

Alternative to Camps Guidelines – Ladder of Options

September 2018

Overview/Current Situation

The escalation of conflict in Yemen since March 2015 has brought the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Yemen to just over 2,000,000. As conflict continues and the humanitarian situation deteriorates, multiple internal displacement continues and the number is estimated to increase in the months ahead especially with the ongoing West coast emergency. The current conflict has now increased the number of people in need to 22.5 million people, a staggering 75 per cent of the total population.

While the Host community may have significant capacity to host the displaced population and is the preferred option for most IDPs there had been no attempt to assess and estimate what absorption capacity exists and can be supported. Similarly although renting is the second most preferred option and rental subsidy is a significant part of the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster response there had been no attempt to assess the rental housing stock and capacity to absorb more families. However these assessments are now an integral part of the alternatives to camps to ensure these options are and remain viable.

So far there are very few official camps in Yemen due, in large part, to the preference of IDPs for residing with host families/communities. The dearth of appropriate land for constructing camps and the preference for the humanitarian community to support IDP shelter preferences due to previous experience in Yemen of establishing IDP camps (2010 - 2015 in Hajjah, Haradh) which contributed to the protraction of the displacement. Further there is common agreement that given the limited resources available, the resources required for constructing camps and providing services would be much better spent on improving existing communities and supporting basic services in host communities. This would support the larger community who are also in a very vulnerable state and are sometimes worse off than IDPs.

Further, supporting camps at this juncture would be inconsistent with the strategy that has been adopted in the HRP (Humanitarian Response Plan) 2018 where the focus is on identifying and supporting more sustainable longer term solutions in line with IDP preferences.

Considerations for Planned Camps

Camps can facilitate the rapid provision of protection and life-saving assistance in the event of a large-scale IDP influx. The establishment of camps can also facilitate the identification of people with specific needs and the delivery of services to them. While camps are an important tool, they nevertheless represent a compromise that might limit the rights and freedoms of IDPs and too often remain after the emergency phase and the essential reasons for their existence have passed.

Experience, the world over, has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned. Living in camps can engender dependency and weaken the ability of IDPs to manage their own lives, which perpetuates the trauma of displacement and creates barriers to solutions, whatever form they take. Camps can also distort local economies and development planning, while also causing negative environmental impacts in the surrounding area. In some contexts, camps may contribute to the prejudice and discrimination against certain groups like the Muhamasheen and increase critical protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child protection concerns and human trafficking. Camps may also not contribute to security, and become venues for the forced recruitment or indoctrination of IDPs. Faced with these risks and challenges, many IDPs decide to settle outside of camps or designated areas.

When setting up a camp, the humanitarian community, host governments and partners also make significant investments in infrastructure and systems for the delivery of basic services. The running costs for maintaining and operating these dedicated facilities and systems are also considerable and often must be sustained for many years or even decades. These investments are typically lost when IDPs go back to their areas of origin, particularly where camps are located in isolated areas far from local communities, so that facilities cannot be handed over to them.

While the humanitarian community will always retain its accountability for ensuring that the needs of IDPs are met, camps are not the only, or often, the best mechanism for the delivery of services.

Alternatives to camps should ultimately be more sustainable and cost-effective, because they harness the potential of IDPs, rationalise service delivery and allow for more targeted assistance to those most in need. Achieving these objectives, however, may require greater early investments, in order to realise such efficiencies later. Making alternatives to camps work also calls for strengthened protection outreach and monitoring which may be more labour and resource intensive than in a camp setting. These increased costs, however, should be offset by the reductions in direct assistance, as more IDPs become self-reliant and are able to meet their own basic needs sooner rather than later.

Ladder of Options

In support of the Government of Yemen, the humanitarian community will seek to find alternative shelter solutions for IDPs and the construction of camps will be considered as a last resort in line with best practice the world over. The creation of IDP camps should be only as an option of last resort after exploring all other feasible options in consultation with the authorities and IDPs, in particular women, children, vulnerable and minorities, who encounter numerous concerns specific to them.

The Humanitarian community, in support of the Government of Yemen, is accountable for ensuring that IDPs are able to access protection and assistance wherever they are living. Millions of IDPs have settled peacefully outside of camps in both rural and urban areas, living on land or in housing that they rent, own or occupy informally or in hosting arrangements within communities or families. Camps nevertheless remain an important feature of the humanitarian landscape.

Pursuing alternatives to camps means working to remove restrictions so that IDPs have the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community, either from the beginning of displacement or as soon as possible thereafter. As far as possible livelihoods opportunities will be integrated in all the alternatives being considered.

The Shelter/NFI/CCM Cluster in coordination with its Partners and the local authorities have developed these guidelines which recommends a 'ladder of options' for IDPs in displacement where the situation in the areas of origin has been determined by the humanitarian community to be unsafe for return. Each step in the ladder of options should be comprehensively explored and assessed with the affected populations before 'moving up the ladder'. The ladder of options will be applied in consultation with the affected population through focus group discussions to ensure that the most appropriate response is provided.

Although there is agreement on implementing an 'integrated response' to the needs of IDPs in Yemen it has so far had limited success, but with agreement among Cluster coordinators on implementing a pilot in 44 IDP hosting sites there is resolute movement towards provision of a more coordinated integrated IDP response even if it will be have to be adapted depending on whether it is implemented in IDP hosting sites or in host communities.

1. Host Families

According to the September 2017 TFPM 16th Report 77% of the displaced families in Yemen live within host families or private settings. Of this population about half (some 36%) are living in host families that are relatives and some (11%) with non-relatives. Clearly the preferred option for emergency accommodation is the host family arrangement. However host family arrangements have been overstretched and need to be supported by the humanitarian community to be a safe and sustainable shelter option. In December 2015 17% of IDPs were hosted in sites, in December 2017 this rose to 23% and families moved from host families and rentals to IDP Hosting Sites due to lack of sustainable support and also linked to the nature of the IDP hosting sites ensuring that IDPs are more easily identified and (hopefully) assisted which has not been the case. Host families should be provided with additional shelter assistance after an assessment and consultation with beneficiaries and host families. In order to mitigate the burden on host families and minimize potential conflict, assistance should be provided to the IDP family in order to enable them to contribute to household needs and to the host family to support the burden of hosting additional families, based on their socio economic status.

2. Rental Subsidy

Out of the population living within host families and private settings some 22% are living in private rented accommodation. This shelter option represents the second most preferred option for displaced Yemenis. The provision of rental subsidy is appropriate as it affords families transitional accommodation until return is possible with the support of the humanitarian community and provides a decent level of accommodation. It is a flexible solution and can be supported for as long as funds allow. The Shelter/NFI/CCM Cluster recommends rental subsidy, as a transitional shelter option, to be supported for 9 – 12 months and combined with livelihood options so that families are in a position to continue to support themselves and pay their rent after support is withdrawn.

3. Transitional Shelter (Family and communal)

The Shelter/NFI/CCM Cluster will work with the Yemeni local authorities to identify land for IDP families who cannot go back to their areas of origin but would benefit from transitional shelter support in displacement. Government land should be in locations where there are existing basic services including WASH, Health, Education etc, as far as possible. The Shelter/NFI/CCM Cluster will assist these families to construct transitional shelters on government land or land that the family can identify for themselves (with clear land agreements). This option offers families a decent appropriate shelter option and supports local markets/economies. If the land is not adjacent to basic services these will need to be assured including access to Health, Education, Food, WASH etc

4. Existing IDP Hosting Sites (excluding schools/health centres etc)

There are 776 IDP Hosting Sites (480 Collective centres and 296 Spontaneous sites as @ September 2017) in 16 out of 22 Governorates so far assessed in Yemen and they are in very poor condition. Some 23% of IDPs find themselves in these sites when they have little other choice. Although far from a preferred option the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster and the humanitarian community should be prepared to work with the Yemeni authorities to identify potential communal sites such as government or private buildings that can accommodate additional IDPs. *Please note that schools and health facilities are excluded.* Where necessary, these sites can be upgraded and/or expanded to accommodate the newly displaced through the provision of emergency shelter construction materials. In parallel the IDP hosting Sites Management and Coordination structures should be established to set community self-management committees on site. Capacity assessments on IDP hosting Sites would be done by Site Management and Coordination teams as part of the Cluster contingency plan.

5. New Sites (short term): Public or Private Buildings (Apartments, Government offices etc)

In collaboration with local government authorities, the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster and its Partners involved in finding shelter solutions should identify public or private buildings that could accommodate the newly displaced (prioritising empty public or private buildings that will not be required in the next 6 – 9 months). *Please note that schools and health facilities are excluded* This option should only be used in extreme emergency situations and is only for a maximum of 6 months until an appropriate shelter solution is found for the families.

These buildings can be (rented for private buildings) or allocated by the authorities for public buildings and upgraded, particularly in terms of security (lighting, security patrols or community watch programmes, Water and Sanitation and privacy concerns, such as partitions etc). Emergency shelters may be provided within the grounds where public or private buildings cannot house all of the displaced. Short term shelter to bridge gaps may also be provided through tents in this specific situation.

6. New Sites : Camps with emergency shelters (tents) as a last resort

Where unused public buildings are not available or where there is insufficient place to accommodate all of the displaced in safety and dignity, and return is not foreseen in the short term, appropriate land for IDP camps should be identified and prepared. The local authorities, in collaboration with Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster Technical Site Selection Committees (consisting of humanitarian agencies with expertise in site selection), should be responsible for identifying appropriate sites.

To minimise the impact of IDP camps the sites should be as close to existing towns and villages so that the establishment of parallel structures for basic services like WASH, Education, Health etc can be minimised or eliminated. Shelter agencies can begin construction of individual or communal family emergency shelters if the situation does not improve. Tents should always be the last and least preferred option. The considerations for site selection are included in Annex 1.

IDP Hosting Site Management and Coordination and Monitoring

The Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster, in close collaboration with the authorities, is working to establish site Management and Coordination support teams in both short term and medium term responses to displacement, especially in IDP hosting sites for new displacements to monitor and report on the situation including protection concerns, while assessing needs and ensuring that humanitarian assistance is distributed equitably within the site. While the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster, in collaboration with the authorities, will maintain the overall lead role, individual agencies or organisations will be designated responsibility for individual sites or sites in specific geographical locations. Participation of IDPs in decision-making processes, implementation and monitoring should be encouraged from the outset, thereby empowering IDP communities and minimizing dependency. Ultimately, this will result in IDPs being actively engaged in finding durable solutions to their displacement.

References

UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/statelessness/5422b8f09/unhcr-policy-alternatives-camps.html>

UNHCR Emergency Handbook: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/115940/camp-planning-standards-planned-settlements#3,1521084981824>

Task force for Population Movement (TFPM) 16th Report – September 2017

CCCM Baseline Assessment Reports - December 2017

Annex 1 SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Sites for planned camps should be selected in consultation with a range of sectors, including WASH, protection and supply, as well as with technical specialists such as hydrologists, surveyors, planners, engineers, and environmental engineers. Developing an inappropriate site or failing to develop a site to standards can result in further displacement causing unnecessary further loss and distress to persons of concern and may put some people/groups at further risk.

The operational context will determine site selection criteria. In general, however, the following factors need to be considered when selecting sites for IDP camps:

Topography, drainage, soil conditions	<p>The topography of the land should permit easy drainage and the site should be located above flood level. Rocky, impermeable soil should be avoided. Land covered with grass will prevent dust. Wherever possible, steep slopes, narrow valleys, and ravines should be avoided.</p> <p>Ideally, a site should have a slope of 2%–4% for good drainage, and not more than 10% to avoid erosion and the need for expensive earth-moving for roads and building construction.</p> <p>Avoid areas likely to become marshy or waterlogged during the rainy season. Consult national meteorological data and host communities before making a decision.</p> <p>Soils that absorb surface water swiftly facilitate the construction and effectiveness of pit latrines.</p> <p>Subsoil should permit good infiltration (permit soil to absorb water and retain solid waste in latrines). Very sandy soils may have good infiltration; but latrine pits may be less stable.</p> <p>Pit latrines should not penetrate into the ground water. The groundwater table should be at least 3m below the surface of the site. Avoid excessively rocky or impermeable sites as they hamper both shelter and latrine construction.</p> <p>If possible, select a site where the land is suitable for vegetable gardens or small-scale cultivation.</p>
Water resources	<p>Choose locations that are reasonably close to an adequate source of good water, and ideally near high ground that has good surface water run-off and drainage. Once located, water sources should be protected. Ideally, no individual should have to walk for more than a few minutes. There should be at least one water point for every 250 people.</p> <p>Ideally, hydrological surveys will provide information on the presence of water. A site should not be selected on the assumption that water will be found by drilling. Trucking water over long distances should be avoided if possible.</p>
Land Rights	<p>The Humanitarian community neither purchases nor rents land for IDP settlements.</p> <p>IDPs should enjoy exclusive use of the site in which they live, by agreement with national and local authorities.</p> <p>Governments often make public land available. Private or communal land (including unclosed pastoral land) may only be used if the Government has agreed a formal legal arrangement with the owner(s), in accordance with the laws of the country.</p> <p>The status of land occupied for sites should be clarified in writing by the Government.</p> <p>In association with the Government and host community, agree and clarify the entitlement of IDPs to carry out given activities (forage for food, collect firewood, collect timber and other shelter materials such as grass or mud, gather fodder and graze animals).</p>
Accessibility	<p>Ensure the site has an adequate road infrastructure; access to it should be reliable, including during the rainy season.</p> <p>Assess the site's proximity to national services, including health facilities, markets and towns. Access to mainstream services is encouraged wherever possible and avoids the need to develop parallel services for the camp population.</p> <p>Liaise with development agencies, including UNDP and related Government ministries, to secure improvement of access routes.</p> <p>Partners should fund the cost of building short access roads connecting the site to the main road.</p>
Security	<p>The site should be located a sufficient distance from international borders (50km), conflict zones, and other potentially sensitive areas (such as military installations). Avoid locations that experience extreme climatic conditions, or present evident health (malaria), environmental or other risks.</p> <p>High winds can damage temporary shelters and increase fire risks.</p> <p>Evaluate seasonal variations. Sites that are ideal in the dry season may be uninhabitable in the rainy season.</p> <p>Avoid locating IDPs in places whose climate differs greatly from that to which they are accustomed</p>
Environment and Vegetation	<p>Ensure the site has sufficient ground cover (grass, bushes and trees). Vegetation provides shade, protects from wind, and reduces erosion and dust.</p> <p>Avoid sites where dust clouds are common; these cause respiratory disease</p> <p>Avoid sites within 1 day's walk of an environmentally protected area (such as a wild-life reserve). Take steps to ensure access to a supply of firewood, in collaboration with local forestry authorities, and in negotiation with the host community.</p>