

Guidelines for the Upgrading of Substandard Housing Units & Increasing Housing Units in Unfinished Buildings

Introduction

This document was prepared by a sub-working group of the interagency Shelter Sector Working Group (SWG) in Jordan for the Syrian refugee response and is intended to complement the 'Explanation of Shelter Methodologies and Standards in the Jordanian Host Community' adjusted extract from the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Strategy for Jordan¹, and UNHCR's Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy, 2014-2018². These guidelines have been developed to ensure agencies involved in shelter interventions meet minimum SPHERE standards for Syrian refugees in non-camp settings. Housing units above SPHERE standards will be considered on a case by case basis based on local norms. In addition these guidelines will be used as a checklist to identify substandard housing units under emergency conditions. The guidelines are dynamic and responsive to the changing contexts and circumstances, and thus will be periodically reviewed to reflect these changes.

SPHERE Standards

The aim of the SPHERE standards project is to improve the quality of humanitarian actions during emergency response and for humanitarian agencies to be held accountable for them. The minimum standards are evidence-based and represent sector-wide consensus on best practice in humanitarian response. Under SPHERE, key actions, key indicators and guidance notes accompany each standard, providing guidance on how they can be attained. The minimum standards describe conditions that must be achieved in shelter response in order for conflict affected populations to survive and recover in stable conditions and with dignity³.

Shelter interventions and objectives

Interventions involve 1) upgrading substandard housing units, and 2) increasing the availability of housing units in unfinished buildings. These are two separate interventions and methodologies but aim to achieve the same objective which is to meet SPHERE standards and objectives set out in the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Strategy for Jordan. The sectorial objective for the provision of adequate shelter and settlement of Syrian refugees in host communities as defined in the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Strategy for Jordan is: to increase number of people that have access to shelter solutions that provide privacy and emotional support, protection from elements, space to live and store belongings, facilitate access to utilize essential household services/ infrastructures, enhance security of tenure, minimize risk of eviction and reduce the competition between refugees and vulnerable Jordanian households thus benefiting from peaceful coexistence with host communities⁴.

Scope of shelter interventions

Interventions are categorized into civil, mechanical, and electrical. Subject to the space and condition of the substandard housing unit, the budgeted amount of USD\$2,500 (as earmarked for each of the interventions under the RRP6) may range on a case-by-case basis⁵. In addition the budget is subject to periodical revisions depending on prevailing construction costs. It will also be taken into account that the budgeted amount for such interventions is usually based on the donor's approval, where shelter sector actors have to adjust their intervention budget accordingly. Interventions will be coordinated with local municipalities who will help prioritize unfinished housing units whose completion will not further strain municipal services and ensure that planning and building codes are respected. The type of interventions stated below are derived from indicators of the UNHCR Jordan Shelter and Settlement Strategy and set a simple method of identifying the housing units/ buildings which are eligible for interventions.

¹ [Explanation of Shelter Methodologies and Standards in the Jordanian Host Community adjusted extract from the Shelter Strategy for Jordan.](#)

² [UNHCR's Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy, 2014-2018.](#)

³ [Chapters 4: Minimum Standards in Shelter, Settlement and NFIs.](#)

⁴ [UNHCR Shelter Strategy for Jordan.](#)

⁵ [A BOQ template developed by NRC.](#)

Housing units to receive upgrading to adequate standards: housing units will qualify for interventions if they lack privacy, are considered insecure, do not provide adequate protection from the climatic elements, lack access to sanitation facilities and electrical services, and/or if they are overcrowded (less than 3.5M² of habitable space per person excluding kitchen and bathroom).

Increased housing units in unfinished buildings: unfinished buildings will qualify for interventions if they require finishing works to make them habitable and lack access to sanitation facilities and electrical services. They must consist of a basic concrete structural frame (columns, beams/floor slabs, and roof) and allow for subdivisions to create multiple units.

Awareness campaigns, workshops and focus group discussions regarding the rights and obligations of both landlords and tenants will run alongside shelter interventions. Workshops will address the issues of restriction on access to housing due to discrimination. Participants will also be informed of both their rights and their obligations as tenants under Jordan’s tenancy laws⁶. This will aim to mitigate tensions surrounding housing for Syrians in host communities.

Rental policy

In addition, shelter upgrading interventions will be linked to conditions that allow the tenant to remain in the upgraded property for a set period of time with no increase in rent as defined by the agency and the landlord⁷. This can be summarized in the table below which relates investment limits to certain rental conditions.

Intervention	Investment limit	Minimum standards
Upgrading housing units	<500 JD	Negotiated secure lease, no increase in rent, no eviction
	500-900 JD	Negotiated reduction in rent, secure tenure, no eviction
Increased housing units	1,000 JD	Rent-free agreement for 12 months, secure tenure, no eviction
	1,400 JD	Rent-free agreement for 18 months, secure tenure, no eviction

Refugee families should have a clear rental document stipulating rental terms, recognized in Jordanian court system, and access to legal protection in the case of arbitrary eviction or actions by the owner in contravention to the rental. Agencies should also be responsible for monitoring the household to ensure that both landlords and tenants do not breach the defined agreement over tenancy period. Agencies should consider existing networks and family groups as not to damage existing coping mechanisms and alleviate protection concerns.

Every identified condition will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and will therefore likely require a different type of intervention which may entail a budget that is lower, higher, or equal to the intervention budget. However, the following description of civil, mechanical, and electrical issues should be followed as the basic needs to be available in each housing unit after the completion of the intervention.

Minimum provisions after completion of intervention	
Civil	<p>Every housing unit should have the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doors to provide access, security and privacy. This intervention may also include the replacement of damaged doors or installation of new doors only if necessary for safety, privacy, or technical reasons. A door should include a frame, handle, lock and hinges. 2. Windows to provide natural light and ventilation. A window should include a frame, lock, mesh and glass. 3. Ceilings and roofs free from significant cracks, mold and/or any other defects and impervious to water. 4. Finished floors free of significant cracks and other defects. 5. Walls free of significant cracks, mold and any other defects that provide privacy, security and optimize available space. This might include installing permanent or temporary partitions for the subdivision of rooms.

⁶ For more guidance see NRC’s unofficial translation of Jordanian tenancy laws:

[1\) Landlords and Tenants Law No 11 of 1994](#)

[2\) Civil Code No 43 of 1976 \(articles 658-710\)](#)

⁷ For more guidance see [NRC’s Legal, Regulatory and Protection Considerations for Urban Shelter Responses](#)

	<p>6. As stated in the Shelter Strategy for Jordan, ensure a minimum 3.5M² of habitable space per person, excluding kitchens and bathrooms.</p> <p>Interventions should take into account access for persons with reduced mobility. If this intervention does not incorporate disabled access a justification for this should be provided. For more guidance see the adjusted extract of the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Strategy for Jordan.</p>
Mechanical	<p>Every housing unit should have the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to functioning toilet, sink with taps, shower and plumbing. 2. Access to a kitchen that includes a functioning sink, taps, plumbing, safety measures for fire protection and ventilation of heating devices (electrical heaters, gas heaters, stoves, etc.) 3. Connection to a functioning water source and wastewater system within the building/housing unit for sanitation, cooking, washing, and cleaning.
Electrical	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to a safe electrical network that includes at least one power outlet per room compatible with domestic appliances. 2. Functional and safe switches, sockets, electrical fittings and wiring. 3. At least one light fitting per room. 4. Installation of circuit breaker.