaptation of dignity kits & revision of distribution standards for risk mitigation during COVID-19 pandemic



Prepared by:  
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Image above: Santosh/UNFPA Nepal

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Many countries are taking strict measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 with lockdowns, curfews, and closure of public spaces and services. As a result of stress and uncertainty caused by these strict measures, women and girls are at even greater risk of violence at a time when their access to services is further reduced. With many people's livelihoods and incomes significantly affected, together with movement restrictions, basic hygiene and menstruation items are unlikely to be prioritised.

Distribution of culturally relevant dignity kits with additional items for the COVID-19 context can be highly valuable in reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to violence and to connect women and girls to GBV related information and response services, especially as these may have changed since the COVID-19 outbreak. Provision of much needed supplies in dignity kits will enable women and girls to use their limited resources to purchase other important items needed in an emergency, such as food, and facilitate their mobility to access services.<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the context where vulnerable populations, including women and girls, are placed in imposed collective settlements aimed at reducing transmission of COVID-19, provision of dignity kits with essential hygiene items along with information on GBV services becomes extremely crucial and lifesaving.

While distribution of dignity kits are typically part of more comprehensive GBV programming, dignity kit distribution may also be undertaken as an acute emergency response activity. Indeed the COVID-19 environment may exacerbate immediate/acute needs for underserved communities and women and adolescent girls at increased risk of GBV due to heightened barriers to access to basic services or necessities.

This guidance note provides inputs on adaptation of the contents of the kits to the COVID-19 context as well information on mitigating risk of spread of infection during dissemination. This is a living document that will be updated as new information and promising practices emerge.

## Contents of the dignity kits

Dignity kits typically contain standard hygiene items such as sanitary napkins, hand soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and underwear.<sup>2</sup> Kits may also include items that can help to mitigate GBV risks such as radios to access information, flashlights, and whistles. The content of the kits should be tailored to the local context and include culturally relevant and appropriate items.

To further customise dignity kits to specific vulnerable groups, it is recommended to explore opportunities for remote consultations with target communities and/or with organisations representing these communities, such as adolescent girls clubs, disabled persons and elderly women's organisations, and transgender community organisations, where possible. This is recommended because the hygiene needs of affected populations and context-specific items may have changed since the outbreak.

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1 Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, UNFPA, [www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL\\_.ENG\\_.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL_.ENG_.pdf)

2 Ibid.





Image: Tomoko Kurokawa/UNFPA

## Suggested additional items

Given the urgent need for hygiene items as well as crucial information on GBV response services in the current context of COVID-19, the following items can be considered for addition to the existing dignity kit contents:<sup>3</sup>

- Reusable cloth sanitary pads, where possible
- Additional antibacterial soaps
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser
- Baby-safe antibacterial wipes
- Laundry soap
- SIM cards or mobile phone credit for women and girls to access hotlines and phone-based GBV response services
- Chamberpots and privacy shields for women in lockdown where latrines are not accessible or are risky

For more information on specifications of core items for procurement purposes as well as safe procurement during COVID-19, please refer to *UNFPA Guidance Note on Key Gender-Based Violence Supply Operational Considerations in COVID-19*, April 2020.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, masks are only for people who are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, caregivers of people with COVID-19, and health workers. Thus, blanket distribution of masks as part of dignity kits is not recommended.

It is important to ensure proper labelling and messaging related to safety to avoid misuse of items (e.g. alcohol based hand sanitisers are for external use only, and must be kept away from eyes, mouth, and open wounds).

<sup>3</sup> For specifications on each of these additional items, please refer to *Key Gender-Based Violence Supply Operational Considerations in COVID-19* developed by UNFPA Humanitarian Office, April 2020

## Adapted messaging to include in dignity kits

As dignity kits and their distribution serve as an entry point to engage with women and girls, it is essential to include life-saving information on available SRH and GBV response services: what services are available; when, where, and how to access them.

Information for inclusion in the dignity kits should be accessible to the target population by translating it into local languages, making it available in multiple formats (disability inclusive, oral), and taking into account literacy levels and other information access issues. In addition, there should be consideration to include general COVID-19 messages, in consultation with national health partners (e.g. Ministry of Health, health cluster), on infection and respiratory precautions to prevent person-to-person transmission.

### **Examples of COVID-19 messages based on WHO recommendations are below, which can be selected and adapted to both the local context and the contents of the dignity kits:**

- Wash hands often with soap and water, particularly before eating and after using the toilet
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol based hand sanitiser
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects
- Cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing; dispose of the used tissue immediately
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 meters between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Avoid crowded areas, such as markets
- If you feel unwell with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, stay at home until you recover to avoid contact with others
- If you have fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention early

## Operational recommendations for dignity kit distribution

While ensuring provision of dignity kits and critical SRH and GBV information to women and girls is an important part of the COVID-19 response, maintaining the health and wellbeing of frontline workers by reducing transmission risk remains a key priority. There are a number of operational considerations to take into account when planning and implementing new ways of working for GBV prevention, mitigation, and response, including for dignity kit distribution.





### **Operational recommendations for dignity kit distribution: key points**

- Dignity kits should not be distributed through a large gathering or a line-up of people. If a line-up of people is absolutely necessary, ensure the recommended physical distancing of 2 meters.
- Strategies such as staggering of distribution times may be implemented to avoid large congregations of people.
- House-to-house may be an alternative if conducted in coordination with local health or social welfare authorities.
- Prior to the distribution, communication materials need to be prepared and widely disseminated, including in multiple accessible formats (oral, sign language, easy-to-read/plain language) to inform the communities about the timing and location of the distribution, guidance on distribution procedures, contents of the kits and their intended use. Where Community Engagement Working Groups exist, consult with them to identify what forms of communication would meet the needs of the target population.

## Risk mitigation actions for dignity kit distribution

In addition, following are recommended risk mitigation actions for dignity kit distribution adapted from IASC Interim Guidance for Adjusting Food Distribution Standard Operating Procedures in the context of the COVID-19 Outbreak:<sup>4</sup>



### 1. Educate and train all staff involved in distribution of dignity kits, including administrative and cleaning staff, on basic infection protocols and respiratory hygiene

- Determine the minimum number of staffing required to conduct the dignity kit distribution and GBV information dissemination activities.
- Conduct proper education on the WHO recommended and nationally adopted infection prevention and control protocols.
- Ensure that there is a referral pathway for women and girls who may present with fevers and or respiratory symptoms who warrant further medical investigation and/or treatment.
- Ensure thorough cleaning of surfaces with a disinfectant before and after the distribution activities.
- All distribution personnel should follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering their mouth and nose with bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, and disposing of the used tissue immediately.
- Ensure adequate provision of disposal bins for used tissues.
- Ensure proper training of cleaning staff to safely dispose of trash.
- Equip all personnel engaged in distribution of dignity kits with masks. For personnel involved in cleaning and clearing the space, provide gloves in addition to masks.

<sup>4</sup> Interim Recommendations for Adjusting Food Distribution Standard Operating Procedures in the Context of the COVID-19 Outbreak, IASC, March 2020 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/74753.pdf>

Image: Tashiya DeMel/UNFPA Sri Lanka



## Risk mitigation actions for dignity kit distribution, continued



### 2. Organise and clearly mark the allocated spaces at the distribution site

- Establish a reception point, verification point, collection point, and exit that ensures one-way traffic flow and allows for personal space of at least 2 meters between each recipient of dignity kits, in line with physical distancing measures.
- Ensure that there are clearly marked entrance and exit points, and that they are accessible to women with disabilities in the distribution area.



### 3. Facilitate individual health screenings, where possible

- Allocate an area at the entrance for body temperature checks by health officials, where possible.
- Allocate adequate areas for women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, and other vulnerable groups after health screening/body temperature checks in order to prioritize distribution and minimise exposure.
- Establish sheltered/covered areas for women and girls who do not receive clearance at the health screening/body temperature check point. The allocated area should be spacious enough to allow women and girls to sit/stand at least 2 meters apart from each other.

Images this page: Santosh/UNFPA Nepal  
Top image p. 7: Jacqueline Macou from Pixabay  
Bottom image p. 7: Santosh/UNFPA Nepal  
Image p. 8: Munira Mutaheer/UNFPA Sri Lanka

## Risk mitigation actions for dignity kit distribution, continued



### 4. Ensure adequate facilities for handwashing

- Set up handwashing areas with an adequate supply of soap and water, preferably at the entrance as well as at the exit of the distribution site. If soap is not available, alcohol based hand sanitisers should be provided.
- Each handwashing station must have the “How to Handrub” guidance poster that meets WHO standards to ensure that the community is learning and engaging in effective handwashing.
- All distribution personnel must routinely wash their hands (frequently, and especially when visibly dirty) in the handwashing stations provided.
- All women or girls receiving a dignity kit must be encouraged to wash their hands prior to and after receiving the kit, in an effort to maintain basic hygiene and engage the community in the habit of routine handwashing.



### 5. Encourage all distribution personnel, as well as women and girls receiving dignity kits, to follow physical distancing protocols

- To ensure safety of those receiving the kits and the safety of the distribution personnel, there should be minimal or no physical contact during distribution of kits – while also maintaining physical distancing of at least 2 meters.
- When handing over the kit to the woman or girl, explain to them that in an effort to prevent any spread of COVID-19 or the ‘coronavirus,’ you will limit the contact with the person and will place the kit on an accessible surface for the person to collect.
- Wait until the person understands, or until any questions they might have are answered.
- Place the kit on the ground or a surface where it is accessible for them to receive it.





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## Additional resources

- Key Gender Based Violence Supply Operational Considerations in COVID-19, UNFPA, April 2020.
- Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, UNFPA, 2015 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL\\_.ENG\\_.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL_.ENG_.pdf)
- Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, IASC, 2019 <https://www.unfpa.org/minimum-standards>
- IASC Interim Guidance for Adjusting Food Distribution Standard Operating Procedures in the context of the COVID-19 Outbreak
- IASC GBV Pocket Guide, "How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area" [https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GBV\\_PocketGuide021718.pdf](https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GBV_PocketGuide021718.pdf)