

**DRC JULY 2011 SHELTER ASSESSMENT
– MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the Syrian uprising in 2011, approximately 6,000¹ Syrians have fled into Northern Lebanon's Akkar Region since the beginning of May. The majority of those fleeing have subsequently returned to Syria, and currently (mid July 2011), approximately 2,500 remain, displaced in dispersed settlements and mainly hosted with families, friends, and strangers, with a few in abandoned schools. A shelter needs assessment has taken place from the 2nd to the 18th of July 2011, to assess the shelter needs and options with respect to both the displaced and the local community's. Information for this assessment has been obtained from visits to various sites, as well as from the UNHCR/DRC field team, the outreach workers, local leaders, the displaced and the population database.

The shelter need findings for the displaced indicate that there are 728 persons or 29.2% of the displaced that are most in need of shelter. These displaced are hosted in "poor or below" housing conditions in lodgings such as stable buildings, basements, workshops, garages, and abandoned houses, with a general lack of access to electricity, and water (toilet/bath and kitchen facilities). An additional 530 persons or 21.2% of the displaced are hosted with families, relatives or strangers who are or will soon be exhausted and no longer capable of coping with their hosting situation. Displaced with intermediate needs include 1,082 persons or 43.3% of the displaced hosted with families, relatives, strangers or collective shelters, who need to be prepared for the rainy season and winter. There is also a need for response to a minor influx of new displaced (up to 6,000 persons). A more comprehensive shelter assessment will be needed for an eventual new, larger influx of arrivals of over 6,000 persons, and for those that can't be accommodated by family, friends and strangers.

The hosting rural poor community and the hosting families have shown a strong willingness to respond quickly by hosting 91% of the displaced with dispersed accommodation. Consequently an integrated shelter response packages should contain; Non-food –items (NFI), social support and basic services, when required; including support to income generation activities, to build capacity and support the local community.

The recommended response is divided into three overlapping phases covering the next 6 to 12 months: a first phase for immediate response covering moderate rehabilitation of installations and structures for hygiene improvement and transferring hosted families in need of collective shelters; a second phase covering preparedness for minor influx, the rainy season and winter including starting minor rehabilitation and construction works; and the third phase of preparedness for an eventual minor and larger influx and response to families that cannot be accommodated by hosted families, friends or strangers.

2. CONTEXT

This mission was undertaken between the 2nd and 18th of July 2011 to assess the shelter options for the Syrians displaced in Northern Lebanon (the Akkar region). The shelter options need to be evaluated both with respect to the current situation - a relatively small population (2,000-3,000) residing mostly with host families with a few in abandoned schools - and with respect to a potentially larger situation of displacement in the north. Information has primarily been obtained from visits to

¹ This figure is based on assertion from various mokhtars.

various sites as well as from the UNHCR/DRC field team, the outreach workers, local leaders, the displaced and the population database.

The mission has been informed by the following assumptions:

- The displacement situation could become protracted, extending through the winter 2011/2012 and beyond;
- Barring a mass influx situation, it is unlikely that one shelter solution would be ideal for all and instead, different options will be pursued for different subsets of the population;

The figures used in this assessment are based on UNHCR Lebanon statistics: “Displaced Syrians in North Lebanon” 8th of July 2011, after consultation with UNHCR Database Manager Christian Habib. The numbers of displaced used in this recommendation is 2,500 persons based on the average of the prediction (2,000 – 3,000) mentioned above.

The objectives of the mission are to:

- 1) Assess the option of host families and rented accommodation, in particular the local hosting capacity in host families, the availability of rented accommodation, the approximate proportion of persons currently living in sub-standard shelters as well as propose measures for overcoming 'fatigue' among host families/communities.
- 2) Assess the option of shelter in abandoned schools and other structures, in particular through mapping out these structures (GPS) as well as assessing their potential hosting capacity and the detailed need for structural rehabilitation.
- 3) Explore the option of transitional shelters (prefabs), including the viability of such from a financial perspective and where, when and for whom such shelters would be preferable.
- 4) Identify and map out (GPS) potential tented campsites, paying particular attention to the suitability of such sites based on land ownership, topographical and weather conditions as well as distance from the border.

3. **ASSESSMENT**

Forty six (46) sites have been visited, mapped with GPS coordinates, photo registered, and detailed information collected based on the following type of site visits:

- Seven displaced families visited and interviewed;
- Nine public and private abandoned schools visited including meeting with owners and mokhtars;
- Five public school visited including meeting with principals and mokhtars;
- Two other public buildings visited including meeting with mokhtars;
- Five unfinished public and private structures visited including meeting with owners and mokhtars;
- Eighteen potential campsites visited including meeting with principals and mokhtars.

Displaced hosted with families, friends, and strangers

When the influx started in the beginning of March 2011, individuals and the community took the lead in hosting the individuals and families in dispersed accommodation, and the majority of the displaced have expressed appreciation to the host community for their welcoming attitude and for this initiative.

In all, seven interviews have been conducted with the displaced. Four interviews have been conducted with displaced families hosted with Lebanese families and relatives; two of these families are living in the same shelter. Three interviews have been conducted with families who were picked up by strangers who provided them with shelter, and again, two of the interviewed families are living together in the same shelter. All families are staying for free.

One displaced family has fled partly to Turkey and partly to Syria and still has one family member in Syria working for the Syrian army; the family has no contact or idea on how it is going with the remaining family, when to return, where to go or when the family will be reunited. The displaced

have in general no idea how long they will stay or when they will return, but they feel safe in their temporarily shelters.

The majority of the displaced arrived in the beginning of May 2011 and have explained they can't go back to Syria; one family arrived as late as 2nd July. Five out of six displaced have arrived through the unofficial Lebanese/Syrian border in Wadi Kahled. The remaining one out of six have arrived over the border in Birreh.

Ninety-one percent (91%) or 2,275 of the displaced are hosted by families, broken down into 58% or 1,320 persons with families or relatives and 38% or 885 persons hosted by strangers (neither family nor relatives). The remaining 9% or 225 persons are being sheltered in shared, rented, or self-owned accommodation.

Twenty-nine percent (29,2%) or 728 of the displaced persons are currently hosted in "poor or below" housing conditions in secondary rooms such as stable buildings, basements, workshops, garages, and abandoned houses with general lack of access to toilet/bath and kitchen facilities and they are in some cases sharing the host's "private" toilet, kitchen etc. Where these facilities exist inside or are close to the assigned shelter there is often no or limited access to water or electricity etc., and especially access to drinking water is a problem.



**Kitchen with toilet
(behind the partition)**



Temporay latrin



**Open drain
(kitchen and shower)**

Furthermore the shelters assigned to them appear to be in bad condition, with leaky and musty walls and roofs and improperly sealed windows and doors, insufficient drainage etc.; these unhealthy conditions will be particularly challenging during the upcoming rainy and winter season.



Cracked walls and missing windows



Musty wall from leaky roof

The displaced have stated that they prefer to stay under hosted conditions (instead of moving to common shelters/camps) and when asked what kind of resources they have, all those hosted with families and relatives have explained that they are receiving minor charity and are sharing food, etc. The displaced with non-family or non-relatives have stated that they are receiving no or little support from their host, except to some extent electricity and water, if available; this group's biggest concern is clearly the unknown duration at the assigned shelter. Nevertheless one of the families explained that they prefer to stay with an unknown host rather than their family.

Vacant houses or flats for rented accommodation

Vacant non-luxury accommodation available for immediate occupation in both Birreh and Wadi Kahled is all most not existent. Five potential vacant houses and flats have been assessed as feasible shelters for hosting of displaced families. These available houses and apartments would need a disproportionate investment for completion when compared to the investment needed to support the existing coping mechanism. In addition, the volume of rented accommodation-required risks skewing the market and distorting prices and could easily create an unwanted pull factor.

Abandoned schools

Nine abandoned public and private schools in both Birreh and Wadi Kahled have been assessed so far and found to be immediately suitable for collecting shelters. The accommodating capacity covers from 518 to 740 persons depending on the number of members in each family (average household size of 4.9 to 7.0 persons) and the numbers of individuals.

List of assessed abandoned schools									
#	School name	Location		GPS position Latitude/ Longitude	Altitude meter	Capacity persons	Needed rehabilitation	Owner	Possible tent side
1	Rama	Wadi Kahled	Al Rama	34.619667° N 36.378302° E	381	215	***	Public	No
2	Al Wadi Centre	Wadi Kahled	Aaouadi	34.626287° N 36.376076° E	338	70	**	Private	Yes
3	Al Ibra	Wadi Kahled	Mashta Hassan	34.628167° N 36.318667° E	386	105	***	Private	Yes
4	Aidamoon Public School	Birreh	KbayyatMart amoura	34.577500° N 26.281333° E	511	98	*	Public	Yes
5	Birreh Public High School	Birreh	Birreh	34.587833° N 36.232333° E	500	70	*	Public	No

6	Birreh Intermediate School	Birreh	Birreh	34.566833° N 36.232833° E	510	49	*	Public	No
7	The old secondary school	Birreh	Birreh	34.587333° N 36.231667° E	579	21	*	Public	No
8	KherbetDaoud Public School	Birreh	KerbetDaoud	34.587333° N 36.231667° E	569	28	**	Public	No
9	Monsa Public School	Wadi Kahled	Mouance	34.566500° N 36.688567° E	487	84	***	Public	Yes

Note: * non or very little rehabilitation needed
 ** little rehabilitation needed
 *** moderate rehabilitation needed

The general conditions for these nine inspected schools are good and they will need only minor physical rehabilitation (described later in the “immediate need shelter response”) before the displaced can be accommodated. Three of the schools, Rama, Al Ibra, and Monsa Public School, are in need of more rehabilitation before they can be fully utilized (described in the “longer-term need/response”).

A detailed breakdown of the type of work and investment needed to reopen the abandoned schools as collective shelters for the displaced is attached, kindly refer to annex 01 where the estimated cost is 35,000 USD.

Map of assessed abandoned schools



Public schools

Five public schools have been assessed and are considered suitable for housing displaced as collective shelters, but since the availability would be limited to the school summer vacation period, this is not sustainable as a longer-term hosting solution. These schools could, however, be useful in an emergency situation before the start of the school year 2011/12, when there is a massive influx of displaced that cannot be immediately hosted with families, friends, stranger or the collective shelters in the previously abandoned schools. They could be used as transitional shelters until more collective shelter capacity (campsites) are in place.

Other Public buildings

Two other minor administration buildings containing one to two offices, meeting room and

toilets/kitchens in good condition, one in Mashta Hassan, Wadi Kahled and one in Kerbet, Birred, have been offered, free of charge, to be used for the emergency response if needed.



Office building in Mashta



Office building in Kerbet

Potential tented campsites

Five out of six displaced persons have arrived through the unofficial Lebanese/Syrian border in Wadi Kahled. The remaining one out of six has arrived over the border in Birreh. Eighteen potential campsites have been visited in various villages, mainly in Wadi Kahled, all guided by the respective village mokhtar. Based on this assessment, the following observations on campsite requirements can be made:

- A pullback zone from the borderline of at least 3km is compulsory to ensure security;
- Campsites should be clustered to ensure protection and enlargement;
- Camps should be located in semi village areas to facilitate service and management;
- Due to camp design, flat, low, wind-protected, dry farm land is desirable;

List of potential campsites											
#	Type of land, village	Surface	GPS Location	Altitude meter	Approximately size	Electricity access	Water access	Wind protected	Public land	Favored sites	Capacity persons
1	Rural - Country hill site KarmZibidine, Wadi Kahled	Stone Moderate	34.621833° N 36.357333° E	548	45,000	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	**	1000
2	Semi Village - farm land Aouadi, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Light slope	34.626287° N 36.376076° E	278	20,000	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	****	360
3	Rural - Uncultivated land Knaisse, Wadi Kahled	Stone Flat	34.599833° N 36.439667° E	543	< 100,000	Yes	No	No	Yes	*	< 2,200
4	Semi Village - Hill site farm land Mashta Hassan, Wadi Kahled	Light stone Light slope	34.628002° N 36.318833° E	397	16,000	Yes	No	No	Yes	***	290
5	Rural - Country hill site Mashta Hammond, Wadi Kahled	Light stone Light slope	34.638500° N 36.321000° E	357	< 100,000	No	No	No	No	**	< 1,800
6	Village - farm land Mashta Hammond, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Flat	34.636167° N 36.322833° E	327	24,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	****	525
7	Village - Uncultivated farm land Mashta Hassan, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Light slope	34.627667° N 36.323500° E	320	52,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	****	950
8	Village - farm land Mashta Hammond, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Flat	34.634333° N 36.327000° E	308	30,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	****	650
9	Semi Village - farm land Aarida, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Flat	34.662333° N 36.331667° E	273	22,500	Yes	No	No	Yes	*	500
10	Village - village land Mouance, Wadi Kahled	Top soil Flat	34.589667° N 36.221500° E	491	2,500	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	***	50
11	Rural - Hill site farm land Kherbet	Stone Light slope	34.586500° N 36.222667° E	540	4,500	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	**	80
12	Village - village land Al Dababeie	Top soil Flat	34.625333° N 36.207500° E	229	2,500	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	*	50
13	Village - Uncultivated farm land	Top soil	34.622233° N	254	4,500	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	*	100

	Al Dababeie	Flat	36.213667° E								
14	Rural - Uncultivated hill site Al Kwaikhat	Stone Slope	34.576833° N 36.095833° E	114	12,000	No	No	No	Yes	**	160
15	Rural - Uncultivated top hill Al Kwaikhat	Stone Light slope	34.578833° N 36.095667° E	160	35,000	No	No	No	No	**	625
16	Village - farm land Al Kwaikhat	Top soil Flat	34.576833° N 36.084833° E	55	6,500	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	****	125
17	Village - village land Al Kwaikhat	Light stone Light slope	34.580333° N 36.089333° E	65	5,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**	90
18	Rural - farm land Kwashra	Light stone Light slope	34.602167° N 36.206333° E	232	< 30,000	No	No	Yes	Yes	**	550

The most appropriate campsite areas (marked with ****) is one site in Aaouadi and various sites in Mashta Hammoud and Hashta Hassan, all in Wadi Kahled, and one site Al Kwaikhat in Birrah. All are on flat protected land with access to local infrastructures.

Map of potential campsites



4. SHELTER NEEDS (and vulnerabilities)

a) Shelter needs of the Syrian displaced (based upon UNHCR outreach monitoring data of 14/07/2011 with a total population displaced of 2,500 individuals)

1. Immediate needs – for priority groups:

- Displaced hosted under poor conditions and below – 728 persons (29.2% of the total displaced population)
- Displaced exhausted from being hosted – 530 persons (21.2% of those hosted by family/friends + 30% of those hosted by strangers)

2. Secondary needs – for groups under less pressure

- Estimated as 778 persons or 31,1% (728 persons with immediate needs and 778 with secondary needs = 1,500 persons of the total displaced) who are living in medium/ good/ very good housing conditions, but who could become in the short-term exhausted of being hosted (especially those hosted by friends/strangers...)
- Minor additional influx (up to 6,000 individuals = maximum hosting families' capacity).

3. Tertiary needs - Larger influx (over 6,000 individuals)

- Newcomers that will not be accommodated by the hosting families, should only be considered for collective settlements (abandoned schools or campsite) options,

Recommendation: to qualify what poor housing conditions means, a monitoring team should assess a sample among the 728 individuals and identify major shelter issues, for instance lack of space, sanitation/hygiene/ventilation/electricity.

What we don't know:

- Intentions of displacement/return remain unknown and have an impact of shelter response;
- Long-term nature of shelter options desired by the displaced remains unknown: collective, or with family, or with friends, or isolated...

Recommendation: to assess the intentions of return and nature of shelters desired by displaced people. Again a monitoring team could undertake the exercise on a sample basis.

b) Hosting community's needs

- Akkar is a poor area (agricultural region, low employment rate, limited infrastructures...);
- Hosting families are tired of accommodating the displaced, due to:
 - The long duration of displacement (more than 3 months for some of them);
 - The increased challenge of sharing of resources:
 - Promiscuity fatigue;
 - Political tensions...

Recommendation: any shelter response should benefit the hosting families and communities

5. SHELTER CAPACITIES

- Hosting families have been accommodating an exceptional high rate of more than 91% of the displaced so far.
- The hosting families in Berrih and Wadi Khaled have accommodated up to 6,000 individuals (according to HRC figures at the peak of the crisis).
- Communities and their leaders have been taking the lead in assisting and protecting displaced from the very beginning.
- Mapping of the existing capacity:
 - 9 abandoned schools can be transformed into collective shelters and accommodate from 518 to 740 individuals in the medium-term and a further 50 families or approximately 250 individuals can be accommodated in the short-term in tents located in the abandoned school playgrounds etc.
 - Potential campsites are mapped in both Wadi Kahled and Birreh for hosting a larger influx.

Recommendation:

1. Support the exceptional high shown rate of 91% shelter absorption capacity of displaced hosted with families, friends, and strangers in the communities. Enhance that already existing capacity in an inclusive approach through extended NFIs and food distribution covering the host in need and extended protection and social activities to also cover the host and communities.
2. For displaced there are exhausted from the their host should an equally replacement within the community with other host should be prioritized and if not

accommodated then a transferred to collective shelters in a abandoned school as last option.

6. SHELTER RESPONSE (the four shelter options)

Dispersed settlement

- 1) Improving the hosting families housing condition:
 - a) **Immediate shelter needs response:** 29.2 % of the total displaced or 728 persons, living with “poor or below” housing conditions will have improved their WASH conditions.
 - b) **Transfer:** Offer 21.2% or 530 persons of the displaced, when they are exhausted and no longer capable of coping with their hosting situation, to be transferred to collective shelter in abandoned schools.
 - c) **Mid-term shelter needs response:** 22.1% of the total displaced or 552 persons will be prepared for the rainy season and winter with sealing of shelters and provision of heater and chimneys.
 - d) **Longer-term shelter needs response:** 22.1% of the total displaced or 552 persons that are living long-term with families and relatives are provided with construction materials and supervision to improve their living conditions, such as building or expanding bathrooms, cooking areas and adding additional rooms.
 - e) **Sustenance to host families:** with inclusive food distribution and social support that covers the host families and communities
 - f) **Support hosting** of newcomers.
- 2) Prefabricated shelters:
 - a) **No immediate response:** the preferred option is to sustain host families in existing structures or transfer displaced to collective shelters. Later, when the displaced situation has stabilized, shelter needs for dispersed displaced families with no possibility or desire to return to Syria should be assessed.

Collective settlement

- 3) Rehabilitation of abandoned schools for collective shelters:
 - a) **Legal clearances** of property, rental agreement with owner conditions, privileges, and restrictions and division of responsibilities between government institutions, Lebanon High Relief Committee , Ministry of Education etc.
 - b) **Immediate shelter needs response:** develop a priority plan based on need, cost and capacity, successive rehabilitate and reopen abandoned schools as collective shelters.
 - c) **Transfer of displaced** hosted with families after they are exhausted of living with families, friends or strangers.
 - d) **Mid-term shelter needs response:** prepare for the winter with sealing of shelters and providing heaters and chimneys covering 21.2% of the total displaced or 530 persons.
 - e) **Prepare for quick response** to minor influx for up to 50 families or 250 persons, with setup of tent sites directly connected to the collected shelters common facilities: toilet; bathrooms and kitchens etc.
 - f) **Investigate other collective shelter options** in other abandoned structures, to be restructured to collective shelters.
 - g) **Host newcomers** not hosted with families, friends or strangers.
- 4) Preparation of campsite:
 - a) **Legal clearance for public and private lands** of preselected campsites for approximately 1,000 families/4,000 to 6,000 persons. Larger influx shall be included in contingency planning.

- b) **Procurement camp material**, winter-tents, latrines, fences etc....

Definitions related to rehabilitation of existing buildings:

1. Immediate shelter needs response:

Light direct “low cost” (75 USD as an average per hosting family) repair for improve improving the hygiene and living conditions, such as change a water tap, repair a drain, light repair a door, replace a broken glass in a window etc.

2. Mid-term shelter needs response:

Moderate rehabilitation of existing wall and roof etc. to extend existing unutilized or ruined living space. Sealing buildings for the winter including providing heaters and chimneys.

3. Longer-term shelter needs response:

The following could help long-term hosts to cope better: providing materials to create temporary walls in homes, building or expanding bathrooms, cooking areas and additional rooms.

Recommendation:

Based upon need and capacities, DRC assessment recommends two favoured options:

1. Improving the hosting families housing condition;
2. Rehabilitation of abandoned schools for collective shelters, including preparation of tent setup in schoolyards for minor influx.

Options not recommended

- Rented accommodations:
 - Could negatively impact on the local market and affect local residents;
 - Lacks sustainability.
- Pre-fabricated shelters:
 - Are not cost-effective, and should only be considered at a later stage and only when the displacement situation has stabilized (minimum 6 months from influx);
 - Disagreement with local communities on their usage, placement etc. upon crisis.

Recommendation: Camps are a feasible option only under a scenario of large-scale displacement and should be covered in the emergency preparedness.

Recommendations:

- Due to their involvement, communities should be consulted in the design and implementation of the shelter response;
- Hosting families should benefit from shelter assistance;
- The shelter response should be accompanied by NFIs, hygienic kits, PSS, educational, recreational activities... in an inclusive manner (displaced + hosting) = holistic approach

7. SUGGESTED ACTION PLAN

Shelter response should be divided into 3 overlapping phases:

a) *Short-term response (< 3 months)*

1. Light shelter support to hosted/hosting individuals of 728 persons focusing on basic light shelter needs (and prospective assessment for mid- and long-term response) focus on simple low cost improvement as repair a water tap, a drain, a door etc.

2. Preparation of collective shelters for 530 persons and start transferring those most exhausted from being hosted.
- b) *Mid-term response (3 to 6 months)***
3. Camp preparation
 - School yards could accommodate up to 50 families;
 - Campsites: legal clearance for public and private lands + procurement of tents / latrines for 1,000 families (4,000 to 6,000 persons).
 4. Winter preparation works (isolation, heating, roof sealing...)
 - For hosting family shelters covering 552 persons;
 - And for collective shelter for 530 persons.
- c) *Longer-term response (from soon but going over 6 months)***
- Extension/moderate upgrade of family shelters for 552 persons.