

**What is it?**

A checklist to establish an endorsed policy to care for staff and priests involved in relief work

**Why use it?**

To share the burden of coordinating, facilitating and implementing a response, it is important to make sure that there is sufficient support and resources for clergy and staff tasked with this responsibility.

**How to use it?**

After disasters, the role of the church in facilitating a response and serving the community is endless. Whether it be meeting immediate food and water needs, assisting with clothing and shelter, helping people wrestle with questions about why such events occur, or in the long-term, supporting longer term emotional and spiritual recovery, such assistance does not come without a price. In many contexts, clergy & staff in major disaster areas experience very high turnover following disasters. First, clergy & staff rightly perceive experience serving those in need as their calling, but too often, clergy & staff take on the role of “supermen” overextending themselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. The outcome ranges from exhaustion, burnout and loss of personal faith – impairing their ability to continue supporting the disaster victims or their congregations – to conflicts with their congregations or marital or family problems, substance abuse and suicide.

The following checklist provides some guidelines to establish a Staff Care Policy

1. Meet with your Bishop or Archbishop to offer some background on the need for a policy.
2. Ensure that relief committees are formed following a disaster to share the responsibilities
3. Set regular times to meet with staff and dedicated volunteers to prioritize and delegate tasks
4. Make time for Sabbath time: daily, weekly, monthly and annually
5. Ensure that priests and staff prioritize personal social relationships to maintain a balance
6. Identify church human resources to provide pastoral counseling (retired priests or Bishops)
7. Identify professional resources for psychosocial counseling and establish a budget
8. Develop or identify theological resources for pastoral and spiritual counseling
9. Establish guidelines for regular ‘check-ins’ with priests and staff by a spiritual counselor
10. Establish guidelines on regular opportunities for priests and staff to have access to pastoral or professional counseling
11. Establish other outlets for clergy and staff to address any impacts of being a host family
12. Establish prayer teams – so clergy and staff can check-in with colleagues. When people do not show up for these informal gatherings, it is a trigger that something is wrong
13. In more complex contexts, including war, political violence or insecurity, consider:
  - i. Training for all staff on personal safety, including special considerations for women
  - ii. Amended work hours for staff, so that travel to/from home is during daylight hours
  - iii. Hire additional adhoc staff to compensate for the limited work hours and/or for staff who leave without notice or cannot to work on certain days
  - iv. Limit the need for field visits, instead opt for daily check-ins with localized personnel
  - v. Keep all laptops and other assets in the office for security and avoid commute liability
  - vi. Weekday morning buddy system – so that staff can check their routes to work with others who may have more information on the safety of that route
  - vii. Establish a phone tree network for emergency notification (confirm that staff have mobile phones) and consider alternate communication systems in case mobile networks are unreliable during emergency situations
  - viii. Physically strengthen gates and doors to offices and compounds
  - ix. Establish guidelines for displaced clergy on setting up new congregations
  - x. Establish guidelines for displaced congregations to set up a disaster committees

**This tool was developed and field-tested in:**

Burundi

**Where to go from here?**

Tool 24: Recognizing and Managing Stress