

## Transitional Shelter Assistance - Technical Working Group-Gaza (TSA TWIG)

CRS, Shelter Cluster, NRC, IOM, Save the Children, UN- Habitat, We World, Palestine Housing Council and CARE

# 1<sup>st</sup> draft Gaza Shelter response – Technical Guidance (Oct 2023 Escalation)

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## Purpose of this guidance

The devastating conflict in Gaza has led to widespread forced displacement and extensive damage to community infrastructure and housing. Therefore, it is imperative to coordinate efforts collaboratively to swiftly offer dignified and appropriate shelter solutions. These efforts aim to alleviate prolonged displacement, prevent secondary displacement, and mitigate the adverse social, economic, and health impacts on individuals' physical and mental health/well-being.

As the trajectory of the conflict is uncertain, these guidelines present various options to assist shelter actors in strategizing their interventions. They offer clear methodologies, estimates, and approaches, fostering the delivery of high-quality, consistent, equitable, and accountable aid while minimizing redundancy.

All options require a lift on the severely strict restrictions to access construction tools, materials, and equipment as well as at least minimal levels of safety and operational access. This guidance aims to facilitate the implementation of activities outlined in the Shelter Cluster Response strategy. It is driven by its goals to address the dire living conditions experienced by people in Gaza amidst their current displacement, and incrementally seeking interim shelter solutions and working towards recovery.

Providing technical guidance for a humanitarian shelter response in Gaza needs to deal not only with large scale destruction of both housing and community infrastructure but also with insecurity and instability after displacement where collective centers and the relocation sites/areas have also been affected and targeted, hindering self-recovery and the impact of the response, and forcing people into multiple displacements.

This document highlights key general aspects and relevant considerations per shelter option that will be required to conduct due diligence, to avoid doing harm (mitigating disputes, conflict, or gender inequality), to ensure tenure security and durability of the shelter structures which in turn will help avoid prolonged and secondary displacement, to maintain technical quality and a harmonized approach among agencies promoting recovery. This document complements the Palestine Shelter Cluster Response Strategy v. 2 – [February 2024](#). This first version of this technical guidance has two main components. Firstly, it offers considerations that will be relevant to most if not all shelter programming. Then, it elaborates on the first objective of the shelter strategy (Emergency Shelter), adding additional technical and operational notes for each specific shelter option. Technical guidance for repairs and for transitional shelter (objectives 2 and 3 of the strategy) are being developed and will be provided in the second version of this document. Shelter partners are encouraged to contribute to future revisions,

including sharing challenges and problem-solving colleagues are facing in the field as well as observations on self-recovery.

## Contents

Purpose of this guidance .....	1
Context Background .....	2
Response .....	3
Enabling environment .....	4
Housing, Land and Property (HLP).....	5
Safe and Dignified Programming .....	6
WASH.....	7
Environmental Considerations.....	8
Response modalities and Market based approaches .....	9
Module 1: Emergency shelter assistance .....	10
Tents.....	12
Sealing off Kits and Emergency Shelter Kits.....	15
Improvements to collective centres .....	19
Rental or host family support .....	24

## Context Background

The escalations since October 2023 have resulted in large numbers of casualties, mass-scale destruction, and mass displacement. Given the` sustained bombardment from the land, sea and air, figures continue to change and the full impact on housing and community infrastructure is yet to be accurately assessed. Therefore, figures are indicative and the estimates used by the Shelter Cluster are intended to give a sense of scale of the damage, displacement, and shelter needs for humanitarian purposes<sup>1</sup>.

Shelter actors and response plans need to bear in mind that we do not know the full extent of the damage over the course of the war. What we already know is that much of the housing stock has suffered damage and entire neighbourhoods have been destroyed. The attacks hitting housing and infrastructure will also continue to add to the already over 12 million metric tonnes of rubble which will require several years to fully clear.

Accurate displacement figures are also difficult to obtain but there is a record of displacement for almost the entire population. Many people have been displaced repeatedly and might be forced to displace again with protracted displacement expected since people will not be able to return due to the level of

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<sup>1</sup> This guidance note takes into consideration the *Gaza Escalation, Damage, Displacement, and Shelter Response* [Tracking dashboard](#) updated regularly from October 2023.

damage to their homes or surrounding infrastructure, as well as due to the risk of explosive remnants of war.

The forced eviction and mass evacuations, the loss of homes, restrictions on movement and access to basic services, being forced to repeatedly flee during displacement and stay in overcrowded and unsafe conditions, and the uncertainty of a return to rebuild communities directly leads to psychosocial distress and deterioration in health including mental well-being.

Collective centers are severely overcrowded with five times the capacity planned for contingency. People in these collective centers seek safety yet often feel compelled to move to open areas as these locations have come under direct attack. From observations from field assessments and the accounts of field staff, overcrowding is a clear common concern across the alternatives where people are trying to shelter. At times over 15 individuals may be found in a single tent or makeshift shelter, while households accommodating 7 people are also hosting an additional twenty individuals.

In addition to the lack of privacy and the basic conditions to get some rest (day or night, for months), insufficient access to energy (a full electricity blackout continues) and to clean water hinder daily activities and undermine dignity. As a result of improper waste and wastewater disposal, there is a rising spread of infectious diseases. Poor shelter also worsens the effects of poor nutrition and increases risks of exposure and hypothermia. Living under constant stress fuels desperation, interpersonal tensions, and the risk of gender-based violence.

Over 1.4 million people or half of the population is now in just 65 km<sup>2</sup> at Rafah governorate. Spontaneous camps have multiplied without key infrastructure or planning. Self-built structures are constructed from salvaged materials and are unable to withstand the cold, wet and windy weather. Tents are also flooded on rainy days, further exacerbating the suffering of displaced people.

For decades, Gaza had been undergoing rapid demographic growth, with approximately three quarters of the population living in urban centers, mostly in multi-story buildings. Housing construction has been affected by severely strict restrictions on bringing construction materials and tools into Gaza as well as by complex land tenure and regulation overlapping systems. These challenges have exacerbated due to the escalation of the conflict and will affect both a humanitarian response and self-recovery.

## Response

Different options need to be discussed among the near impossible problem-solving that families and shelter actors are confronted in Gaza. This guidance includes a full range of activities since a range of solutions are needed, since there is no unique shelter typology or approach that could address the unprecedented scale of damage and displacement and given the restrictions hindering humanitarian agencies as well the private market to bring into Gaza construction tools and equipment, shelter materials and prefab components.

Most humanitarian responses include a range of shelter solutions to be tailored to different stages of displacement. Agencies might consider developing a *menu of options* consisting of a combination of assistance modalities available. Stakeholders, particularly donors, also need to accept that it will be paramount to have a degree of flexibility within projects given the lack of security, import restrictions, shortage of shelter materials, and the uncertainty around the conflict.

Despite the obstacles, there is a steady determination among shelter actors, local first line responders, and field colleagues. Agencies can review data and share reports that existed prior to the conflict. Previous experience in Gaza needs to inform the response to avoid a strict separation between

emergency, transitional, and permanent phases. Instead, shelter programs that are adaptive and that at each stage contribute to the long-term resilience of the community should be promoted.

In addition to building upon previous lessons learned and ongoing multisectoral assessments, the shelter response must first and foremost identify sheltering coping mechanisms and how people are trying to adapt. In the short term, the primary focus is on managing extensive evacuations. Looking ahead, temporary shelters will be pivotal in offering immediate sanctuary, alleviating displacement hardships, facilitating access to essential services, and reducing the repercussions of displacement. Program objectives must be realistic, clear, and implementable and whilst SOPs (standard operating procedures) from other responses will not work at least in the mid-term given the extreme restrictions, communities should be involved early on. Key questions to ask ourselves: are we improving the *current* shelter/living conditions and are we providing people with the opportunity to make a choice or adapt their shelter assistance?

## Enabling environment

Working under the current situation implies unprecedented challenges due to the combination of scale, safety among other operational factors and restricted field access. These notes regarding the Enabling Environment must be based on the foundation laid out in the Shelter Cluster Response Strategy which identifies six key enabling aspects: Sufficient entry of humanitarian goods; Damage assessments; UXO/Rubble removal; HLP (Housing Land and Property); Material access; and IDP registration.

From the above, and while all are critical, this document particularly uses HLP lenses as there are different HLP issues, due diligence, and related aspects / HLP documentation to consider depending on the type of shelter assistance and to be adapted to the different land tenure systems in Gaza.

**Two other aspects to highlight also from a technical perspective are safe access – including at the project site level, and access to sufficient construction tools and materials.**

**Safe access** is essential for both aid agencies to reach affected populations and carry out their work, as well as for populations to access and receive assistance. At the project site level, clearance of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and rubble removal in and around each property are preconditions to conduct detailed damage assessments. In turn, shelter actors depend on the ability to conduct shelter/building technical assessments, classifications to effectively plan and implement shelter programs including the elaboration of standard or tailored BoQs.

Shelter partners must follow procedures and obtain confirmation from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)<sup>2</sup> or relevant authorities that an area has been cleared of human remains, of UXOs and rubble removal actors. Currently UNEP (UN Environment Program) is leading the Gaza Debris Management Planning – which is also connected to a comprehensive Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) response. These plans are informed by ongoing data collection and analysis supported by UNOSAT (the United Nations Satellite Centre) and other technical partners. Site clearance will require several years and several actors and clusters including the Shelter Cluster to further define and implement the debris action plan<sup>3</sup>.

**Access to sufficient construction materials is a key determinant to meet minimum standards including Sphere.** While a variety of shelter solutions are necessary to meet needs, at this point (when almost two million or over 80% of the population is displaced) apart from a handful of items (namely plastic

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<sup>2</sup> Gaza's debris removal Implementation (work on progress)

<sup>3</sup> UNEP, 2024 [UNEP Gaza Debris Shelter Meeting 31 Jan 2024 | Shelter Cluster](#) presentation

sheeting, adhesive tape, rope and tents), the import of construction materials for repairs, rehabilitation, or new shelters faces significant limitations as these are marked as “dual use” (for humanitarian and potentially military purposes). A significant improvement in the approval process for the entry of items into Gaza and continued commercial entry of goods would be a characteristic of an enabling environment alongside stable prices of shelter materials in surrounding markets including transportation costs. One of the key advocacy messages from the Shelter Cluster is for *“a significant and substantial increase in the quantity of items entering Gaza, especially through the private sector, and removal of restrictions on household items that pose little threat but can improve personal safety and ability to meet basic needs.”*<sup>4</sup> In addition to what shelter partners will procure for distributions or direct implementation, it is paramount to restore commercial imports and re-establish local markets of shelter items including timber, fixings, tools, cooking stoves among other essential shelter, household and personal items.

## Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

Housing, land and/or property are accessed through a specific piece of land or territory and are some of people’s most valuable and meaningful assets, often related with a sense of belonging. The Housing, Land and Property (HLP) considerations for the shelter response in Gaza need to address the loss of these assets.

HLP will be an intrinsic component of the shelter response given the scale of displacement (from mass forced evictions) within an already very narrow territory (and overcrowding in the evacuation zones), large-scale destruction of the housing stock and infrastructure, changes in land use and the need for explosive ordinance clearance, the uncertainty regarding the ability to return or access restitution or compensation, as well as working with complex land tenure systems (that are fragmented and overlap), alongside a weak planning system. All of which will be further challenged where multi-storey buildings were divided into ownership by housing units, thousands of owners will be among the casualties and documentation have been lost not only at the household level but registries archives in full.

By addressing mass displacement, shelter solutions are reducing the risk of further displacement. In fact, the very occupancy of temporary shelters can serve as documentation of displacement, which can aid in making claims for land, property or housing rights that have been lost as a result of the war, allowing affected people to benefit from restitution and/or compensation (a longer-term solution). Full shelter and settlements recovery in the Gaza strip will be lengthy, transitional solutions provide an opportunity for community engagement, allowing displaced populations to participate in decisions regarding their future including the protection of their HLP rights.

Shelter actors need to understand the local tenure systems, formal and informal norms and practices to access land and housing (the reality on the ground). This is the precondition to undertaking due diligence to achieve as much certainty about tenure as possible, define the documentation, information and accompaniment that will be needed to protect project participants (beneficiaries) from forced eviction and promoting incremental steps towards the enjoyment of adequate housing<sup>5</sup>.

This requires collaboration among planners, humanitarian agencies and relevant other relevant shelter actors, experts in Protection and HLP to conduct due diligence and to gradually (re)establish tenure through formal or customary methods. Due diligence is part of the Sphere Standards for Shelter<sup>6</sup> (6.1)

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<sup>4</sup> GSC, 2024, Gaza Crisis Response [7 January 2024 Shelter Update](#)

<sup>5</sup> To learn more: [UN Habitat 2008 Secure Land Rights for All](#)

<sup>6</sup> Sphere, 2018, Interactive Handbook, Shelter Standards for Shelter, [Chapter 6.1 Security of Tenure](#).

required for projects that require access to buildings, land, property, or natural resources to ensure our interventions do no harm. Whilst HLP aspects are vast and must be contextualized, the work starts with identifying the specific HLP elements that are required or affected by each intervention. Therefore, this document offers HLP considerations that are relevant to different interventions. Shelter actors should conduct or link with organizations and technical working groups<sup>7</sup> that have conducted and will review a comprehensive and context specific HLP assessments to identify the stakeholders and partners, the opportunities and constraints, the gaps and needs, as well as the strategies and objectives for HLP interventions.

## Safe and Dignified Programming

Every person (male and female, young and old) inside the Gaza strip is experiencing traumatic experiences. Losing a home can be devastating to individuals and families, and so can be the living and sheltering conditions during displacement. During site selection, shelter actors should avoid hazardous areas and conduct due diligence to prevent forced eviction. This can protect people from additional harm and distress. The preparation of the teams and how shelter partners design projects and carry on their work can have a positive impact. Staff must be well versed in the principles of 'Do No Harm' and trauma-informed approaches, which are being adapted to tackle the repercussions of the escalations in Gaza. Additionally, a referral system for protection and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) is being established. It is essential to establish communication with the Protection Cluster, Child Protection AoR, and MHPSS working group for Gaza and the West Bank, particularly at the intersection of Education, Health, and Protection Clusters.

*How* shelters are planned and designed (physical characteristics), and how are these allocated (process, including community engagement) is crucial to ensure safety, protect dignity, and offer meaningful access to vulnerable populations. Thousands of people have been injured, including those with amputations<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, there will be a need for accessibility in the aftermath of the conflict for households that have family members with injuries, chronic illness, elderly, and disabilities.

Across different *shelter* options, people that receive *shelter* assistance will be identified firstly by their current living conditions. This is, by the physical *shelter* characteristics or level of exposure to the elements (as well as by other aspects and restrictions). Adopting a rights-based approach implies making an additional effort and allocate additional resources to provide meaningful access to the affected population with particular care for female headed households, referred cases from Protection partners or the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), older adults and people with disabilities.

Even when displacement and substandard housing is currently affecting the vast majority in Gaza, the commitment to ensure *meaningful access* can be achieved through engaging with potentially marginalized groups, removing barriers and assessing risks, tailoring the shelter response to these groups and collecting disaggregated data to monitor their inclusion. Since protracted displacement and further displacement is the most likely scenario, this will need to be an iterative process. The question to ask for each shelter solution (from tents to collective centers) is who is marginalized here and how? How can we improve the space and the process? Involve the affected people to design shelters that are safe, comfortable, inclusive, and culturally acceptable. Make sure that there are enough female staff members on board to facilitate interaction with women and girls. Women, girls, older people, and people with specific needs should be consulted before, during and after the implementation of the

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<sup>7</sup> Housing Land & Property (HLP) Technical Working Group (TWG)

<sup>8</sup> Since 7 October, more than 1,000 children have had one or both legs amputated, [according to UNICEF](#) (19 December 2023)

shelter intervention to make sure that their views and needs are accommodated and to respond to the needs of the people with disabilities. Conducting this consultation might seem extremely difficult if at all feasible under an active conflict. As a start, **consider protection and gender-based violence risks in design by talking with vulnerable populations, especially women and girls about privacy. What privacy options do they have or are trying to have (even if only partial or incremental results are observed)? Pay attention on what people do and think how these solutions could be improved or replicated.**

Whilst it is extremely difficult (if at all possible) to advise on what the “safest” or least dangerous alternatives and locations are, different agencies and sectors need to understand **how IDPs decide where to find sheltering**. Understanding these preferences and rationale are needed to tailor the response, mitigate overcrowding, and define community messaging.

Given that overcrowding is a grave concern for all displaced people in tents/makeshift shelters, in collective centers or sharing accommodation with host families. **Overcrowding is a key aspect and more ways to address this are needed.** Shelter actors can work with the site management working group, Protection or WASH colleagues and most importantly with communities to facilitate conversations around key questions such as: **What is acceptable and what is not acceptable? or what people suggest if asked to identify any space that can be used for some quiet time?** In addition to improving the physical characteristics of a space (e.g. adding partitions in a communal space or opaque cladding to a makeshift shelter) discuss **what activities people can do to participate?** This participation through different organized activities or through improvements to their shelter conditions can significantly help address pain or emotional distress during displacement.

Be accountable to foster meaningful engagement, maintain two-way communication with affected populations. Disseminate information about the project, participants’ rights, available services, and safe access methods. Tailor language to cultural nuances, especially for women and girls. Additionally, confidential systems are established based on community preferences for handling complaints.

## WASH

Ensuring safe and dignified living conditions in Gaza is crucial. A critical aspect to do so is integrating Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities into shelter projects. Shelter and WASH integrated programming address basic needs, reduce disease risks, and uphold safety and dignity for affected people. The collaboration between shelter and WASH partners can start by including WASH indicators in the assessment and project design addressing water supply, sanitation, hygiene and environmental health. From emergency response to rehabilitation, focus on access to dignified and safe sanitation facilities.

With regards to **water supply**, assess availability of clean and safe water sources, connections, and storage facilities reporting storage facility locations to the WASH cluster for effective water provision; Evaluate distance, accessibility to water points, and continuity of water services; and Consider water quality and testing results. In terms of **sanitation**: Examine existing sanitation facilities, emphasizing safety and dignity for women, girls, and accessibility for people with disabilities and the elderly; Ensure sanitation facilities are connected to sewage networks or septic tanks; Provide gender-segregated facilities in collective centers; Design sanitation areas to align with cultural norms; and Address operation and maintenance (O&M) of sanitation facilities in collective centres.

Key tasks in **hygiene promotion** include: Coordinate closely with WASH actors for comprehensive hygiene promotion; Ensure access to hygiene items, including Menstrual Hygiene Management products; and improve the availability of handwashing facilities. And in terms of **environmental health**:

Assess environmental health risks, including stagnant water and sewage leakages; Implement proper waste disposal mechanisms; During planning, integrate WASH facilities into shelter design.

The context is as restrictive for WASH activities as it is for shelter and settlements programming; the tenure systems and permits for shelter are also relevant to access to land and natural resources to implement WASH activities; and, the concerns around severe overcrowding and lack of privacy across sheltering options also affect WASH facilities. Whilst agencies will only be able to integrate the quality programming considerations above incrementally, shelter and WASH needs an early start of the coordination. Engage WASH experts during assessment to identify specific needs and keep abreast of alternatives and problem solving. Close coordination from the drafting of the strategy, technical guides and during implementation ensures agencies will be able to identify potential public health risks, proper installation of facilities, allows to define clear behavior change and hygiene awareness campaigns. WASH experts can also support to define best WASH facilities maintenance approaches with communities.

To effectively monitor and evaluate the WASH component of shelter interventions, it is key to define clear WASH indicators, to regularly assess WASH facilities functionality and to adapt interventions based on WASH actors' feedback.

## Environmental Considerations

The situation in Gaza is deeply concerning, with already devastating impact on both human lives and the environment with the ongoing conflict exacerbating previous environmental conditions. The environmental damage to Gaza's environment includes the pollution and degradation of soil, air and water, the loss of biodiversity, ruined farmland, widespread and lasting toxic contamination, all which will likely only worsen through continued conflict.

Ongoing bombardment has caused heavy destruction to housing stock as well as of the public infrastructure. This destruction further strains an already fragile system, impacting essential services such as the water supply, electricity, and waste management. In particular, the lack of access to potable water, sanitation and waste management is a critical issue from a WASH, shelter and settlement perspective increasing the risk of waterborne diseases with devastating consequences for the most vulnerable, children – particularly infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with chronic illnesses.

In addition to the direct carbon emissions attributed to bombardment and the ground invasion, the damage to buildings and infrastructure also has a significant indirect carbon footprint, given the amount of rubble and debris that is generated as well as the needed reconstruction materials that will generate more emissions. To mitigate the adverse effects of shelter interventions on the surrounding environment, shelter actors are responsible to integrate mitigation measures incrementally as soon as to the extent these are possible.

**Avoid the use of unsustainable shelter materials** (e.g. materials that are damaging to the environment or have low recycling potential) and **reduce the generation of waste**. The quality and lifespan of items need to be selection criteria avoiding items that degrade quickly and instead prioritise good quality tarpaulin, tents, and plastic sheeting to last longer. Reduce packaging to a minimum particularly for individual items included in kits for distribution.

**Promote and encourage recycling and reuse of materials**. Waste should be separated on site, stored in separate containers or areas, and then disposed of by the most appropriate method. This may include engaging private sector recycling operators to remove waste. Identify site waste management methods that are available and communicate with participant households including informing which materials are appropriate for recycling, reuse, or disposal. Find out what infrastructure is in place for waste

management including landfills and dumping sites within the catchment area (whether the sites are still operational and what capacity level they have and what type of waste these receive).

Provide information to households on how to dispose of construction waste and encourage recycling. The recycling of debris contributes to mitigate the environmental impact of the disaster and has a financial value. Sorting debris before disposal will reduce the volume of waste added to landfill and can maximize the income from recovered or recycled materials. Potentially recyclable materials include steel beams and rebar removed from reinforced concrete; concrete; bricks, tiles, cement blocks and copper. For example, concrete can be crushed and reused as aggregate for hollow blocks, flooring or non-structural elements. Where technical training and supervision is provided, some type of plastics can also be recycled into different components, for example to make pipes or some of the recovered rebar can be reused as reinforcement for concrete if/ where the required facilities may be operational. People in Gaza are already salvaging materials. Facilitate the process to reclaim doors, windows, as well as other items in the building.

**Manage hazardous materials** consulting with agencies specialized in managing Explosive Remnants of War coordinated with United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the protection cluster before commencing any repairs or shelter work. The issue of asbestos in Gaza is exacerbated by the destruction and the scarcity of alternative construction materials. There is no such a thing as a "safe use of asbestos". Even though, asbestos is used in Gaza, shelter partners shall not include it in a BoQ for any construction, rehabilitation or repair. This applies across modalities, direct implementation, working with contractors, working through partners or using cash and voucher modalities. If existing asbestos-containing materials are discovered in a shelter, house, building or on a project site, asbestos must be removed and disposed in adherence to asbestos removal and disposal protocols adhering to either, all applicable local codes and regulations or the following international guidance<sup>9</sup>.

## Response modalities and Market based approaches

In addition of having a range of shelter solutions and the flexibility to adjust the response, shelter actors will also need to consider different modalities or how to combine them (through direct implementation, cash, owner-driven/self-help, contractor-driven, in kind or hybrid approaches).

The Shelter Cluster advocates "for a significant and substantial increase in the quantity of items entering Gaza, especially through the private sector, and removal of restrictions on household items that pose little threat but can improve personal safety and ability to meet basic needs."<sup>10</sup> **The shelter response prioritizes cash-based modalities** and should at minimum be '*market aware*' to avoid, to the extent possible, contributing to further damage of local markets, while still meeting urgent needs. As soon the markets are operational, many people are likely to rely on local markets to address their shelter needs.

Based on contextual feasibility as the situation evolves, shelter actors need to **understand local markets** to inform the design of different transitional shelter solutions (including decision making on whether cash or voucher assistance is feasible). Working with other stakeholders, including other clusters and the Cash WG, assess the functionality and accessibility of local markets in different areas of Gaza.

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<sup>9</sup> "Asbestos has been widely used in the construction industry around the world due to its heat resistant and insulating properties. It is often found in its various forms during humanitarian response operations following conflicts and natural disasters, particularly during search and rescue operations in damaged buildings, clean-up of debris, and transitional settlement and reconstruction activities. All forms of asbestos, including chrysotile, are classified as known human carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). [...] Its use has consequently been banned in over 40 countries worldwide. However, booming construction industries' need for cheap materials, the lack of alternatives and lack of awareness of the health risks account for a shift of asbestos consumption to the developing world, where there is little or no control legislation." CARE, 2017 [International Policy on Asbestos](#)

<sup>10</sup> GSC 2024, [Gaza Crisis Response – 7 January 2024 update](#)

Understanding market functionality includes the supply, availability, and price of construction materials, tools, as well as the capacity of vendors and traders to restock goods and the cost of labour/skills and rent. Aside from market functionality also understand if different community members (men, women, elderly, people with disabilities) have access to where these goods and services are available. This information can be gathered through rapid market assessments and may be available with the Cash WG.

As soon as it is feasible, consider introducing regular **market monitoring** for goods and services essential to the shelter response, including price and availability (including quality and quantity). This would enable partners to a) adjust the assistance value for any cash and voucher assistance (CVA) provided for different shelter solutions based on price, and b) adjust the modality of assistance if availability for specific goods or services changes (e.g. switching from in-kind to CVA or vice versa).

Based on information from needs assessments, and market assessments, determine which assistance modalities are most appropriate (i.e. cash, vouchers, locally procured items distributed in-kind, items procured outside Gaza distributed in-kind, or a mix) for different shelter solutions. **Consider using Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) where appropriate.** This might include cash or vouchers to purchase materials, tools, and/or pay for labour required for shelter repair; cash support to hosting families or providing cash support to vulnerable households to pay for rent and avoid eviction (see section below); cash grants to property owners to finish unfinished housing units; or cash grants or vouchers supporting households building shelters through the self-help approach.

As the response moves to supporting transitional solutions, where possible shelter partners should endeavour to **support local market recovery**. This indirectly contributes to the recovery of local businesses, expanding employment opportunities, and increasing local economic activity. Given the widespread disruption and destruction to all aspects of life in Gaza, including the local economy, employment, businesses and trades, it will likely be essential for actors to intervene to support local markets to recover. Providing support to restart or improve the functioning of local markets required for shelter solutions can be relevant, such as grants to support manufacturers, shops, or various trade workers to restart their operations, repair their facilities, replace lost or damaged assets, subsidize running costs in the short term (e.g. covering labour, fuel, or other running costs) or helping the to expand production.

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## Module 1: Emergency shelter assistance

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### **Cluster Objective 1 – Vulnerable populations are provided with emergency shelter and NFI assistance to reduce exposure to climatic extremes and to meet their basic needs.**

The Shelter Cluster has as immediate priority to improve shelter conditions to protect further loss of life due to exposure, and limit spread of disease through overcrowding. This first objective of the strategy is carried out through the **provision of shelter** and **essential household items** to meet the basic needs of IDPs sheltering either in collective centres (setup in UN buildings, schools, or public buildings) as well as those outside collective centres (sharing accommodation with host families, in informal settlements, in self-settled, or in makeshift shelters.) Shelter actors are also committed to the provision of winterization assistance to facilitate return and to protect people in damaged properties.

Essential household items are required to meet basic daily needs and include protective winter clothing, bedding, and kitchen items. Given the massive shortage (informal reports indicating near zero stock), targeting and distributions are increasingly difficult. The Shelter Cluster and partners keep track of the availability of NFIs including winterization items and monitor for changes in the restrictions to bring *any*

of these items into Gaza. Technical guidance for NFIs is not included in this document, rather, the target groups and content of personal and household items are documented under the *Standardized Shelter NFI packages and combined kits*.<sup>11</sup> Contents will likely be reviewed as different items are allowed to enter Gaza.

In addition to the NFIs first line response, providing emergency shelter is lifesaving, reduces exposure to climatic extremes and the deterioration in health including mental well-being. At this stage of the response, emergency shelter through the provision of tents is the most feasible shelter response that offers a covered space per household.

Far from their residence, and often displaced already multiple times, families and individuals are gathered in collective centers with a sense of uncertainty how long they will remain. Whilst the decongestion of collective centres that are acutely beyond capacity is a key concern, there are limited options for most of the population and more IDPs continue to arrive. Therefore, part of the emergency shelter response needs to address the lack of privacy, lack of infrastructure and services in the designated emergency collective centers.

The self-built makeshift shelters are constructed from salvaged materials inadequate to withstand the weather conditions. Emergency shelter materials in the form of sealing-off kits (SOKs) and emergency shelter kits (ESKs) are urgently required to reinforce the stability of makeshift shelters, to consolidate or extend covered living space as well as seal off damaged properties.

An important consideration across all emergency shelter options is that *due to the ongoing hostilities causing damage to properties, repeated displacement, [and extreme weather conditions] resulting in damage and water ingress to tents or shelters, items typically provided once are needing to be replenished or replaced*<sup>12</sup>. **Likewise, it is important to note that agencies might need to provide two units of assistance (e.g., two tents or ESKs) to accommodate large / merged HHs and reduce overcrowding.** The different emergency shelter options also require different degrees of site planning – including hard and soft activities.

## HLP CONSIDERATIONS AND PERMITS

Shelter partners in coordination with relevant site planning stakeholders can examine potential locations to identify appropriate sites or confirm if a site is safe and suitable. Although, confirming a location in the Gaza Strip is *safe* is extremely difficult if at all feasible at this stage. All agencies and local actors are working under severe uncertainty. Acknowledging this, it is part of the HLP practice to evaluate the characteristics of the plot of land against a series of minimum requirements. These requirements include the minimum space for the number of people and tents (including fire safety and including space for WASH and other basic facilities) and to avoid contributing to environmental degradation.

The creation of tented collective sites is considered a *last resort*. Given the current scale and conditions though, this is necessary to shelter people that have been displaced and/or have lost their homes and would be otherwise exposed to the elements or staying in extremely overcrowded conditions. HLP is often managed under a *what is secured enough* (WISE) principle. **If necessary, consider a shorter but-renewable- agreement – and ensure the duration of the agreement is clear.**

In addition to confirming type of land tenure (e.g. ownership, access and use rights), securing an agreement from the owner(s) and permit from the relevant authorities protects people's right to stay

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<sup>11</sup> Shelter Cluster 2023 [Shelter NFI Kits](#)

<sup>12</sup> GSC 2024, [Gaza Crisis Response – 7 January 2024 update](#)

in one place avoiding expulsion/eviction and further displacement. Permissions must be obtained before installing emergency shelters and due diligence might need to be done at two levels, at the district or community level and for a specific plot of land<sup>13</sup>.

## SITE PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

A total of 298 potential sites with a total area of 6,302 dunums have been tentatively identified across Gaza using satellite imagery and the available data on the situation pre-conflict.<sup>14</sup> The analysis is limited however by the inability to conduct field assessments. The selection should consider the distinctive context in the Gaza Strip and determined by aspects that include the distance to the border and to the closest urban area; connectivity; land ownership; land use; topography and flood vulnerability – where the bombardments and accordingly, the damage, have been less intensified.

A land suitability assessment and HLP due diligence will continue to be preconditions to define a site to accommodate IDPs and support the installation of temporary shelters. Tentative sites are ranked based on their suitability. This follows the UNHCR Emergency Handbook’s required standards contextualized to the Gaza Strip and prepared within the available data.

Site planning will require multi-agency coordination following the UNHCR's Master Plan Approach to Settlement Planning Guiding Principles<sup>15</sup> and using key indicators during the site planning phase. Particularly, the 'average camp area per person (sqm)' indicator measures the average living space to which a person has access in a camp. This space should accommodate all services while promoting dignified living. Covered living area (sqm); fire safety<sup>16</sup>; camp site gradient; and drainage.

The site modular approach of UNHCR is adopted and customized to fit the high number of IDPs in the Gaza Strip with limited vacant spaces within Gaza’s urban context, therefore, the modular approach used for in identifying the structure of camp sites is as indicated on the table on the right.

Proposed modular approach for the context of Gaza		
Module	Structure	# of IDPs
Family	1 family	6
Neighbourhood	12 families	72
Cluster	8 neighbourhoods	576

Site planning should focus on the household requirements like proximity to water sources, accessibility to communal services, availability of showers and latrines, waste management, and incrementally the provision of amenities and services including health care; education; marketplace, among others. The evaluation of sites will likely need to be reiterative. The amount of land that will fit the criteria will continue to shrink. This evidence-based approach aims to inform decision makers and highlights the challenges that hinder the analysis and complying with international standards and recommendations.

# Tents

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSISTANCE AT GLANCE

The provision of tents is most valuable in the immediate relief phase. Standard Family **Tents** are the preferred option when – as currently is the case in Gaza – no other materials or solutions can be procured/imported, delivered, constructed, accessed and/or permitted within a sufficient timeframe or until more cost-effective and durable solutions are possible.

<sup>13</sup> See for reference: IOM, 2019 [CCCM Cluster HLP Due Diligence Guidance for informal sites Syria](#)

<sup>14</sup> 7 February 2024 presentation - UN Habitat 2024 [Site identification and land suitability analysis for transitional shelters in the Gaza Strip](#)

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, 2019, [Master Plan Approach to Settlement Planning](#)

<sup>16</sup> GSC 2023, [Fire Risk Reduction Guidance](#) - on design or management of shelter programming as well as 9 key areas of fire safety.

Tents are also among the most frequently used shelter solutions given its characteristics including lightweight (for transport and distribution); that large production capacities are commonly found and that tents are quick to install. On the other hand, tents are also inflexible; may be unstable in high winds or heavy precipitation (rain or snow) and difficult to heat.<sup>17</sup>

## IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

A marginal number of households (HHs) have either received shelter humanitarian assistance or have found an alternative to their shelter needs. The target group for tents is the displaced population in the open or in extremely precarious makeshift shelters. These include:

- Dispersed IDPs with no shelter;
- IDPs who are self-settled in camp-like settings, in very sub-standard/makeshift shelters;
- IDPs who are living in camp like settings.

To select HHs within these groups, **prioritize** female headed HHs, child headed HHs and households that have family members with injuries, chronic illness, elderly, and disabilities.

For the provision of tents the groups that are **not prioritized** include: non-displaced HHs, IDPs living in collective centers and IDPs being hosted. However it may be considered on a case-by-case basis if could serve the purpose of relieving overcrowded shelters or restoring the original function.

To the extent it might be possible, shelter actors should provide full coverage of HHs within a target location (excepting HHs that have already a tent or shelter that meets minimum standards). In addition to the household composition, other aspects to consider include the distance to place of origin and length of displacement. Supporting HHs with different characteristics (e.g. male or female head of households), is needed to reduce suffering, it helps to mitigate tensions and to help maintain communities together. Where different types of households are under dire sheltering conditions, some criteria (e.g. declining assistance to male headed households) can ostracize those who received assistance; it can further increase overcrowding; put those who received assistance at risk of coercion, exploitation; or increase theft of tents from those who were selected.

**Families in the vicinity can help** identifying HHs with no shelter. Triangulate information by cross-checking with other stakeholders in the same area including community committees if they exist. **Field teams will need some concrete points to classify existing structures into very sub-standard shelters.** The following criteria can assist:

- Minimal or in-existent frame structure (no metal or timber poles for either the walls or roof)
- Roof and walls made from non-water-resistant material (cardboard, blankets, very damaged plastic sheeting)
- Absence of a ground sheet
- Very inadequate size relative to the household (less than 2m<sup>2</sup> per person)

## IMPLEMENTATION

Shelter teams might be providing multi-sectoral assistance or be working side by side (e.g. with WASH, Protection, first-line responders or local partners teams) which have been building relationships with displaced communities and community leaders. Consult and involve them to make informed choices about location and identify participant HHs (beneficiaries) as described above.

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<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, 2024 Emergency Handbook - [Emergency Shelter Solutions and Standards](#)

Each distribution in Gaza needs communication with relevant coordination mechanisms in place such as **the site management working group**. Due to the scale of need against the lack of shelter options and limited coverage of humanitarian assistance, distributing items as valuable as a tent may cause community tensions. Once a project site is identified and prioritized, the field team should conduct a HH registration before bringing the tents to the site of distribution. Agencies should provide additional assistance to housebound individuals that cannot come to the collection point (e.g. elderly or wheelchair users with limited mobility). But neither the agencies nor community leaders should hold tents for absent households. Households who were not present at the time of the registration or distribution, might not be eligible to receive a tent.

Agencies might need to adapt a range of methods to distribute tents. Depending on security, geographic spread, timeframe, operational capacity including type of transportation, access and the availability of local or community-based partners, in some locations, tents might be brought to the project site, in others manage distributions from a central point. Tents should be provided as an integrated package including other NFIs if possible, especially bedding kits.

Consider providing local transport for tents from the distribution point. The packages containing the different components of a tent are too big to fit on a bike, wheelbarrow, or donkey (without a cart) and require at least two healthy adults to carry them short distances.

Ensure the field team as well as the affected population have access to a list of items included in each of the package(s) as well as [basic instructions for assembly](#).<sup>18</sup> **Provide the field team with printouts of a visual BoQ or checklist with photos or illustrations. This is particularly important in Gaza since packages might be opened or taken apart at the crossing, and each household will need to ensure they have all the needed pieces.** Provide additional assistance for setting up tents for those who need it, such as female and child headed households, the elderly, and people with disabilities.<sup>19</sup>

## TECHNICAL QUALITY

The **recommended type** is the standard **family tent** following humanitarian specifications (UNHCR<sup>20</sup> or IFRC<sup>21</sup> tent, IFRC geodesic tent or equivalent) waterproof, fire retardant and UV stabilised. Standard tents have an average of **16 m<sup>2</sup> to 17.5m<sup>2</sup>** covered area and are suitable for a family of 5 people. Tents should include a partition and it should be possible to sub-divide the internal space for privacy.

**The unit cost** per tent varies depending on the type and density of the canvas- for the recommended IFRC/UNHCR family tent or IFRC/UNHCR geodesic family tent. Shelter Cluster Standardized Shelter NFI packages indicate \$420 as a reference. Considering additional transportation costs are crucial, as they significantly affect the overall price with a significant difference if transportation is by air or by sea.

The expected lifespan of a tent is 6 months to 1 year maximum. This depends on the length of storage before distribution, the site conditions, the climate, and the care given by its occupants. Where tents are used for long duration (more than 6 months), provisions for repair materials should be considered. A standard **repair kit** includes 1 large needle (suitable to work with for heavyweight fabrics like canvas), 20 m stitching thread, 3 m polyester rope or string of 6 mm and a canvas spare piece.

Thermal comfort specially without bedding and winter clothes, is a concern against extreme weather. A key item to check is the quality of zippers to avoid draughts. Tents are difficult to heat as the canvas

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<sup>18</sup> IFRC, 2011, [Family tent, 16m<sup>2</sup> Fact Sheet](#) – including packing list for a standard tent package (visual BoQ) and shelter setup instructions.

<sup>19</sup> Follow best practices from Care, IOM, 2018, [Distribution, Shelter materials, NFIs and Cash](#)

<sup>20</sup> IFRC [16m<sup>2</sup> Ridge Family Tent](#)

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR [Item No 05353](#)

provides limited insulation so winterization kits or layers for improved insulation particularly to the ground should be considered for the winter period.

In Gaza, the repeated displacement and harsh weather conditions will likely damage tents and further to the initial distribution, replacement, reinforcement, or maintenance may be required. Provide information on proper installation and on common tent failures and ways to fix them.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Tents must be carefully sited considering:**

- Site planning guidelines for multiple units, this includes allocating equal and leveled 'plots' for each tent and allowing groups of HHs (e.g. friends and relatives) to be in proximity.
- Installing as possible vestibule spaces to increase visual privacy.
- Access to water and sanitation facilities. Coordinate and follow guidance from WASH actors.
- Install tents in locations with slopes of 1 to 6 percent as possible. Dig drainage ditches around tents to prevent the tents from flooding with the rain. The dirt extracted from digging ditches or from a bank (sleep slope) can be used to level and raise the area covered by the tent.
- Follow Fire Risk Reduction Guidance<sup>23</sup> including minimum spacing between shelters (tents and surrounding makeshift shelters or other structures), depending on construction materials, opening sizes, shelter contents, and wind conditions. Firebreaks a 2½ times the height of a tent apart (min 5 meters), and spacing tents 2 meters apart between guy ropes as minimum.
- When the context allows, consider forming a team managed by community members to erect some sample tents with drainage ditches

## Sealing off Kits and Emergency Shelter Kits

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSISTANCE AT GLANCE

**Sealing off Kits (SOKs)** and **Emergency Shelter Kits (ESKs)** are a cost-effective way to rapidly reach large numbers of affected families with life-saving shelter assistance. SOKs and ESKs can help improve the stability of an emergency shelter and be part of a longer, incremental approach if complemented with technical advice and supervision, and if there is access to local construction skills and materials including salvaged materials.

SOKs and ESKs vary from a simple bundle of items to a complete set of materials. Timber (poles or posts), plastic sheeting (or other cladding and roofing materials), and fixings (such as nails and wire) in addition of handheld tools are often included in these kits. SOKs and ESKs can be used to reinforce, consolidate, or create self-built shelters or to protect damaged housing and facilitate return where possible. When properly installed, SOKs and ESKs contribute to the: protection from climate; improved privacy and sense of dignity; and improving security.

**By design, SOKs** provides families with an essential package of items **to seal** their living space (e.g. repairing roofs, closing doors or windows openings) and **ESK** provides families with an essential package of items **to create** a living space (at least one full room) as a short-term shelter solution. The reality on the ground (restriction of bringing materials into Gaza, scale of need and budgeting concerns) has an impact on the content included in the kits. Given the overwhelming overcrowding and lack of shelter options in Gaza, it is expected that some SOKs and ESKs will be used in different ways, for example to create partitions or room extensions in collective centers or for IDPs sharing accommodation with host

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<sup>22</sup> UNHCR 2004, [Tents. A guide to the use and logistics of family tents in humanitarian relief](#)

<sup>23</sup> GSC, 2023, [Fire Risk Reduction Guidance](#)

households. People seek to improve their own living conditions, so, agencies must maintain focus on the *outcomes* accepting and allowing people to make decisions – providing technical advice to mitigate risks.

## IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

The target group for ESKs and SOKs is the displaced population staying in the open or living in sub-standard shelter lacking self-reliant strategies within: collective centres; self-settled living in substandard shelters; and people with partially damaged houses.

To select HHs within these groups, **prioritize** female headed HHs, child headed HHs and households that have family members with injuries, chronic illness, elderly, and disabilities. This prioritization is based on vulnerable conditions exacerbated by displacement given the household composition. It is important to note that families eligible for ESKs can be eligible for a tent as well an alternative or to accommodate large / merged households and reduce overcrowding.

For the provision of SOKs and ESKs the groups that are **not prioritized** include: non-displaced HHs (with access to shelter) and IDPs being hosted if the house has not been damaged.

Families in the vicinity can help identifying vulnerable HHs in need of shelter. Triangulate information by cross-checking with other stakeholders in the same area including community committees if they exist. **The selection criteria includes both vulnerability and current shelter conditions (to ensure the SOKs and ESKs go to families that need *this specific shelter assistance the most*).** Field teams will need some concrete points to classify existing structures into *very sub-standard* shelters.

**Criteria for SOKs** identifies families living in sub-standard shelters with the following characteristics:

- Pre-existing structures (e.g., masonry or timber frame housing units) that have suffered damage (have broken doors, windows, or missing parts of the roof) but pose no structural risk of collapsing
- Self-built shelters with some frame structure but not fully framed (the shelter has *some* poles for the walls and roof structure)
- Water resistant roof and walls (plastic sheeting, tarps) but with some gaps and can leak if it rains consistently
- Partial ground sheet
- Inadequate size relative to the household (less than 3.5m<sup>2</sup>/ person)

**Criteria for ESKs** identifies families living in very sub-standard shelters with the following characteristics:

- Minimal or inexistant frame structure (metal or timber poles either in the walls or in the roof or both)
- Roof and walls made from non-water-resistant material (cardboard, blankets, or very damaged plastic sheeting)
- Absence of a ground sheet
- Very inadequate size relative to the household (less than 2m<sup>2</sup>/ person)

## IMPLEMENTATION

When distributing SOKs and ESKs, consider among a range of methods such direct HH distribution, distribution from a central location, or through vouchers, etc. Deciding factors include security, geographic spread, timeframes, operational capacity, availability of local or community-based groups, contractors, and shops to provide support and norms of practice agreed with other cluster partners.

**A key challenge to reach the intended outcomes will be that the selected households will prioritize the use of SOKs or ESKs (either distribute in kind or through cash or voucher assistance) for the improvement of their shelter conditions – over other immediate needs.** This can be mitigated through targeting, referrals, or complementary assistance (particularly food and fuel for cooking and for heating during the winter) as well as by providing technical training and supervision, with additional labour support for particularly vulnerable HHs.

As a minimum, families should receive basic orientation on how to use the items included in the kits, to enable them to use them without causing themselves or others any harm. This includes Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and in-person guidance where and when feasible.

As the context allows, shelter partners should consider the following aspects:

- Different degrees of constraints related to local manufacturing and supply of construction tools and materials will continue across all scenarios. Monitor prices, quality and availability of materials including salvaged items such as metal frames, timber, rebar, blocks, doors, and windows.
- Observe how people are adapting, what materials they use, how do they connect these materials, what structures people put together, how do they link to existing spaces (even if incomplete or damaged). Prepare messages based on these observations (key risks as well as best practices).
- Identify people with technical construction skills who can train and/or help others. This is especially important to help HHs that may not be able to carry on the work on their own.
- Engage with local manufacturers and suppliers. The experience they have can bring relevant input into the designs, costs, materials, and prototypes to encourage collaboration. Use the ingenuity, and resourcefulness of small business. By working together, we can enhance shelter solutions.
- Consider the feasibility of upgrading shelters to improve durability. Options include metal sheet roof coverings, timber reinforcement, metal panels, or durable cladding for walls.

## TECHNICAL QUALITY

The contents and specifications below are included for reference. Particularly the SOK has been prepared based on the few items that are currently allowed into Gaza. The revision and prioritisation of items will depend largely on the availability of materials as well as the specific needs identified – to improve the shelter conditions across different locations.

Some of the items might be exchanged. Shelter partners can for example explore the opportunities to import bamboo instead of timber. After any adjustments, every ESK should still have elements for the structure, some cover, a way to fix these together and basic instructions or IEC materials (e.g. simple step-by-step explanations with drawings or pictures). When adapting the contents, the shelter cluster should be at least informed. A regular exchange including challenges and problem solving is important.

Even with only a few items in the SOK and no standard ESK design, there are technical points to consider during their installation. Discuss these points with team members beyond the shelter team and in addition to other technical advice collected from direct observations. Use field visits or activities to communicate these with participants to improve the sturdiness and lifespan of the structures.

- The timber (square timber, posts, poles, or bamboo) in the kits is mostly intended for temporary wall framing – for internal or external walls –. If participants decide to use the timber for internal partitions this possibly indicates the household is prioritizing overcrowding.
- The quantity of items is very limited so it is important that participants make basic calculations and decide what to prioritize. Ask people to remember: “measure twice, cut once” making sure that the pieces are large enough and help connect different elements.

- Promote the use of bracing to make timber frame stronger. Particularly diagonals connecting corner posts with beams. Cutting diagonals with precision so the cut faces of the timber is as flat as possible. Avoiding gaps between elements that are connecting is very important. Bracing can also be done with metal plates, plywood or repurposed wood planks.
- Timber can also be used to create door or window frames. Door openings need to be wide enough for wheelchair users but lower doors (e.g. 1.7m instead of 2.1m) will be sturdier and use less timber.
- Maintain a minimum height of 2.1m for the shelter so people can stand inside the shelter.
- Also ensure that the posts go into the ground from 30 to 50 cm deep. The hole should not be wider than needed. Compact the bottom of the hole and add gravel or stones. This improves stability and keeps posts from rotting. Maintaining the post as vertical as possible when filling back the ground.
- Follow the basic tips for installing plastic sheeting<sup>24</sup>: spreading the load of fixings and chose the best method to fix the plastic sheeting to the ground; a strong way of fixing rope to plastic sheeting is to fold a smooth stone (3cm diameter min) inside the plastic sheeting and tie the rope around it.
- To avoid water puddles forming, ensure that plastic roofs are sloped, that the plastic is fixed tight and there are sufficient well-placed supports. Avoid sharp points such as pointy sticks or branches that can puncture it. Some rafters should “rest” above the posts, additional rafters or purlins can be added in between rafters but ensure all components are properly tied to avoid injuries.
- The amount of self-built shelters continues to grow without planning. Engage with households receiving kits to ensure that the shelters do not block access to pathways and water/sanitation facilities. Follow Fire Risk Reduction Guidance,<sup>25</sup> including minimum spacing between shelters from 2m to over 5m, depending on construction materials, opening sizes and locations, and wind conditions.

#### Sealing off kit – SOK<sup>26</sup>

Item	Specifications	Unit	Quantity	Unit cost \$ USD	Total cost \$ USD
Clear plastic sheeting up to 50 m2 per shelter. Minimum width 4m.	190gsm or 0.3mm thick	m <sup>2</sup>	50	1.16	58
Tarpaulin sheet. Maximum 2 sheets per unit	humanitarian standard specs UNHCR/IFRC/ICRC size (4x6)	Piece	2	20	40
Adhesive tape	Duct tape Extra Heavy Duty, 50mm x 25m	Piece	2	2	4
Rope	Standard plastic rope 6mm dia (Qty Per Kit = 20m)	Piece	1	2	2
IEC material		Piece	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>105</b>
N.B. Unit costs are estimative and should be updated to market conditions					

#### Emergency Shelter Kit – SOK<sup>27</sup>

The content of the kit should be discussed and validated with the shelter cluster. The content in the table below is for reference and should be adapted to context and lifting of material restrictions (currently timber and some construction tools are restricted since they are considered dual-use materials).

<sup>24</sup> IFRC and Oxfam, 2007, [Plastic Sheetting: A guide to the specification and use of plastic sheeting in humanitarian relief](#)

<sup>25</sup> GSC, 2023, [Fire Risk Reduction Guidance](#)

<sup>26</sup> Shelter Cluster, 2023, [Standardized Shelter NFI packages and combined kits, Shelter Cluster Palestine](#)

<sup>27</sup> Shelter Cluster, 2023, [Standardized Shelter NFI packages and combined kits, Shelter Cluster Palestine](#)

Item	Specifications	Unit	Quantity	Unit cost \$USD	Total cost \$ USD
Clear plastic sheeting up to 50 m2 per shelter. Minimum width 4m.	190gsm or 0.3mm thick	m2	50	1.16	58
Tarpaulin sheet. Maximum 2 sheets per unit	humanitarian standard specs UNHCR/IFRC/ICRC size (4x6m)	Piece	2	20	40
Rope	twisted polypropylene rope 3mm dia (Qty Per Kit = 30m)	Piece	1	3	3
Rope	twisted polypropylene rope 12mm dia (Qty Per Kit = 30m)	Piece	1	5	5
Timber	Timber section with dimensions 65X65X4000 mm. PREFERRED. Length. Range 65 to 75mm.	Piece	8	8	64
Nails	Galvanized roofing nails (3 mm diameter and 75 mm length) supplied in a sealed bag	kg	0.5	4	2
Nails	Galvanized round wire nails for timber use (3 mm diameter and 75 mm length) supplied in a sealed bag	kg	2	2	1
Hammer	Claw hammer with weight 0.750 kg. Wooden handle, replaceable. Head in forged steel. Good quality.	Piece	1	5	5
Shovel	Shovel head with sharpened tip in forged steel which is tempered and hardened. Supplied with a handle. (length 1-1.2m)	Piece	1	5	5
Handsaw	Saw, All-Purpose, total length 550mm, for wood, good quality, teeth from tempered and hardened steel. Unbreakable handle. Saw blade covered in protective cardboard.	Piece	1	5	5
Hoe	Hoe (180x310mm) with standard hardwood handle (length 1-1.2m)	Piece	1	5	5
Pliers	Combination pliers 150mm, 34mm jaw	Piece	1	5	5
Wire	Galvanized tie wire, 25mx1.5mm dia roll	Piece	1	5	5
Tape	measuring tape 5m	Piece	1	5	5
Bag	Resistant 19polyethylene bag for distribution of the items 50kg	Piece	1	2	2
IEC material		Piece	1	1	1
				<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>
N.B. Unit costs are estimative and should be updated to market conditions					

## Improvements to collective centres

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSISTANCE AT GLANCE

Collective centers are existing buildings used as temporary accommodations for displaced populations. Most collective centers are part of the public or community infrastructure that people are familiar with such as schools, hospitals, public, or religious buildings. People also gather around humanitarian

buildings and compounds as well as in large private buildings such as wedding halls, hotels, or office buildings. A shelter response in collective centres aims to adapt these buildings which were not built or intended for accommodation to shelter large groups and to enable them to conduct basic daily activities (e.g., sleeping, washing, eating). People of different ages and genders, may have different needs, and may experience trauma, stress, and uncertainty in different ways.

Improvement of collective centres<sup>28</sup> play a crucial role in supporting collective centre residents living in precarious and overcrowded conditions. Therefore, infrastructure and utilities (particularly WASH) should be well maintained from the onset. Investments to improve or expand the facilities takes place incrementally after an acute emergency. The critical upgrades address urgent needs and includes improving privacy for individual households; gender disaggregated and barrier free latrines; improved ability to store water and to manage waste; setting up cooking facilities; improving lighting and ventilation as well as maintaining common spaces and areas dedicated for the management of the collective centre or for the provision of additional services.

Collective centers often provide shelter from the first days of displacement and for a duration beyond initial expectations. The longer these centers stay operational, the greater the need for expanded infrastructure, additional supportive activities (such as management and community involvement), ongoing maintenance and problem-solving as well as rehabilitation of repair. When overcrowded beyond capacity, the buildings will inevitably suffer damage which will need to be repaired. Further, for as long they are used for shelter, these cannot be returned to their original use – hindering recovery.

Improvements and upgrades will cost up to \$13,000 per Collective Center.

## IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Vulnerable families *already* living in collective centres prioritizing female headed HHs, child headed HHs and households that have family members with injuries, chronic illness, elderly, and disabilities.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Since the collective centers are already in operation, confirm that due diligence has already taken place confirming land tenure and verify the length of any agreement in place. UNHCR (and no other agencies) offers rent for the use of collective centers no matter who owns a building.<sup>29</sup> Before engaging in infrastructure or rehabilitation works, shelter actors need to comply with necessary permits and secure agreements with the building owner(s), authorities, and partners. Coordinate with the agency that manages the collective centre so the terms under which the building will be returned to its owners is agreed upon before beginning initial works and operation. The building might either be returned with all infrastructure and subdivisions intact for their own usage, or with the building stripped back and repaired to its original state. This must be clearly stated in any agreements and handover documents.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the varied characteristics of collective centres around the world, shelter actors can follow an intervention logic that includes ensuring the safety of the building; protection from the natural elements; adaptation, repair and rehabilitation works; and, ongoing care and maintenance.<sup>31</sup>

The current conditions in Gaza impede shelter actors to confirm collective centers comply with structural safety standards while these locations and surrounded areas have come under direct attack. When operational capacity permits to do so civil engineers should assess the structural safety of the

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<sup>28</sup> This shelter solution will be also considered and further developed by the site management Working Group.

<sup>29</sup> [Collective centre strategy considerations | UNHCR](#)

<sup>30</sup> IOM, 2015, [Camp Management Tool Kit](#)

<sup>31</sup> Adapted from UNHCR-IOM, 2010, [Collective Centres Guidelines](#)

collective centers against national and international construction standards and to withstand the impact of earthquakes or other threats. This is particularly important for collective centers installed in unused buildings, such as inactive hotels, abandoned warehouses or factories, which may be structurally unsound.

When a building is not structurally sound, the typical options are either to retrofit the structure or to relocate to a safer building. In Gaza however, structural retrofitting will not be possible without access to steel or concrete. Alternative locations to accommodate large groups are also increasingly scarce. Agencies need to continue to promote decongestion of collective centers and alternative shelter solutions. A strategy to do so, is providing shelter materials to facilitate return and repair damaged housing.

After safety, a second priority, is the protection from the natural elements. This might be referred as “sealing off” or improving the building insulation system including a waterproof roof and good windows to withstand all climate conditions. Arrangements for winterization are critical as well as natural ventilation for the summer.

In terms of the adaptation of the space, repair, and rehabilitation, conducting major works may not be cost-effective or possible. Rather, partners should aim to improve the immediate adequacy of the space by increasing privacy, improving sleeping areas as well as areas used for cooking and improvements to WASH infrastructure. All activities need to be in coordination with WASH actors, the site planning working group, and critically, with residents and the agency managing the collective centre. We must ensure that interventions/assistance do not alter the primary purpose of use since more than 90% of collective centres are schools.

Regular care, repair and maintenance are imperative to maintain a minimum level of the safety, health and wellbeing, and avoid the degradation of the building. The managing agency must develop a maintenance plan to ensure ongoing functionality. Shelter actors can support other agencies working with the community centre residents to develop “community rules”. These self-regulation schemes can help facilitate respecting the purpose and use of the different private and communal spaces, particularly shared spaces, toilets, kitchen, cooking and dining spaces. Shelters need to have comprehensive yet simple regulations that are clearly communicated to all residents and include opening times; the obligations of residents with respect to maintenance; governance and coordination mechanisms; garbage disposal management; hygiene measures; and fire hazard measures.

The provision of shelter in collective centers need to consider access to basic furnishing and the distribution of NFIs. In Gaza, the standard NFI assistance includes a bedding set, a washing set (to carry water and do laundry), and a kitchen kit.<sup>32</sup>

With most of the total population of Gaza is displaced, the need to shelter in large numbers will continue. Further, access for humanitarian assistance to collective centers in buildings with a lower number of residents can be more problematic. On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge that whenever possible, small scale collective centers – with under 100 residents have generally a higher social solidarity and lower security of gender-based violence (GBV).

In coordination again, with WASH actors, the site planning working group, and critically, with residents, the agency managing the collective centre, the property owner(s) and original users (e.g. school, church or mosque representatives), develop an exit strategy for when the collective centers are no longer required, and the buildings can be returned to their previous use.

## TECHNICAL QUALITY

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<sup>32</sup> Shelter Cluster, 2023, [Standardized Shelter NFI packages and combined kits, Shelter Cluster Palestine](#)

Collective centres are normally not designed for accommodation and sanitation facilities soon become overburdened. Therefore, there are some typical adaptations that are commonly done. It is vital to ensure adequate access to basic WASH facilities like toilets, showers, and handwashing facilities, through collaboration with WASH cluster partners, and ensuring adherence to SPHERE standards.

Partitioning of large areas into family units is one of the primary activities and should facilitate the grouping of extended families. Internal layouts should promote division of household and personal space. The materials used to partition collective centres need to provide as much sound insulation as possible to give families some degree of privacy from their immediate neighbours.<sup>33</sup> This is particularly important to prevent women and girls be sleeping in mixed-gendered rooms with extended families or strangers, which increases risks such as gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Also as a measure to mitigate GBV add lighting along hallways, WASH facilities and dark spaces.

Given the risks associated with overcrowding, it is crucial to hold consultations with communities during the design of the improvements to collective centres. Consideration is also needed in terms of accessibility for persons with disabilities. Consultations must involve women, girls, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, ensuring that solutions align with the expectations and needs of all participants.

Shelter in collective centres often involves high levels of stress and conflict, especially when the facilities are unsuited for the purpose or poorly managed. The period of stay should be as short as possible – especially for persons with disabilities. People experiencing psychosocial or cognitive disabilities should be prioritised for alternative shelter options. Barrier free considerations include installing or maintain ramps and having common services on ground floor, including bathrooms, kitchen and laundry spaces with clear signage and inside the washrooms, toilets to be accessible for wheelchair users.<sup>34</sup>

The recommended living space per person is 3.5m<sup>2</sup> and between 12 and 15m<sup>2</sup> per family. Where HHs get separate shelter units, the privacy of the family might be an outweighing factor. In the case of schools, a standard classroom (e.g. 35 m<sup>2</sup>) can be divided into two spaces. Partitions may be separate, free-standing panels, unfixed to existing floors, walls, or ceilings, or temporal and be easily removed.

When installed in large spaces, panels should be at least 180 cm high (a divider of 167 cm tall is the minimum height to provide a sense of privacy). The primary focus is on quick installation, but we must also account for minimum technical requirements to ensure stability and safety. Fabric, canvas, or plastic sheeting might be the last resort and clear plastic is not acceptable. These materials would not provide a minimal sense of privacy, minimal noise reduction and will not last long. If available, light wooden frames with panels of hardboard or gypsum board partitions are recommended for partitioning (lined on both sides and finished as appropriate). Room dividers can also be composed of free-standing panels with two parts: a rigid and opaque/solid panel and a basic self-standing support. Plywood, oriented strand board (OSB) or medium-density fibreboard (MDF) could be used (although MDFs is heavier and difficult to cut). If panels are too long might be instable. If too thin, these will bend or break. It might be possible to create the support using heavy duty shelf brackets or bent iron bars (with no sharp ends). These and other ideas will need to be tested and more durable alternatives should be considered as soon as possible.

Once a space is given to a household, instead of trying to keep everything “plain and standardized” allow people, especially children to customize the walls or panels to customize their space – allowed or not, if families stay in a place for days and weeks if not months, this will likely take place either way. This can

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<sup>33</sup> IOM, 2015, [Camp Management Tool Kit](#)

<sup>34</sup> Consult IFRC, 2015, [All Under One Roof | Shelter Cluster](#) and R4V 2021 [Collective Shelter Management Toolkit](#) for inclusion guidance.

be allowed and even encouraged (e.g. with colourful stickers or drawing with crayons over the surface depending on the material used on the panels). Ask people and coordinate with agencies addressing MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support). Still clearly communicate that people should not nail or hang anything heavy and might damage the panels or cause them to fall.

It is important to create an adequate sleeping space. Without any rest, the wellbeing of people is further deteriorated. Whilst the external context cannot be controlled, the physical space can be improved to avoid frequent disturbances to sleep due to light, lack of mattresses or bedding, or due to extreme cold, extreme heat or damp conditions. As possible, collective centers might also reserve different areas to be designated by the residents (such as quiet, praying, grieving safe spaces). Also consider allocating a gender-disaggregated space where staff providing aid at the collective centre can rest, cry, or step out for a pause in their work.

In most cases, individuals naturally prefer to prepare their own meals so if adequate space is not provided, people may do so within their private sleeping areas, which without proper separation and ventilation many people may be exposed to smoke inhalation increasing chances of respiratory disease, different habits may disturb others, leading to heightened tensions and compromising health and fire safety. To avoid this, communal cooking facilities may be appropriate, requiring careful consideration of both the physical (space, equipment, location) and organization (usage, opening hours, cleaning). Access to energy for cooking, as well as for other uses (e.g. charging cell phones) needs to be also considered.

The conditions of the collective centres will vary and will likely deteriorate with their prolonged use. In addition to a detailed WASH assessment within and around the building, teams can develop a checklist to conduct regular technical assessments of the building. This checklist should include the state of the roof including any leaks to fix; checking if walls are sealed and provide sufficient thermal insulation; cracks on the walls / bullet holes (including checking if air is going through the holes or people can see through them); the state of electrical wiring and fuses, if lighting to be powered at night; need to install or replace solar panels; level of ventilation; broken windows and broken doors; need to installing internal locks for independent shelter units; fire access; state of stairs and security features such as handrails or barriers on higher floors; state of cooking areas as well as heating or air conditioning facilities if any.

Use this assessment to prepare for any rehabilitation works and develop relevant documents, including a scope of works, implementation plan, technical drawings, sketches and/or photos, bill of quantities (BoQ) and specifications.

Follow Fire Risk Reduction Guidance, as Collective centers often present significant fire risks that are not well understood, mitigated, or managed.<sup>35</sup> These fire risks are exacerbated in Gaza by the overcrowding of makeshift shelters and improvised partitions in the corridors and all open spaces in the compound.

The maintenance of Collective Centres, particularly communal spaces, would always be a challenge and requires the participation of the residents. Repairs after use will be needed so buildings will be in a reasonable state when it is returned to its intended use.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> GSC, 2023, [Fire Risk Reduction Guidance](#)

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR-IOM, 2010, [Collective Centres Guidelines](#)

# Rental (not feasible in current context) and host family support

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSISTANCE AT GLANCE

Rental or host family support can be an effective way of providing shelter for the displaced population, while utilising the already existing housing stock and accordingly, **the availability and stability of the housing stock and functionality of the rental market are critical**. The conditions to successfully implement rental market interventions (RMIs) as part of the humanitarian shelter response are unlikely to be found in the short and mid-term in Gaza (beyond extending the assistance to any ongoing caseload). Going beyond any small-scale intervention would require a market able to absorb displaced households within the rental market without driving rents up and inadvertently evicting current residents from their homes.

The total population of Gaza has been estimated at 2.2 million people before the start of the 2023 hostilities. The census of 2017 indicated that the Gaza Strip had 1.88 million people with 83% households living in housing units owned to one of its members and **only 7% of households lived in rented housing units**.<sup>37</sup> The local (neighbourhood or village level) market functionality is paramount and can be characterized by relatively stable prices, some (affordable) units vacant or available, and a market system, as well as self-regulating mechanisms (such as property agents and a range of formal and informal rental agreements). For the contrary, as shared by the Shelter Cluster in January 2024: “based on an IDPs survey conducted in Rafah; **rental apartments cost over 800% the normal price** due to lack of availability of units in the south”.

An estimated 74% of the population is considered urban and the average household size in the Gaza Strip is estimated at 6.9 persons per housing unit.<sup>38</sup> Before the 2023 escalation of the conflict and evacuation orders, 77% of the households lived in apartments and 12% of households already in overcrowded conditions. This means **hosting families have very limited space to share yet there is an overwhelming number of individuals in extended and merged households sharing accommodation**.

As a consequence of the level of destruction and the need for accommodation that property owners will have for their own relatives, the rental market after escalation is expected to be practically inexistant. **Host family support as a shelter response can allow hosting arrangements to last longer and to be less burdensome**. Boosting support to host families is crucial to mitigate tensions and help keep displaced people in shelter longer but **host family support will not be feasible at scale** or to improve security of tenure unless there is a significant increase in the supply of housing units.

## IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

People who are hosting and the people they are hosting become project participants and benefit from the assistance. However, based on experience from different contexts, it is recommended to limit the vulnerability criteria only towards the hosted IDPs.

Once the housing stock and the rental market are recovered, project participants will be people whose homes have been destroyed or are uninhabitable and do not own land to construct a transitional shelter.

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<sup>37</sup> GSC, 2024, Gaza Crisis Response [7 January 2024 Shelter Update](#)

<sup>38</sup> PCBS, 2018, [Social Coherence for Adequate Housing](#)

## IMPLEMENTATION

The main objective of rental support (i.e., cash for rent) is to be able to access or retain housing in the rental market under favorable terms. Rental or host family support can be particularly adequate for persons with disabilities when the alternative is shelter in camps or collective centers. Renting or hosting can offer increased safety and suitability. Rented or hosted shelter can in some cases offer persons with disabilities and caregivers increased possibility to stay close to support networks or important services and facilities. However, rented or hosted shelter may also involve challenges, including physical barriers in the existing housing stock. Hosting can put a strain on social relationships, and renting may come with tenure insecurity which affects persons with disabilities disproportionately.<sup>39</sup>

Considerations to ensure quality are not covered in this document and should be contextualized from the global guidance available for Rental Market Interventions<sup>40</sup> and Hosting Support<sup>41</sup>. The amount of the cash transfers needs to be revised to match current context.

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<sup>39</sup> Consult IFRC, 2015, [All Under One Roof | Shelter Cluster](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Shelter Cash and Markets Community of Practice- Documents | Shelter Cluster](#) ; [Shelter and Cash Working Group | Shelter Cluster](#) ; [Rental Market Interventions | Shelter Cluster](#) ; [Rental Assistance Guide | IFRC](#) ; [Cash and voucher assistance | IFRC](#) ; [HLP and Cash Tip Sheet](#)

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, 2012, [IDPs in Host Families and Host Communities: Assistance for hosting arrangements](#)