



# Earthquake Mitigation Policy

### Earthquake damage mitigation policy and procedures:

Afghanistan is located on the meeting point of several tectonic plates that have created a number of prominent fault lines, resulting in significant seismic activity across the country. Unlike other natural hazards, earthquakes strike suddenly and without warning. Nevertheless, there are things that can be done to reduce the chances that those under Mahboba's Promise care will be injured, that property will be damaged, or that facility functioning will be disrupted by an earthquake. This policy details the actions required to enhance the preparedness of Mahboba's Promise programs, facilities, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries when an earthquake strikes.

#### Scope of policy:

This policy covers all Mahboba's Promise run programs and facilities in Afghanistan and the individuals who use these.

#### Policy and procedures:

Mitigating the dangers of earthquakes require staff, volunteers and beneficiaries of Mahboba's Promise facilities to be educated in what actions can be taken to reduce their impact. This involves taking proactive steps before an earthquake that will make facilities safer and reduce the risk of injury during and after an earthquake.

#### Before an earthquake:

- In an earthquake, most injuries and deaths are caused by loose objects in and on buildings. To address this risk, it is important to review the objects in Mahboba's Promise facilities that could become a hazard in an earthquake and take steps to secure them before a quake hits. This can be incorporated into a learning process for all individuals involved with the facility by asking them to identify objects they believe could pose a hazard and discussing how to reduce this risk. It is advisable to remove, move, fasten or latch any items that are likely to break, fall over, cause a fire, or hurt people.
- It is also important to decide on safe places that people can move to should an earthquake hit. A safe place could be under a sturdy table or desk or against an interior wall away from windows and bookcases, or tall furniture that could fall. The shorter the distance to move to safety, the less likely it is someone will be injured. Injury statistics show that people moving as little as 10

feet during an earthquake's shaking are most likely to be injured. Once people are made aware of the safe places in the facility, the **Drop Cover and Hold** technique should be demonstrated. This is the position one should adopt when sheltering from an earthquake in a safe place. The technique is described in the '*During an Earthquake*' section of this document.

- To normalise the Drop, Cover and Hold reaction when an earthquake starts, drills should be practiced throughout the year to ensure everyone is aware of what actions need to be taken to protect themselves and others. When an earthquake or other disaster occurs, many people hesitate, trying to remember what they are supposed to do. Responding quickly and automatically may help protect you from injury.
- A designated meeting place should be decided upon in an open area outside of the facility. This is where people will aim to move to after an earthquake, when it is safe to do so to conduct role calls and determine the next course of action. It must be emphasised that only once all shaking has stopped should people move to the meeting place.
- Emergency packs are made up of the basic necessities required to deal with the first few days after an earthquake. Mahboba's Promise facilities need to have at least one emergency pack, however more is recommended for larger facilities. This should be kept in an easily accessible place. Staff of the facility should all know where emergency packs are kept. At a minimum an emergency pack needs:
  - >Water
  - >Food: non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items
  - >Flashlight with extra batteries
  - >Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
  - >First aid kit
  - >Extra money
  - >Blankets
  - >Candles and matches

Other items deemed necessary such as specific types of medicine or warm clothing can also be included in the pack.

### **During an earthquake**

If inside when an earthquake hits, the following actions should be taken:

- Move no more than a few steps, preferably to a designated safe place then **DROP, COVER** and **HOLD ON**:
- **DROP** to the ground.
- Take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and
- **HOLD ON** to it until the shaking stops.
- If you can't get under something strong, or if you are in a hallway, crouch against an interior wall and protect your head and neck with your arms. Stay indoors till the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit.

If you are in bed when you feel the shaking:

- Stay there and cover your head and neck with a pillow. At night, hazards and debris are difficult to see and avoid; attempts to move in the dark can result in more injuries than remaining in bed.

#### After the shaking stops

- Count to 60 to allow debris to finish falling after the shaking stops.
- Check to see if you are hurt. You will be better able to help others if you take care of yourself first, then check the people around you. Move carefully and watch out for things that have fallen or broken, creating hazards. Be ready for aftershocks.
- Assess your immediate surroundings for dangers. If it is safe to do, then evacuate the building, taking the emergency packs with you.
- Be on the lookout for fires. Fire is the most common earthquake-related hazard, due to broken gas lines, damaged electrical lines or appliances, and previously contained fires or sparks being released.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as light fixtures or furniture.
- Upon exiting the building, proceed directly to the designated meeting place.
- If an aftershock occurs during evacuation and you are still inside the building, repeat **DROP, COVER**, and **HOLD ON** procedure before resuming evacuation.

#### What to do during an earthquake – outdoors:

If you are outdoors when the shaking starts, you should find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines, then **DROP, COVER** and **HOLD ON**. Stay there until the shaking stops.

#### After the shaking stops

- Count to 60 to allow debris to finish falling after the shaking stops.
- Assess your immediate surroundings for dangers (e.g. fallen wires, fires).
- Proceed directly to the designated meeting place.

**Important things to remember after an earthquake:**

- You may need to turn off the electricity, gas, or water after an earthquake because of broken or exposed electrical wiring, a gas leak, or flooding from leaking pipes or sprinklers. Learn how to turn these off and train all staff to do so.
- If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window, check to see if anyone else is in the room, quickly leave together and then turn the gas off at the outside source.
- Unless you must evacuate immediately, check all children and adults for injuries. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury (fire and flooding). Instead, cover them with a sturdy table or whatever is available and send someone for medical help after the earthquake shaking stops.