

# 20 Volunteer protection

## OVERVIEW



Volunteers work in vulnerable situations and with vulnerable people. Working in epidemics can be extremely risky as volunteers can also catch the disease and get sick. Your National Society should provide proper protection for volunteers working in epidemic situations. Different levels of protection are used for different situations.

## What you can DO

- ➔ During epidemics such as Ebola and Marburg, full protection should be used. This is called personal protection equipment (PPE). See *Action tool 21* for instructions in its use.
- ➔ other epidemics, such as of diarrhoea and respiratory infections, you should at least use masks and latex gloves for protection when coming in contact with patients with the disease.
- ➔ You should be trained and familiar with using protection equipment before you are in a situation in which you need to use it. Try the equipment out beforehand and learn how to use it properly.



*Putting on personal protection equipment*

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## Protecting volunteers from harm and liability to others

Volunteers often work in vulnerable situations and with vulnerable people. They should be protected in case they incur damage or injuries in the course of their work or duties. Accidents can happen, causing volunteers to be injured or harmed, or even killed. By the same token, volunteers can harm people and property, especially if they have not been properly trained or given the correct equipment.

It is important for a National Society to have appropriate insurance policies. The insurance may be needed to pay compensation to volunteers or their families if they are injured or killed. It can cover the legal costs of and pay compensation to volunteers if they are injured or injure others while working. The nature of the cover will depend on the legal system of the country.

Volunteers should be informed of and understand the National Society's security policy and follow the rules and regulations accordingly. They should be kept up to date of any changes in the policy and asked to report any incidents of concern.

Safety in the community depends on the personal attributes of volunteers, coaches and other team members – how they work together and how they work with community members. Behaviours must be culturally sensitive. Volunteers should never provoke a situation through offensive personal behaviour. They should always maintain integrity and not become part of the problem in the community. Correct, polite, impartial and neutral behaviour is expected at all times.