



SANITATION, LIGHTING AND WOMEN'S SAFETY IN SOUTH SUDAN

Lighting, sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence

Case study 7: South Sudan, Malakal

What type of lighting was installed, when, where and why?

In 2014, Oxfam installed solar lights in Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and later distributed handheld solar lights to individual households.

The solar lamps were installed around the latrines in Malakal PoC following a rapid GBV assessment which found that latrines were particularly unsafe for women, with camp leaders even banning women and girls from accessing the latrines after dark to prevent them from being assaulted. Almost everyone included in the rapid assessment was aware of cases of rape happening in or around the latrines. Women and girls also reported being touched, watched and accosted in the latrines after dark.

Oxfam also distributed d.light solar lamps to 6,400 households for household usage, and trained recipients on how to use and maintain them.



Malakal PoC, South Sudan. Photo: Simon Rawles/Oxfam.

Did the distribution/installation of lighting affect perceptions of safety, particularly in relation to GBV?

The installation of lights around the sanitation facilities reportedly increased women's perceived risk of GBV, as lighting acted as a draw for men from around the camp to congregate, given that no other



Oxfam distribution of solar lamps. Photo: Martin Lubang.

lights were installed anywhere else in the camp. As such, men wanting to socialize after dark, play cards or drink alcohol would do so outside the latrines – and women and girls had to go past them to get to the latrines, which was considered culturally unacceptable. As a result of these findings, additional lighting was installed in other areas around the camp.

During the post-distribution monitoring, when respondents were asked whether they use the

handheld solar lamp for accessing sanitation facilities at night, 83% said yes. Those who said that they do not use the solar lamp reported that they use a torch because they do not want to leave their household members in darkness, while others said that they prefer keeping the solar lamp in the tent because it is big. Some respondents, especially women, said that they feared being followed by men when they carry the solar lamp.

Respondents were also asked whether they think the solar lamps have contributed to their safety when accessing sanitation facilities after dark: 72% said yes, and said that the solar lamp has provided them with adequate light to see people who hide in the toilets and bathing units. Some respondents also said that the solar lamps have reduced incidences of attempted theft, especially at night. Many mothers reported that with the solar lamp now they feel comfortable leaving their children alone after dark and can go about other household duties.

Any other observations related to WASH, GBV or lighting

The fixed solar lights were installed at a very high level to try to prevent people from stealing the solar panels; however, this meant that they were difficult to maintain. As a result, solar panels became covered in dust and stopped functioning. However, once the community members were engaged in the maintenance of solar panels, the lighting was more consistent. Community feedback included a request for Oxfam to train a local person to fix solar lamps that are damaged, either on a shared-cost basis or with Oxfam assuming all the costs. Feedback showed that there was a strong desire among households for torches instead of large solar lanterns, with people saying that these would be lighter to carry than the d.light solar lamp.

The community offered a number of suggestions to improve the safety of latrines, including more space between male and female latrines. They also requested lamp posts, especially around the latrines and water points, and the assignment of security guards to the latrines after dark. In addition, community members asked for a higher UN police presence on the main road; for UN police to patrol deeper inside the PoC, away from the main roads; and requested UN police who could speak the local language. They also asked for community protection monitors in the area.



Oxfam staff demonstrate how to use the solar lamps. Photo: Martin Lubang.

The community also suggested that they be consulted on the placement of lamp posts, to help identify the areas with the highest risk. Public spaces and activities which allowed people to mingle, establish trust, strengthen social networks, mobilize collective action and protect each other more easily were also suggested methods of mitigating risks of GBV. Community members repeatedly cited the need for activities for young men, in order to mitigate the risk of GBV against women and girls around latrines.

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