



GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER

A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018

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ACRONYMS

HLP	Housing, Land and Property	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IOM	International Organization for Migration	WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

VISION

All refugees are able to satisfy their settlement and shelter needs in a safe, dignified and sustainable manner wherever they live, be it in urban or rural settings.





STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2014-2018 - UNHCR AND PARTNERS WILL:

1. SETTLEMENT

Enable refugees to access and live in dignity in secure settlements that improve their social, economic and environmental quality of life as a community.

2. SHELTER

Enable refugees to access shelter solutions that provide privacy, security and protection from the elements, emotional support, and a space to live and store belongings in a dignified manner.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Protection
- Age, gender and diversity
- Equity
- Accessibility
- Access
- Sustainability
- Community empowerment
- Appropriateness and reliability
- Environment

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Partnerships and coordination
- Capacity-building
- Communication and advocacy
- Integrated approaches
- Measurement
- Innovation



Kenya / Refugees in Kakuma camp / UNHCR / J. Björgvinsson / December 2011

HOW TO REACH RESULTS?

- Integrate settlement strategies and potential layouts in contingency planning processes
- Develop standard formats and operating procedures for designing and implementing settlement and shelter strategies
- Ensure all country operations implementing settlement and shelter programmes have sectors strategies
- Ensure systematic deployment of senior settlement and shelter experts at the onset of emergencies.
- Promote holistic and comprehensive design and development of settlements (i.e. Master Plan)
- Design and roll out urban settlement operational guidelines
- Develop a range of shelter models for all operational phases in urban and rural settlements
- Strengthen UNHCR's capacity to better respond to housing, land and property issues
- Invest in research and development for alternative and innovative shelter options
- Enhance settlement and shelter needs assessment methods and tools
- Finalize and roll-out sectoral monitoring and evaluation system
- Compile and catalogue settlement and shelter good practices to enhance institutional memory and technical reference
- Strengthen UNHCR and partners' capacity

SCOPE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Affected population in both rural and urban settings
- Integrated approach ensuring linkages with all relevant sectors
- Regular monitoring of global market developments

WHO HAS A ROLE TO PLAY?

- Refugee communities
- Government including relevant line ministries and host communities
- UNHCR at all levels and sectors
- UN agencies and other international organizations
- National and international NGOs
- Community and faith-based organizations
- Donor community
- Private sector
- Academia and Research institutions



INTRODUCTION

UNHCR'S GLOBAL SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER STRATEGY FOCUSES ON TWO MUTUALLY-REINFORCING OBJECTIVES THAT AIM TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES WHO ARE SEEKING PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE IN RURAL AND URBAN SETTINGS.

The first objective is to enable refugees to have access to secure settlements where they can live in dignity, with fewer socio-economic vulnerabilities and an improved quality of life. The second objective is aimed at ensuring access among refugees to shelter solutions that provide privacy, security, protection from the elements, and a sense of home.

At present, many refugees are not safe where they live, nor do they live in dignity with access to sustainable settlement and shelter possibilities. A timely and effective settlement and shelter response can significantly improve refugees' protection and ability to meet their basic needs as well as to strengthen their resilience to humanitarian crises and the impact of their displacement.

As a core component of UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate, this Strategy promotes a holistic approach to settlement and shelter responses adapted to the local context in which the refugees live. It provides a dynamic framework for UNHCR and its partners, relevant from contingency planning and preparedness to protracted situations and solutions. The Strategy will bring faster, more effective and innovative settlement and shelter solutions anchoring the refugee presence within the broader context of national and local development plans, fostering an integrated social and economic way of life.



Uganda / Congolese refugees / UNHCR / Rocco Nuri / August 2013

UNHCR's Shelter and Settlement Section (SSS), established in 2011, will steer the implementation of the Strategy. This will include providing support to field colleagues and partners when developing country-based settlement and shelter strategies and implementing a new monitoring system to support the effective measurement of sectoral programmes.

The Strategy should be seen as a companion to three other related UNHCR Strategies for 2014-2018 on public health, energy, and livelihoods, with which it shares a common structure.





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Protection:** The right to adequate housing was first recognized with Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The principle: 'Everyone has the right to adequate housing' is applicable in all stages of the displacement cycle prior to, during and after displacement, and is relevant to all people of concern, including women, girls, men, boys and children. Adequacy of housing includes security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.
2. **Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD):** Gender equality and respecting the rights of all refugees of all ages and backgrounds are central to the work of UNHCR. Special measures to ensure inclusiveness and accessibility for specific groups of concern, including women, adolescent girls and boys, the elderly, the young, people with disabilities, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or intersex, and women and men belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups will continue. UNHCR will ensure that women and girls access services as effectively as men and boys.¹
3. **Equity:** UNHCR seeks to ensure that refugees and others of concern can access quality shelter and viable settlement options, while prioritizing assistance to the most in need. Settlement and shelter programmes should strive to incorporate gender considerations and the full and equal participation of women, and involve vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This process will ensure that their interests are represented in decision-making initiatives.
4. **Accessibility:** Housing can only be adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized persons and groups are taken into account regardless of sex and age.
5. **Access:** Special measures will continue to be taken to ensure inclusiveness regardless of sex, age and disability. Accessibility to land constitutes a fundamental element of the realization of the right to adequate housing, and must also provide sustainable and non-discriminatory access to facilities essential for health, nutrition, security and comfort.
6. **Sustainability:** Policies and programmes should be developed and implemented with sustainability and durable solutions as the ultimate goal, taking into consideration appropriate technology, capacity-building of both refugees and local communities, and use of local skills, materials, techniques and knowledge.
7. **Community empowerment:** Refugees and the affected population at large should be empowered and capacitated at all stages to participate in programme planning, needs assessment, implementation and monitoring and evaluation in order to design acceptable, appropriate, sustainable and culturally-sensitive programmes. They should also be involved as much as possible in the design, construction, and maintenance of any shelter, settlement, and core relief item support. This participatory process should feed into developing settlement and shelter policy so that it will take into consideration refugees' needs, requirements and diverse profiles within the framework of international standards and human rights.
8. **Appropriateness and reliability:** Services should be appropriate to the context in which they are provided. Settlement and shelter designs should reflect the needs of the affected population, their cultural habits and their capacities, but should also attempt to build on existing resources and enhance access to infrastructure.
9. **Environment:** Settlement and shelter interventions need to be planned and implemented to mitigate, to the extent possible, the impact on the natural environment and to prevent hazard risks such as landslides, floods and earthquakes, among others. Attention should be given to laws and regulations governing the use of environmental impact assessments prior to the design and planning of the settlement and shelter programme.

1 See UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, 8 June 2011. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4def34f6887.html>



CONTEXT AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

MANY OF THE 35.8 MILLION REFUGEES AND OTHERS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE, DIGNIFIED AND SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER OPTIONS.

These options, whether in urban or rural areas, largely determine the protection environment of refugees and their opportunities to meet basic needs and achieve self-reliance.

Today, the majority of the world's refugees live outside of camps, largely due to the global megatrend of increasing urbanization.

In urban areas, many refugees have complex displacement patterns, share accommodation, live in non-functional public buildings, collective centres, in slums and informal types of settlements; often their living conditions are substandard. When large-scale displacements occur in urban areas, assessing the settlement and shelter options for refugees and implementing them - let alone preparing for them in the contingency planning phase - remain key challenges in the humanitarian response.

In rural settings, however, delivering protection and humanitarian assistance through refugee camps continues to predominate. Over 2.6 million refugees currently live in camps worldwide and have been displaced for over five years, and some for over a generation. While camps can be practical, particularly during emergencies, encampment results in a range of protection problems and pathologies, including aid dependency and isolation.



Lebanon / Syrian Refugees / UNHCR / E.Dorfman / August 2013

Regardless of where they live, refugees need more efficient and sustainable settlement and shelter options beyond camps. When developing settlements, more integrated approaches are required to anchor refugees within the existing social and economic life while taking into consideration the networks of infrastructure and services available in country.

Swift response in emergencies is essential but the quality of the response is equally important. Shelter should not be looked at in isolation. Closer linkages between settlement and shelter interventions with other sectors, such as SGBV, education, health and nutrition, WASH, energy, environment, and livelihoods, will decrease protection risks among refugees and improve their access to basic services.

Finally, measuring the impact of settlement and shelter programmes so as to enable effective monitoring and adjustment of interventions is paramount to the success of any sectoral strategy. At present, the existing monitoring and evaluation framework does not allow for adequate measurement of interventions over time.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

THE UNHCR GLOBAL SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER STRATEGY FOCUSES ON TWO MUTUALLY-REINFORCING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES THAT AIM TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES AND OTHERS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR WHO ARE SEEKING PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE IN RURAL AND URBAN SETTINGS.

UNHCR will strive to:

- 1. Enable refugees to access and live in dignity in secure settlements that improve their social, economic and environmental quality of life as a community.**
- 2. Enable refugees to access shelter solutions that provide privacy, security and protection from the elements, emotional support, and a space to live and store belongings in a dignified manner.**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE - SETTLEMENT

Enable refugees to access and live in dignity in secure settlements that improve their social, economic and environmental quality of life as a community

A human settlement derives from the structured landscape of a territory. It takes into consideration spatial allocation of functions while maintaining equilibrium between the needs of the population, the availability and allocation of resources, economic dynamics, the amelioration of living conditions, the provision of services and enhancing transportation networks, as well as recreational spaces. A settlement must address the needs of the community at large and be designed with the active involvement of affected populations, partners, and all sectors.

The global environment in which UNHCR operates is continuously evolving. UNHCR's enhanced capacity to design and develop settlements in the future is expected to reduce some of the refugees' vulnerabilities, facilitate camp management and increase self-reliance opportunities as well as set the foundations for durable solutions. Well-designed settlements reduce negative impacts on existing habitats, boost local economies and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid. Settlements can exist in both rural and urban settings.

A *rural* settlement is where displaced populations settle on land outside of cities and towns. The population is often dependent on agricultural and pastoral practices, and has fewer community infrastructure systems than in urban settlements. Rural contexts are defined by population thresholds that differ internationally.

An *urban* settlement is where displaced populations settle within an urban agglomeration such as a town or city. A master plan usually divides towns or cities into zones regulated by norms based on specific sectors such as housing, hygiene, habitat, and environment. Zones are inclusive of residential areas, services and infrastructures, and spaces for administrative, commercial and industrial activities.

Within urban and rural settings, settlements can be either formal or informal:

- a) *Formal* settlements refer to land that has been classified by relevant government or council authorities as a residential zone or is occupied by formal housing.
- b) *Informal* settlements are unplanned and where housing, shelter and services have been constructed on land to which the occupants have no legal claim, or which they occupy illegally.

Options for accommodating refugees vary. They can be planned camps, public buildings usually referred to as collective centres, as well as reception or transit centres. Other options are houses or apartments located within villages, towns or cities of the host communities. In the future, UNHCR will work with a wide range of partners to develop an agreed upon typology.

The **Enabling Actions** to deliver this strategic objective are the following:

i. ***Strengthen UNHCR's engagement in ensuring that settlement strategies are embedded in contingency planning processes and preparedness plans***

Settlement planning should start at the earliest stages of contingency planning and include the development of preparedness measures such as settlement design and shelter solutions. It should consider carefully the specific context of the affected area and the host population, as well as the adverse effects and dynamics created by an evolving crisis.

Discussions and negotiations with host government authorities responsible for the land allocation and the provision of security are informed by contextual analysis. This analysis should identify advantages and disadvantages of various settlement options and establish whether ethnic and cultural affinities exist between the potential refugees and the host communities. Settlement planning and responses should mitigate friction, reduce potential tensions among various groups, and ultimately reduce security risks. The socio-economic dynamics and natural resources available in a given settlement location should also be taken into consideration.

This process should be undertaken prior to the emergency response and with sectoral experts involved throughout. Architects and land-use planners must interact with a multifunctional team including but not limited to protection, health, water and community service specialists, engineers, economists, sociologists, community service specialists, and programme and site managers. These professionals should work together with government counterparts, local communities and other stakeholders so that the crisis-affected population is able to live in dignity and security and work towards self-reliance.

ii. ***Enhance UNHCR's capacity to deliver a combination of settlement options***

Applying a combination of settlement options will require a change in attitudes for UNHCR and its partners. For decades, UNHCR's 'preferred' response to population displacement has been the establishment of planned camps, especially in rural areas. While UNHCR's main focus has been on refugees in camps, the needs of refugees living elsewhere, the so-called 'out of camp populations' also have to be accommodated. The limitations of current policy guidance and sectoral strategic approaches have led to shortcomings in addressing these needs.



Myanmar / Rakhine State / OCHA / May 2013

Stronger efforts to strengthen community resilience are also required. All settlement responses should support existing coping strategies and promote self-sufficiency and self-management of those affected. Local skills and resources should be maximized as long as this does not result in adverse effects on the host population or local economy. Any response should take into account known risks, and minimize long-term adverse impacts on the natural environment.

Settlement design should encompass adequate land management and take into account the environmental impact on affected areas. At the same time, settlement planning should also maximize opportunities for both the refugee and host populations to establish, maintain or enhance livelihood support activities. Creating appropriate spaces and infrastructure for economic activity is critical for livelihoods. Thus, it is important to develop mixed land-use strategies that combine settlements with livelihoods, and respond to market demand and the potential of the informal sector.

UNHCR aims to promote planning for a range of settlement options:

- a) The establishment of a planned camp in rural settings cannot always be avoided, but the potential negative impacts can be mitigated by associating various alternative arrangements such as residing in host settlements and ensuring linkages between camp and host settlements. Ultimately this could help to minimize the camp size and ensure that minimum standards are upheld, including limiting camps to a maximum size of 20,000 persons.
- b) The creation of camps in urban settings is less likely. It is therefore important to map out availability of social and low-cost housing opportunities. A range of options that are affordable to refugees should be provided, and issues related to land and property tenure have to be addressed.

Options should be tailored around the existing capacity and resources available within villages, towns and cities and their communities. In some instances, refugees require cash-based assistance to pay rent. Establishing an appropriate level of this assistance and monitoring its impact is essential. Otherwise, refugees may seek cheaper and often substandard housing solutions in informal settlements which have limited access to services and carry a high risk of eviction. Cash-based interventions for shelter and other sectors will become increasingly important in the future for UNHCR and its partners.

iii. ***Promote the Master Plan concept that will be applied while designing and developing settlements***

Master planning should reflect a consensus reached by the host community, affected population, government and humanitarian and development actors as to how to lay out a settlement. It must take into account land management, existing development plans, and environmental and habitat considerations. This should help to mitigate some of the negative impacts that a new settlement may have, especially when established in fragile environments. Political and social sustainability as well as controlled use of natural resources should be the key elements of planning and should feature in negotiations with governments while selecting site locations.

Master planning is a continuous process that frames the overall assistance strategy. It is dynamic and should reflect changing priorities, population movements and profiles, and be informed by regular detailed assessments and consultations among various stakeholders, including the inhabitants. This is to ensure that the allocation of functions that include residential areas and services should be tailored around a spatial analysis where populations live, grow and interact. Improved allocation of space is vital to ensure that women, men, boys and girls benefit from equal access to adequate living conditions, safety and security in their new settlement, adequate protection in their homes, and enhanced co-existence with neighbours.



RESPONSE MASTER PLAN

A 'response master plan' should define the best settlement typologies to be adopted in a given context and should ensure that settlements relate to each other and to the existing habitat. The plan should be defined in close collaboration with the local government and informed by the population profile, their specific needs, their origin and location as well as their relationship to existing settlements, communal service infrastructure and natural resources.

It should be based on a macro, meso and micro scale analysis whereby a particular settlement is designed taking into account the network of services, infrastructure and resources available in the settlement's vicinity. The humanitarian response must learn from and contribute to long-term development objectives and consider a potential settlement exit strategy at the very onset of the planning stage.

Applying the master plan concept in UNHCR operations is meant to support the core components of UNHCR's protection and durable solutions mandate, whereby enhanced settlement planning is connected to land, shelter, services (water, sanitation, education, health, community services and recreational activities), infrastructure, livelihoods, environment and governance.

iv. Strengthen capacity to address housing, land and property issues

In any settlement and shelter programme, Housing, Land and Property (HLP) considerations are essential and must be prioritized throughout all stages of the planning and response phases.

Emergency responses exacerbate land tenure issues and impact on settlement patterns in both urban and rural contexts. Certain activities, such as constructing shelters, establishing refugee settlements and organizing the return to areas of origin, may significantly affect the land tenure of local communities and the livelihoods of refugees and other displaced people. During displacement, failing to determine who has rights to the land may impede crucial site selection, shelter allocation, water, pastoral and agricultural access and investments in infrastructure. HLP support can help facilitate the provision of food, shelter and other assistance and help reduce protection concerns including tensions among communities, discrimination against groups (especially of women and girls) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Promoting the right to return and property restitution or compensation should be priorities for returning refugees in post-conflict situations. These measures can contribute to a sustainable return by reducing the number of land conflicts and can contribute considerably to peace processes by addressing factors that are politically, economically and socially destabilizing. The guarantee of security of tenure and the right to own and inherit HLP assets for both women and men is also a positive move towards gender equality.



Rwanda / UNHCR / M.Alhadi / May 2013

RWANDA MASTER PLAN

Building on the Master Plan Concept promoted in the Strategy, UNHCR established a partnership with Stanford University and Ennead Architects to develop tools that could assist UNHCR and partners when establishing new refugee settlements. An initial version of the Master Plan Toolkit has been produced building on academic studies in various UNHCR refugee operations field missions to Rwanda.

The toolkit is essentially composed of 6 phases: checklist of issues, decision making aid, best practice kits, computation and rapid iteration and benchmark template.

The UNHCR operation in Rwanda provides solid grounds to pilot the Master Plan Approach while setting up the new settlement in Mugombwa and monitor its impact on the lives of refugees and the host community.

How to Reach Results for Settlement

1. Embed settlement strategies in contingency plan processes, and include a range of suitable settlement options and of settlement layout for a given situation.
2. Enhance settlement planning and design capacity within UNHCR including physical planning, topographic studies and contour line assessments as an integral part of the preparedness plans.
3. Adopt the master plan approach in at least two countries during 2014 while its application is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years.
4. Design and roll out settlement operational guidelines for refugees living in villages, towns and cities.



DRC / IDPs / UNHCR / Brian Sokol / 2013

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO - SHELTER

To enable refugees to access shelter solutions which provide privacy, security, protection from the elements, emotional support and a space to live and store belongings in a dignified manner.

A refugee shelter is first and foremost a home. More technically, UNHCR defines a shelter as a habitable covered living space providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity. Refugees have the right to adequate shelter in order to benefit from protection from the elements, space to live and store belongings as well as privacy, comfort and emotional support.

Shelter should be adapted according to geographical context, climate, cultural practices and habits, local availability of skills within the affected population at large as well as accessibility to adequate construction materials in any given country. Shelter assistance should, therefore, be tailored around these variables. It cannot be standardized. Planning and responding to shelter needs is a contextual and dynamic process.

Emergency shelter assistance should gradually evolve into more durable and sustainable solutions. The earliest possible development of comprehensive shelter strategies is therefore necessary to ensure that appropriate options are available for all stages of the displacement cycle. Any shelter strategy should show a clear trajectory toward and include transitional shelter approaches. Shelter strategies should reflect an incremental approach and process for sheltering populations, through which long-term strategic orientations are set together with affected populations and host government authorities.

The **Enabling Actions** to deliver this strategic objective are:

v. Enhance UNHCR's capacity to establish shelter strategies

Emergency shelter preparedness and response relies on the capacity to develop shelter strategies in a timely way. These must be informed by a projection of needs, surveys of potentially affected areas, an analysis of locally available resources, and the demographics of the affected population. Shelter assistance should be tailored around the social and cultural preferences of the affected households to meet their needs.

Through this Strategy, UNHCR will strengthen its capacity to develop shelter strategies at the early stages of contingency planning. During the response phase, the strategy must reflect the changing needs for shelter that gradually evolve during the emergency towards a longer-term situation.

The development of an appropriate shelter response is a process and not simply the delivery of a product, such as a tent or a temporary shelter solution. Shelter strategies should support timely and quality procurement, warehousing, and delivery of shelter products and materials to the most remote operational areas. They should also seek a range of alternative shelter options that could potentially be available locally. This will boost local economies and may help overcome potential gaps in delivery. Local shelter solutions should be promoted to ensure that traditional building practices and cultural habits are taken into account in shelter design and to facilitate the active participation of refugees and other displaced people in both the planning and construction process. Involving communities is vital for the sustainability and efficiency of the shelter assistance and to support families in their efforts to rebuild their lives.

Strategies should ensure that shelter options are viewed in an integrated manner, as part of their surroundings and the whole settlement, particularly with regard to infrastructure. The type of shelter assistance given to the affected population is informed by the type of settlement chosen or adopted. Hence, shelter strategies must be designed and embedded in the settlement designs, access to basic services and the need to ensure healthy, comfortable and dignified space for living.

vi. Strengthen UNHCR and partners' shelter responses

Efforts of UNHCR and its partners will focus on developing shelter responses which are informed by the results of preliminary needs assessments as well as by data on population demographics. The analysis of the profiles of the population of concern and their vulnerabilities are essential when designing shelter models and methodologies for shelter delivery.

Needs Assessments

The effectiveness of technical approaches depends on the capacity to conduct needs assessments that include qualitative and quantitative data, including data disaggregated by sex and age. Standard operating procedures and guidelines exist for coordinated humanitarian assessments. But tools for collecting information related to settlement, shelter and living conditions have to be improved, with a particular focus on the community level. Through the Strategy, UNHCR with partners will undertake a review of existing tools, analyze their effectiveness and subsequently upgrade them while developing any new tools required. This will be linked with data collection and information management systems at the global level.

Shelter Design

Preferred shelter solutions must be designed and engineered on the basis of context-specific structural and performance requirements. Emergency shelter options are often still limited to tents or shelter kits. When displacement is protracted, alternative shelter options should be considered. Depending on the context, this may entail taking into account traditional homesteads such as huts,

mud houses, and dome shelters. Consideration of housing briefs and templates including house repairs, construction and rehabilitation may also be appropriate, particularly in urban settings. The use of cash-based interventions as an option for meeting shelter needs may be relevant in other instances.

There is no single shelter solution, so a menu of options is required. Catalogues collecting best practices and sets of traditional homestead typologies relevant to different locations, context and climates will be developed to guide and facilitate specialists in applying appropriate shelter designs. The collection should include best practices in designing shelters that mitigate protection concerns, such as SGBV, promote culturally-sensitive practices, facilitate access for disabled persons and also focus on the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys.

Shelter design checklists will guide the development of shelter projects underlining the key features necessary to ensure that all designs respect standard minimum technical criteria. The checklists have to address hazard risks and safety, timeliness and construction speed, lifespan, size and shape, privacy, security and cultural appropriateness, ventilation and thermal comfort; environmental considerations, cost, standards and building codes.

Shelter Programming

Judging the success of a shelter programme requires the capacity to measure the changes in people's lives. Shelter programming must be designed and developed to reflect the views of both men and women and must also respect codes, principles and standards throughout all the phases of the shelter project cycles.

UNHCR will continue to capitalize on its and its partners' expertise and to make sure that lessons drawn from shelter programmes globally are translated in a harmonized and standardized guidance to support a more systematic approach. UNHCR will design and publish Shelter Standard Operating Procedures to assist field teams in the development of shelter programmes. Shelter specialists must function as an integral part of the programming processes to ensure that shelter needs are given adequate priority while achieving protection goals.

vii. Invest in research and development for alternative shelter options

For decades, UNHCR and its partners have been confronted with the challenge of delivering adequate shelter in a timely and efficient manner. UNHCR deploys thousands of tents in its worldwide operations each year. They can be rapidly delivered and installed, providing life-saving shelter assistance. Nevertheless, they remain expensive and have limited lifespans.

An Inter-Agency Committee composed of UNHCR, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been active since 2009 in research efforts aimed at increasing the quality and performance of tents through the development of improved technical specifications. The Inter-Agency Committee has invested in the improvement of shelter-related core relief items. These include the plastic sheets for roofing, flooring or walling, shed nets for shelter insulation, winterization kits for tents and other shelter accessories to improve living conditions in emergency settings.

In tandem with these efforts, UNHCR continues to survey the market for shelter products which may be suitable for specific operational and environmental contexts and can be procured internationally. A shelter market survey has helped in the development of a catalogue of shelter options available in the global market, including foldable and modular light shelters, pre-fabricated options and other innovative types of housing. This may in turn lead to frame agreements with suppliers and manufacturers that would enlarge the scope of shelter products and materials in UNHCR's global emergency stockpile. In addition, UNHCR will continue to reach out to various academic and private entities to explore other potential innovative solutions in responding to the ever changing needs for shelter and seize opportunities presented by new technologies. To this end, among other initiatives UNHCR is collaborating with the Refugee Housing Team to harvest innovative technologies to develop and test a new shelter type.

Given the evolving nature of the shelter technology and materials, research and development in the sector has to be continuous, vibrant and flexible. Testing, quality control and visual inspection of products should remain at the forefront of the shelter innovation process.



Burkina Faso / UNHCR / B. Camara / June 2013

SELF-STANDING TENT TESTING IN BURKINA FASO

Since 2009, the Inter-Agency Committee (UNHCR/IFRC/ICRC) has been working to improve the performance of the family tent by undertaking a variety of research projects which ultimately seek to diversify the shelter solutions available to refugees and other displaced people.

In 2013, one of these projects entailed field testing three different tent designs (Dome tents, Hexagonal tents and Umbrella square tents) in Burkina Faso in collaboration with the Burkina-Faso Red Cross Society and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Throughout the test, UNHCR and its partners studied the benefits and drawbacks of each tent regarding ventilation, insulation, resilience to extreme weather conditions, space, cultural suitability and beneficiary preference.

The outcome of the field test led to the development of an improved design of the dome/tunnel tent including its technical specifications. Pending the validation of this model by UNHCR, IFRC and ICRC's technical team, 30 prototypes will be produced by various manufacturers and will be tested in two different field locations respectively in hot and cold environments.

viii. Focus on shelter solutions in urban settings

Shelter response is even more challenging in urban settings. Displacement to cities frequently results in people living in substandard and overcrowded shelters, squatting in shanty towns or on land owned by others. Often, refugees are forced to settle on peripheral land which is unsuitable for residential development, such as on waste sites, along rivers, canals, roads, or railways or on steep slopes. In such locations, residents are exposed to high levels of risk from natural disasters, as well as the problems of living without security of tenure.

Refugees and returnees must compete in the low-cost housing market, but seldom have enough money for a deposit or the necessary local references. Regulations requiring proof of residence or citizenship may restrict access to formal tenancy arrangements. As a result, refugees are frequently exploited by landlords.

Shelter assistance in urban settings should minimize risk of eviction, exploitation and abuses, overcrowded situations, limited access to services, and decent hygiene condition. UNHCR should work closely with sectoral humanitarian organizations and development agencies that have expertise in assisting and developing urban areas.

Strategies for the provision of shelter/housing solutions must consider urban planning issues, including analysis of residential areas, housing affordability and availability.



India/Refugees from Myanmar/UNHCR/T. Bahar/November 2010

How to Reach Results for Shelter

1. Develop and disseminate a standard format and standard operating procedures for designing and implementing shelter strategies.
2. Ensure all country operations implementing shelter programmes have a shelter strategy.
3. Develop, maintain and disseminate a set of shelter models for emergency, transition and durable solution phases in urban and rural settlements.
4. Launch a competition among architects and students to collect a set of designs for 'traditional homestead typologies' applicable in a range of climatic areas.
5. Pursue continued research and development for the improvement of tent performance as well as development of alternative shelter options applying innovative technologies.

How to Reach Results for both Settlement and Shelter

1. Enhance settlement and shelter needs assessment methods and tools and make them available to operations.
2. Publish a Settlement and Shelter Handbook, including provision of standards, develop tools as well as a set of settlement and shelter typologies and layouts.
3. Increase the number of settlement and shelter experts available in the emergency rosters.
4. Ensure systematic deployment of senior settlement and shelter experts at the onset of emergencies.
5. Enhance local settlement and shelter capacity so that national officers are recruited and trained to support sustainable settlement planning and implementation.
6. Make settlement and shelter experts available within country operations to monitor and evaluate settlement activities and impact, and to ensure evolution of the settlement throughout various assistance phases that end with durable solutions and final decommissioning of the settlement.
7. Equip settlement and shelter experts with updated set of tools to advise managers and provide specialised support in establishing a sectoral programme and in determining the resource requirements.
8. Catalogue a set of standards and flexible UNHCR settlement and shelter options (with all related technical documentation) through inventory of the existing best practice that is published and regularly updated.
9. Establish a settlement and shelter platform as a community of practice.



Bangladesh/Refugees from Myanmar/UNHCR/C. Sattlberger/April 1992

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

UNHCR'S GLOBAL SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER STRATEGY IS GUIDED BY SIX OVERARCHING STRATEGIC APPROACHES THAT SERVE TO ENABLE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY.

PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNHCR coordinates with a diverse range of governments, UN, international organisations, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and faith-based partners in its refugee operations. The Agency is committed to the effective participation of refugees consulting them on decisions which affect their lives. The role of governments remains central and UNHCR will continue to enhance cooperation with national authorities and seek to better understand national and local rules and regulations and environmental and development plans. UNHCR's existing partnerships help millions of people, but the implementation of the Strategy will call for new, more diversified and innovative partnerships. While traditional partnerships with the IFRC, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGOs community are strong and will continue to grow, dialogue with the private sector, academia, architect boards and sectoral national networks will also be strengthened.

UNHCR recognizes that settlement and shelter assistance requires a well-coordinated internal response that ensures effective communication and achieves synergies among various divisions, bureaux and regional and country offices. The expansion of integrated multi-sectoral approaches will ensure that settlement and shelter strategies optimize the well-being of refugees. SGBV, child protection, education, HIV, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, nutrition, livelihood and environmental issues are mainstreamed throughout the process of delivering adequate settlement and shelter solutions.

UNHCR provides leadership and coordination for settlement and shelter responses in both refugee and conflict-related IDP situations. Together with IFRC, UNHCR co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster and, working with partner agencies, plays an important role in ensuring implementation of the IASC Transformative Agenda. Through the Transformative Agenda, UNHCR and its partners are seeking to improve cluster coordination, leadership and accountability, as well as delivery in the field, where it matters most.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

All settlement and shelter programmes will have a training and capacity-building component. UNHCR will ensure that staff, partner organizations, local governments, refugees and host communities benefit from settlement and shelter knowledge generation as direct participants or indirect beneficiaries.

Building technical capacity for settlement and shelter within UNHCR and partner organizations is essential. In 2011, UNHCR established the Settlement and shelter Section as an important step forward in building the organization's capacity to provide technical support to field operations, but more remains to be done to build internal capacity and the broader network of trained and capable specialist staff. The pool of expertise within UNHCR needs to be expanded, including ensuring continuity after the emergency phase when affected populations need support in securing more durable shelter solutions. The recruitment of national staff and tapping into local technical expertise will be important.

The learning strategy for the settlement and shelter sector developed with UNHCR's Global Learning Centre has a dual focus on (1) training for all UNHCR staff on settlement and shelter issues, as they relate to Protection, Programme and all sectors; and (2) focused and in-depth technical training for specialists. UNHCR will also continue to develop academic training programmes for practitioners that, in some cases, have been embedded in university courses. Formal learning programmes will be reinforced by senior technical experts at the Headquarters and regional levels, who will provide on the job training and coaching to more junior specialist staff that is adapted to the operational context.

COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

UNHCR will disseminate the Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter widely to enhance awareness of its engagement as well as to reiterate the Agency's commitment to building upon its experience, while at the same time pursuing innovative approaches. UNHCR will communicate information on and advocate for settlement and shelter strategies, programmes, and related activities to internal and affiliated staff, partners, governments, refugees and host communities. Messages will

be transparent and carried out in culturally appropriate and accessible ways. Donor community interest in settlement and shelter is evident, but to maintain and reinforce it, UNHCR will make greater efforts to advocate for the most critical needs and communicate the challenges. A stronger and clearer communication strategy in the sector is a priority in order to reach out to the public and create a better understanding of existing gaps.

INTEGRATED APPROACHES

The settlement and shelter needs of refugees are integral to nearly all sectors. Consider the links, for example, with protection, SGBV, education, health and nutrition, WASH, energy, environment, and livelihoods. The Settlement and shelter Section will work with all other sectors in the organization at the headquarters, regional and country levels to collaborate and coordinate policies and interventions. UNHCR will ensure that settlement and shelter interventions for refugees take into account the needs of governments and their development plans in order to ensure their sustainability.

MEASUREMENT

Measurement of the impact that settlement and shelter programmes have and UNHCR's accountability to beneficiaries and the donor community is fundamental. To achieve better measurement and improve the impact of settlement and shelter programmes on peoples' lives, UNHCR needs to revise and harmonize current monitoring and evaluation systems, tools and indicators.

The UNHCR Results Framework currently includes two objectives and six impact indicators in the framework that relate to settlement and shelter:

Objective	Impact indicators	
Shelter and infrastructure established, improved and maintained	Shelter	% of households living in adequate dwellings
		% of female-headed households living in adequate dwellings
		Average covered floor area per person (m ²)
		# persons per shelter
	Settlement	Average camp area per person (m ²)
Population has sufficient basic and domestic items	Core Relief Items	% of households whose needs for basic and domestic items are met

While significant progress has been achieved in improving the number of countries reporting on these indicators and the quantity of data available, UNHCR needs to explore how the quality and consistency of settlement and shelter data can be enhanced, while also ensuring clarity and simplicity in reporting.

Measuring the adequacy of shelter remains a challenge, not only for UNHCR but for all agencies working in this area. To report comprehensively on the “% of households living in adequate dwellings”, a minimum amount of technical data, which measures qualitative aspects of the shelter, needs to be collected. UNHCR works in a wide range of contexts, climates and cultural settings, and the ‘adequacy’ of dwellings will vary depending upon local standards. Detailed guidance on what technical shelter data should be collected and how to collect it does not exist and the definition of ‘adequate’ remains subjective and inconsistent between operations.

While UNHCR has been supporting affected populations in a range of settlement types for many years, the emphasis on monitoring the impact of settlement interventions has been less than that for shelter. Infrastructure projects that support the enhancement of settlements are included within the objective “shelter and infrastructure established, improved and maintained”; however the only settlement-related impact indicator under the objective, “average camp area per person (m²)”, relates solely to settlement size. As with adequate shelter, detailed guidance on the data and analysis required to measure the quality of a settlement currently does not exist. In addition, UNHCR is increasingly working in out-of-camp settings, and settlement data collection should be made relevant to urban areas and host villages.

The provision of core relief items is also inherently linked to the adequacy of settlement and shelter. In fact, core relief items may include tents and shelter-related construction materials, as well as other domestic items. While there is an indicator for the “% of households whose needs for basic and domestic items are met”, it is not a straightforward matter to separate the shelter and non-shelter components and to measure the impact of the core relief items on the quality of the living conditions of the population of concern.

To enhance UNHCR’s ability to monitor settlement and shelter programmes, UNHCR has launched a project to develop a monitoring system and tools in order to address the above mentioned shortcomings. The project, which was initiated in 2013, will be piloted in three selected countries in 2014. Recommendations and lessons learned will inform any necessary revision of the system and will be accompanied by the development of a training module and guidelines explaining how to collect, input and analyze the data. Ultimately, this project will enhance the capacity of UNHCR and partner management to monitor gaps, needs and trends in the sector for strategic planning, decision-making and coordination.

INNOVATION

UNHCR continues to draw inspiration from its history and tradition, but is equally committed to finding creative and innovative solutions to settlement and shelter problems that improve the wellbeing and dignity of refugees in a changing world. Meeting these challenges requires the continuous modernization of working methods and application of new and innovative technologies and construction materials. In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to improve the quality and types of settlement and shelter designs. UNHCR has engaged with its partners in efforts to develop new concepts for settlement design, the improvement of technical specifications for tents, development of self-standing tents and accessories, such as winterization kits, and the testing of new shelter prototypes. Other initiatives include the development of mobile phone applications for site planners, and tools for assessments that integrate GPS technology. To make this research more effective, UNHCR and its partners within the sector, will explore collaborations with the private sector and professional associations, such as architect boards, and will expand existing dialogue with universities.

UNHCR will also launch a variety of “designing a home” thematic competitions aimed at developing creative pilot projects for alternative shelter solutions while regular market surveys ensure that UNHCR is continually updated on the availability of new shelter products. Modern technology can also be applied to traditional solutions, enhancing the durability of culturally-acceptable options. With increasing interconnectivity and interdependence, UNHCR will explore ways of creating platforms, networks and communities of practice that enable sharing knowledge and expertise on thematic issues and innovative approaches. UNHCR will also enhance dialogue with the donor community so as to ensure that investment in research and development is supported.



REFUGEE HOUSING UNIT

The Refugee Housing Project is a partnership between UNHCR, the IKEA Foundation and the Refugee Housing Unit. The aim of the project is to develop the specifications and production of a shelter model which draws from innovative technologies and materials.

The concept has been developed based on three core design drivers:

- 1. Modularity.** The modular design makes the RHU a solution which can be adapted to a variety of contexts. The frame combined with plastic sheeting can provide an initial emergency shelter. By adding panels, a shade net and a solar light, the shelter can gradually evolve toward a more sustainable and comfortable home.
- 2. Safe and reliable.** The RHU is designed based on minimum technical requirements tailored around international building standards. Field testing is currently taking place in Ethiopia, Iraq and Lebanon so as to assess the technical viability and beneficiary acceptance.
- 3. Cost effective.** A main consideration in the design of this project was to pursue an alternative light weight and easily transportable shelter which will ultimately diversify UNHCR's shelter response.

Upon completion of the field testing, the RHU technical specifications will be revised and subsequently validated to enable potential manufacturing and widespread use.





