Menstrual Health and Incontinence Care in Emergencies.

Disasters like cyclones, floods, or earthquakes can make it hard to stay clean and comfortable. There may be little water, few toilets, and limited supplies.

Having your period or experiencing incontinence in a disaster can be stressful and cause feelings of worry, but planning ahead can help make sure is everyone feels safe, clean, and respected during a disaster.

Before a disaster – Prepare

PLAN AHEAD! Talk as a family and make a plan that includes everyone's needs, especially people with disabilities or special health needs. Make a disaster plan for your family that includes everyone in your household, so that if there is a disaster, you know what to do.

Disasters can be stressful. Being prepared and having a disaster kit ready can help everyone in the family feel safe. This is especially important for people with disabilities, who may need more care or support during a disaster and may need help getting to an evacuation Centre or understanding early warning messages.

What you can do in your household:

- Talk about who may need help and how to support them
- Pack hygiene supplies like pads/kaliko, diapers etc.
- Make sure everyone knows where the emergency kit is
- Plan where you will go if you need to leave home

As part of this preparation, it is important to make an emergency kit with essential items so they are aware of its content and also so their needs are met.

What to put in an emergency kit:

- Radio,
- Torch,
- spare batteries for torch and radio,
- first aid kit,
- medication,
- bottled water,
- tinned food,
- Sanitary materials like spare pads, reusable pads or period underwear
- Incontinence products
- Spare clothes and underwear
- assistive devices,
- important documents including birth certificate, land registration and passport.

Tip: Reusable menstrual products like reusable pads and period underwear are helpful during disasters because they can be washed and reused, so you don't run out. However, in very rainy conditions, they may take longer to dry, so it's a good idea to also pack disposable pads (such as Stayfree) as a backup.

Tip: Pack your emergency kit in a bright colored bucket so everyone knows where it is and items inside are protected from bad weather

During a disaster:

If it is a disaster like a Cyclone, keep track of warnings and plan to evacuate early when it is safe to do so. People with disabilities may need more help to get to an Evacuation Centre safely, and waiting until the disaster "feels bad" (like heavy rain, strong winds, etc.) can be too late for a person with disability to travel to the Centre safely.

Managing menstruation and incontinence:

- Take menstrual and incontinence materials with you – make sure everyone in your family knows where they are and how to get them.
- Change pads, cloths, period underwear, or diapers when needed
- Wash hands after changing
- If water is limited, use a small amount carefully or see if there is hand sanitiser
- Use clean cloths if pads are not available

Cleaning reusable materials:

- Wash cloths with clean water and soap when possible
- Dry them in sunlight if you can
- If washing is not possible, store safely in a clean bag until you can wash them

Disposal:

- Wrap used items like stay fri in paper or plastic
- Place them in a bin with a lid or bury them away from water sources
- **Do not flush sanitary items in a flush toilet.**

Special Considerations for people with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities may need extra support to manage their period or incontinence during an emergency.

Support tips:

- Ask for consent before helping
- Explain what you are doing clearly
- Keep supplies within easy reach
- Allow extra time for changing and cleaning
- Respect privacy at all times

For carers and families:

- Plan ahead for how to assist safely
- Make sure the person feels comfortable and respected
- Use simple words or visual aids if needed

After a Disaster

Once it is safe:

- Restock your supplies
- Wash and dry reusable items properly
- Check for any health problems (rashes, infections)
- Visit a health clinic if needed