

# TIP SHEET 2: HOUSEHOLD AND INDIVIDUAL LIGHTING, GENDER AND SAFETY IN EMERGENCIES

Based on research and recommendations summarized in *Shining a Light: How lighting in or around sanitation facilities affects the risk of GBV in camps*<sup>1</sup>, this tip sheet explores the risks of inadequate lighting, methods to promote gender sensitive approaches, technical and procurement considerations, and outlines a community-based approach to delivering public lighting interventions.

## 1 INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LIGHTING RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Access to and control over lighting is gendered:** Oxfam has found that, even where solar-powered lamps were distributed to all households, women had less access than men, and women were more likely to be using low-tech and unsafe lighting, such as candles and burning grass. Power dynamics within the household affect who has access to which lighting options and at what times. Competing needs in cooking areas, shelters, mobile phone charging and movement around the camp combine with household power dynamics to the detriment of women, girls and others who may be marginalized within the household such as elderly and disabled people.

**Different social groups have different needs:** Consultation is important to understand people's needs for household and individual lighting, as a blanket 'one-size-fits-all' approach can be dysfunctional and cause unintended negative consequences.

**Work with women, and girls, and vulnerable groups because the specific risks groups face lead to specific lighting needs:** Conducting consultations with different social groups will reveal specific risks (e.g. fear of assault or injury in using latrines after dark) and indicate additional needs that a lighting solution may be able to address. By checking what portable lights are available in local markets, there may be options to purchase lights with additional functions.

**Always provide a minimum of two devices per household, consulting on what type of devices are preferred:** For instance, inclusion of USB chargers or radios is often popular, but can have gendered impacts as men are more likely to own mobile phones that require charging, and so monopolize devices. One woman in Umugo camp, Uganda, explained how she and her children were without light for several days when her husband took their solar lamp with him on a trip to a nearby town because it had a phone charger function. However, mobile phones are also an important source of light, particularly for men, so providing a lamp with a charger port can increase a household's overall lighting devices. Additionally, multi-functional devices can provide women and others with an opportunity to earn a small income charging other community members' phones, thereby reducing their vulnerability to exploitation overall. In Uganda a single mother with four young children received a light with a charger port and was able to earn a small income by charging other people's phones. For her, and other women in a similar position, this ability to earn cash safely meant she could afford to buy essentials for her family, thereby reducing her vulnerability to exploitation.

### PORTABLE OPTIONS

Lanterns or lamps can be hung up to light a shelter and give general ambient light, or used on high power for specific tasks (e.g. reading or cooking). They should be robust, water resistant and have energy-saving settings. Integrated mobile phone chargers are popular.



Torches should be light and portable with a directional beam to facilitate movement. Hands-free is useful; and the ability to be hung up, energy-saving settings, water resistance/waterproofing and integrated phone chargers are popular.



**Lebanon<sup>2</sup>:** Oxfam's protection programme supports Syrian refugees to create Peer Groups that act as representatives for their community or settlement and run community meetings, speak in public, develop relationships with local authorities and NGOs, facilitate community meetings and implement community action plans. Refugee Peer Groups in the informal settlements in the Bekaa Valley found that some elderly people with reduced vision struggled to access latrines or use water tanks after dark, and fears of GBV were common among the wider community. Waterproof portable lights were provided to all households – women in particular reported feeling far safer going out after dark as a result.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Assess what lighting sources already exist, who has access to and control over them, and how sustainable and reliable they are, taking gender and power dynamics into account.** Consider household size and the needs of different individuals for different purposes, to determine the quantity and specification of lighting devices that would ensure everyone has access when needed.
- **Provide a minimum of two lighting items per household** to increase access to lighting for all household members, addressing intra-household inequalities.
- **Work with communities** to test and decide on models, durability, running costs, warranties, user preferences (e.g. portability, brightness, size/weight), and functions. Select solutions that minimize unequal access.
- **Sustainable solutions:** Solar-powered solutions are more environmentally friendly and can reduce onward costs to the family (e.g. replacement batteries incur expense and require the ability to access local markets safely, and safe disposal facilities).
- **Prioritize safety:** The key focus for lighting solutions must always be personal safety, with priority given to the most vulnerable. Planning lighting should always be driven by safety concerns, and especially those of women and girls.
- **Market-based cash approaches offer more dignified and appropriate lighting solutions** for individuals and families, and should be used wherever possible as it gives people the choice to select products that suit their household needs.
- **Remember!** Lighting solutions should still be combined with other social empowerment and awareness-raising activities (see Tip Sheet 1).

**Remember!** Identify target groups carefully: Only providing lights to vulnerable people could make them a target for robbery, as they could be easily seen in an unlit settlement.

**Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>:** Two solar lights were distributed to each Rohingya household in the camps in Cox's Bazar. If the men were out with the torch, the women would use the lantern to go to the latrines or bathing areas, or to help a child or elderly relative do so. Having both lights had undoubtedly made people's lives easier. As one woman concluded, *'Having two lights means there is less discussion about priority.'*

### Case study: Market-based lighting for refugees and host communities in Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>

Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh hosts close to one million Rohingya refugees, the majority of whom fled a violent military crackdown in Myanmar in August 2017. They live in a series of sprawling camps and within host communities. As one of the poorest regions of Bangladesh, many households in the host community are also extremely vulnerable, yet their needs were largely overlooked in the initial stages of the humanitarian response. Oxfam undertook a household survey and found that there were many reasons why families may need light in the evening. They were commonalities among refugees and host communities around socially conservative gender norms limiting women's mobility, particularly being seen by unfamiliar men (the practice of 'purdah' prevents many Rohingya women from moving beyond the vicinity of their shelter). As a result, many women waited until dark to use sanitation facilities, navigating the often steep and slippery pathways in poor light and the lack of lighting was identified as the number one safety concern during Oxfam's 'Rapid Protection, Food Security and Market Assessment.

Local markets were functioning and accessible, but refugee and vulnerable host community households lacked the purchasing power to buy solar-powered lights. Oxfam conducted a market assessment to understand supply lines, trader capacity, household preferences and traders' willingness to engage in a humanitarian programme. Traders were overwhelmingly interested in participating; they had been dismayed at the effect of the refugee influx on local markets, as NGOs were distributing huge amounts of goods and circumventing their shops. Most traders were not connected to suppliers of high-quality solar lights, but were willing to be. Furthermore, many were wary of the Rohingya refugees, calling them 'antisocial' or 'criminals', and many felt that all assistance was going to them. In reality, however, many had neither met nor served any refugees.

Following demand for multiple lights and drawing on lessons from Oxfam's global research, each household received a commodity voucher for high-quality solar lights available in-country (either a d.light S30 or Sun King Pico), plus additional vouchers to buy a selection of three lower-quality lights, which traders were able to access via existing suppliers. Prices and volumes were negotiated with traders, who were then trained in Oxfam's best practice, safeguarding/PSEA<sup>5</sup> and Safe Programming. The high-quality lights came under warranty, and the producer even set up a satellite office in the local town to ensure they could fix products swiftly for both host and refugee communities.

*Further examples of delivery modalities – distributions, market-based, public service delivery and 'enabling environment interventions' – can be found in the EEMRG Inclusive Energy Handbook.<sup>6</sup>*

*'We cover the batteries under the warranty for repair/replacement, but we don't cover damage or theft. The warranty lasts for two years – after that time we would certainly continue to support, but there would need to be some payment for that. I give discounts! And we would be willing to give more training to refugees to replace parts, which are available in the market.'*

- Md Mahamudul Karim, Chairman of Solar Lighting Company, Cox's Bazar

## 2 TECHNICAL AND PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 1. Specifications:** Although it is hard to provide recommendations on products before testing them on the ground, humanitarian agencies are encouraged to use comparable specifications for lamps and torches (including all components) to ensure equal quality across sites. The [Lighting Global Quality Standard](#)<sup>7</sup> provides a list of products on their website that have been shown to meet their quality standards, so can be used as a reference on preferred standards for local suppliers in the tendering process.
- 2. Warranties:** It is advised that contracts with suppliers include 1–2 year maintenance and repair warranties (with agreed response times from the first report of an issue; clarity on the extent of warranties; and assured security of the supply chain for spare parts).
- 3. Consumer engagement:** When distributing portable lights, ensure that people know how to use all the functions, the most effective way to conserve battery power and how to use the warranty. Additionally ensure the consumer/community know how to activate the warranties, coordinate direct communication between supplier and the consumer (either through lighting maintenance groups as explained in Tip Sheet 1) or identify point people in the community who can coordinate with the companies to organize ‘repair days’ for faulty portable lights.
- 4. Safeguarding and PSEA:** Train suppliers and lighting maintenance technicians on safeguarding and PSEA requirements, and make compliance with these and the technical requirements a contractual obligation. Ensure that feedback mechanisms are well known to the community and the supplier.

## 3 COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

Oxfam’s research demonstrates that a community-based approach to lighting is more effective and sustainable. It means more than consultation and feedback – it requires actively and consistently working in partnership with different people. Involving the community throughout the process will help:

- respond to the exact needs of different people;
- build community ownership of lighting projects; and
- help to clarify who is responsible for maintenance.

The activities below outline the process for a community-based approach to enhance planning and action for lighting projects. Community consultation should happen at every stage of an intervention, from assessment to co-planning; from implementation to monitoring and accountability. Sufficient resources (time and labour) must therefore be included in the workplan. The community-based approaches below outline the process for face-to-face consultation. (In situations where physical distancing is necessary, identify realistic means to consult communities. Check the [WHO’s Risk Communication and Community Engagement technical guidance](#).<sup>8</sup>)

**Key informant interviews (KIIs):** KIIs will help you gain insights about the challenges facing particular groups from representatives; and develop a deeper understanding of the context, current coping strategies and protection threats. See **Annex – Tool 1** for more information on KIIs, a sample script and safety mapping tool.

**Focus group discussions (FGDs):** Meet and engage specific population groups to discuss the different household and individual lighting options that are available. Make sure you discuss the appropriateness of any preferred model, and discuss how it could be repaired (availability of parts, affordability, warranty etc). You will need to be well-prepared with information to ensure that group members are informed enough to make decisions. For example, you will need to know *if replacement batteries or bulbs etc is a cost included in the Minimum Expenditure Basket by the Food Security Cluster? How much will the lights cost to fix if it is broken, ask if they could they afford to fix it? Are there batteries that will need to be replaced or charged? Is this cost included? Does the wholesaler have a workshop nearby to fix them? Do the torches have a guarantee and will they be replaced?*

**Surveys:** Survey data can provide insights into the scale and types of problems and protection risks the community faces, as well as how they are dealing with the lack of lighting, which can be used to form a baseline. Surveys can sometimes also identify helpful community-led solutions when people are given the opportunity to explain how they are dealing with a problem. See **Annex – Tool 3** for sample survey questions.

**Meetings and awareness sessions:** Sharing insights from the assessment findings with the community will increase the transparency of decision making between agencies and the community. It can help to inform the community about the importance of lighting in reducing risk after dark especially for the most vulnerable people. It is also possible that it could contribute to a more equal share of lighting items within households when sessions explore the lighting needs of different family members (elderly, young, people with disabilities, and women) promoting equal access for all.

## NOTES

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1. Oxfam. (2018). Shining a Light: How lighting in or around sanitation facilities affects the risk of gender-based violence in camps at [https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/humanitarian/sanitation-lighting-and-gbv?cid=rdt\\_lighting](https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/humanitarian/sanitation-lighting-and-gbv?cid=rdt_lighting)
2. Oxfam. (2018a). Solar Lights for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon; Lighting, sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence. Case Study 5 at <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/shining-a-light-how-lighting-in-or-around-sanitation-facilities-affects-the-ris-620605>
3. Oxfam. (2018b). Gender-Sensitive Solar Lighting in Bangladesh: Lighting, sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence. Case Study 2 at *ibid*
4. Oxfam. (2018c). Market-based lighting for refugees and host communities in Bangladesh: Lighting, sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence. Case Study 3 at *ibid*
5. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
6. Mercy Corps. (Forthcoming 2020). Energy in Emergencies: Mitigating Risks of Gender-based Violence (EEMRG) Inclusive Energy Handbook.
7. Lighting Global. (2018). Procurement of Stand-alone Solar Kits for Humanitarian Aid. Technical Notes. Issue 28. <https://www.lightingglobal.org/resource/procurement-of-stand-alone-solar-kits-for-humanitarian-aid>
8. World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Risk Communication and Community Engagement Technical Guidance, at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/en/>

[www.oxfam.org.uk/lighting](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/lighting)

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