



Dignified and Safer Living Conditions for IDPs in Somalia

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Cover picture:

Women and girls learn vernacular construction techniques to be able to upgrade their transitional shelters, Baidoa – Credit : IOM/Foresight Films

Table of Contents

1.	Executive summary	3
2.	Abbreviations	5
3.	Acknowledgements.....	6
4.	Context.....	7
5.	Conceptual and legal Framework	8
6.	Objective	12
7.	Guiding Principles and Minimum Standards	13
8.	Conclusion	20
9.	Resources	21

1. Executive summary

Conflict, droughts, floods and forced evictions continue to trigger alarmingly high levels of internal displacement in Somalia. Around one million people are newly displaced every year in Somalia¹.

Around four million people are estimated to be in need of shelter and NFI assistance in Somalia in 2022, mainly due to poor shelter conditions, overcrowding, poverty, and a lack of security of tenure. IDPs have been displaced on average for more than seven years². Only 10 percent of IDP sites are situated on land with government ownership demonstrating a possibility for durable land arrangements with authorities³. Therefore, most of IDP sites are located on private land, consequently, they are confined to living in temporary structures that do not provide adequate protection against the elements and that are difficult to maintain.

The shelter response focuses on the provision of emergency shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) which give displaced families immediate relief and protection. Emergency shelters are considered to be a temporary housing solution because of the short lifespan of the construction materials and because they do not provide enough safety, privacy, and dignity for IDPs. Around \$20 Million are spent on shelter response every year, of which only 5% has a durable impact, because most of the assistance is channelled to life-saving shelter and NFI assistance.

International human rights law and a dozen of international binding texts recognizes everyone's **right to an adequate standard of living**, including adequate housing⁴. This right entails affordability, accessibility, cultural adequacy, safety, privacy, land tenure security and protection against forced eviction, access to basic services such as water and sanitation.

Considering that emergency shelters are a temporary solution, and the average displacement period is more than seven years, the Shelter Cluster in Somalia is encouraging all stakeholders to scale up and enhance the response through greater focus on **transitional and durable shelter solutions delivered through owner-driven, area-based approaches that empower affected communities**. The provision of adequate shelter provides an enabling platform for advocacy with local government entities for the increase in access to secure land ownership for IDPs, and increased potential for the integration of displaced persons among hosting communities.

Transitional or durable shelters improve the living conditions of IDPs as well as their physical and mental health. They protect against the elements and improve safety, especially with regards to women and girls who are more at risk of forms of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. The construction of durable shelters also has a positive impact on the local economy as they require materials produced locally and they increase livelihood opportunities for affected populations.

¹ 4.9 Million people have been displaced between 2017 and 2021 (2017: 1.1 M; 2018: 0.9M; 2019: 0.8M; 2020: 1.3M; 2021: 0.9M) according to the [UNHCR Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#)

² Source: CCCM Cluster. Out of the 2,363 IDP sites assessed using the detailed site assessment, 210 (10%) have been classified as having permanent land tenure i.e. land owned by either the local authority or federal government.

³ Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA) 2021.

⁴ Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Source: [The Right to Adequate Housing](#), OHCHR & UN-Habitat, November 2009.



2. Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AoR	Area of Responsibility
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
JMCNA	Join Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment
NFI	Non-Food Item
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCM	Post-Construction Monitoring
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

3. Acknowledgements

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4. Context

Displacement in Somalia

Conflict, droughts, floods, and forced evictions continue to trigger alarmingly high levels of internal displacement. Almost one million people are newly displaced every year in Somalia⁵. In 2021, 544,000 people have been displaced by conflict, considered the main factor driving displacement this year.

According to the Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA) 2021, shelter is one of the top three priority needs of more than half of the entire population and of 58 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Around four million people⁶ are in need of shelter and Non-Food Item (NFI) assistance, mainly due to poor shelter conditions, overcrowding and a lack of space, poverty, and a lack of security of tenure. Those in need of shelter and NFI assistance include displaced and non-displaced populations, however IDPs are particularly affected as they lack the financial capacity to build adequate shelters. In addition, IDPs usually do not own the land they occupy, and therefore are not allowed to build any permanent structure.⁷. Only 10 percent of IDP sites are situated on land with government ownership demonstrating a possibility for durable land arrangements with authorities⁸. Therefore, most of IDP sites are located on private land, consequently, they are confined to living in temporary structures that do not provide adequate protection against the elements and that are difficult to maintain.

Furthermore, girls and women tend not to feel safe in sub-standard and overcrowded shelters which do not offer privacy or sufficient protection from

the elements and increase the risk of gender-based violence. Girls and women living in IDP sites are more prone to sexual violence and abuse than those living in host communities with a better housing infrastructure and service sites and markets.

Over a quarter of IDPs reported their main concern to be that their bathing facilities are not safe⁹. In addition, marginalized groups and persons with specific needs also require additional support and should be prioritized, as resources are limited.

In respect of their missions and mandates, humanitarian organizations are responding to rapid and sudden-onset displacement. Simultaneously, they need to assist protracted IDPs who have already been living in camps or informal sites for several years.

Emergencies, protracted displacements, and shelter response

According to the JMCNA 2021, IDPs have been displaced on average for more than seven years, and therefore require support which goes beyond strictly emergency assistance, such as access to land, durable shelters, jobs and access to services. However, due to lack of funding, Shelter Cluster members were rarely able to provide durable shelter assistance and could only focus on life-saving response. In 2021, Shelter Cluster members reached 209,211 persons who were assisted with emergency shelter assistance while only 6,147 persons benefitted from transitional shelters and 1,560 from durable shelters.

As more IDPs remain in protracted displacement, the long-term shelter needs of displaced persons will continue to increase.

⁵ 4.9 Million people have been displaced between 2017 and 2021 (2017: 1.1 M; 2018: 0.9M; 2019: 0.8M; 2020: 1.3M; 2021: 0.8M) according to the [UNHCR Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#)

⁶ 3.7 million people in need of shelter identified during HNO process in 2021 plus 270,000 newly displaced people who have shelter needs in January 2022

⁷ Source: CCCM Cluster. Out of the 2,363 IDP sites assessed using the detailed site assessment, 210 (10%) have been classified as having permanent land tenure i.e. land owned by either the local authority or federal government.

⁸ Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA) 2021.

⁹ 27 per cent, according to the Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA) 2021.

5. Conceptual and legal Framework

The approach to provide safer, more dignified shelter solutions seeks to guarantee the rights of IDPs in alignment with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which states that '**Every human being has the right to dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity**', and '**All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living.**'¹⁰ These principles are reflected in the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), ratified by the Federal Government of Somalia in 2020.

International human rights law and a dozen of international binding texts recognize everyone is **right to an adequate standard of living**, including adequate housing¹¹. Article 11, paragraph 1 of **the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**¹² provides “[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant should recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) General Comment No. 4 on the right to adequate housing interprets Article 11, paragraph 1 and provides a detailed explanation on what adequate housing entails.

Significantly, under paragraph 7 of General Comment No. 4, the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head or views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. This is appropriate for at least

two reasons. In the first place, the right to housing is integrally linked to other human rights and to the fundamental principles upon which the ICESCR is premised. Thus “the inherent dignity of the human person” from which the rights in the ICESCR derive requires that **the term “housing” be interpreted so as to take account of a variety of other considerations, most importantly that the right to housing should be ensured to all persons irrespective of income or access to economic resources**. Secondly, the reference in Article 11(1) must be read as referring not just to housing but also to adequate housing. As both the Commission on Human Settlements and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 have stated: “Adequate shelter means ... adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities - all at a reasonable cost”.

Article 15 of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, to which Somalia is a party, provides that (a) Everyone shall have the right to own property acquired in a legitimate way, and shall be entitled to the rights of ownership without prejudice to oneself, others or the society in general. Expropriation is not permissible except for requirements of public interest and upon payment of prompt and fair compensation and (b) Confiscation and seizure of property is prohibited except for a necessity dictated by law. These provisions are also reflected in Article 26 of the Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic Somalia, 2012.

With this rights-based approach and conceptual framework in mind, this guidance note outlines how shelter interventions in Somalia must be adapted to meet these rights and that security of land tenure must be improved, with a particular emphasis on durable solutions for displaced persons¹³.

¹⁰ Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Principle 11, 1. 'Every human being has the right to dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity'. Principle 18, 1. 'All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living.'

¹¹ Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights. Source: [The Right to Adequate Housing](#), OHCHR & UN-Habitat, November 2009.

¹² [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

¹³ Improving the security of tenure for IDPs is also part of the [The Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024 \(NDP-9\)](#) strategy, (page 239).

WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING?¹⁴

While adequacy is determined in part by social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other factors, the CESCR has identified certain aspects of the right that must be taken into account for this purpose in any particular context. They include the following:

a) Legal security of tenure

Tenure takes a variety of forms, including rental (public and private) accommodation, cooperative housing, lease, owner-occupation, emergency housing and informal settlements, including occupation of land or property. Notwithstanding the type of tenure, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure, which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats. States parties should consequently take immediate measures aimed at conferring legal security of tenure upon those persons and households currently lacking such protection, in genuine consultation with affected persons and groups;

b) Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure

An adequate house must contain certain facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition;

c) Affordability

Steps should be taken by States parties to ensure that the percentage of housing-related costs is, in general, commensurate with income levels. States parties should establish housing subsidies for those unable to obtain affordable housing, as well as forms and levels of housing finance, which adequately reflect housing needs. In accordance with the principle of affordability, tenants should be protected by appropriate means against unreasonable rent levels or rent increases. In societies where natural materials constitute the chief sources of building materials for housing,

steps should be taken by States parties to ensure the availability of such materials;

d) Habitability

Adequate housing must be habitable, in terms of providing the inhabitants with adequate space and protecting them from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors. The physical safety of occupants must be guaranteed as well;

e) Accessibility

Adequate housing must be accessible to those entitled to it. Disadvantaged groups should be accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources. Priority consideration in the housing sphere should be given to disadvantaged groups i.e. the elderly, children, the physically disabled, the terminally ill, HIV-positive individuals, persons with persistent medical problems, the mentally ill, victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas and other groups.

f) Location

Adequate housing must be in a location, which allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities

g) Cultural adequacy

The way housing is constructed, the building materials used and the policies supporting these must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing.

¹⁴ See CESCR General Comment no. 4, paras. 8 (a)–(g).

The National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020 - 2024¹⁵

The first objective of the National Durable Solutions Strategy is to “increase the resilience of displacement affected communities by ensuring equitable access to public services, housing with security of tenure, and social safety nets through a rights and needs based approach”. The strategy clearly articulates that this requires accelerating the creation and expansion of social development models, piloting public-private partnerships, issuing directives on evictions, creating a database of good practices on affordable housing in Somalia, piloting innovative approaches to security of land tenure in Somalia, and preparing an inventory of land that can be provided by authorities, among others.

Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia¹⁶

Article 6 of the Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia provides “The Federal Government of Somalia at the national and local levels commits to gradually upgrade living conditions of internally displaced person and other displacement-affected communities in situations of protracted displacement and pending a long-term solution in order to avoid a manifestation of a dependency syndrome and chronic poverty”. Pending a long-term solution, the authorities recommend to upgrade “shelter, housing, water, sanitation and other infrastructure in areas inhabited by IDPs to ensure their safety, health and dignity”, Include “IDP settlements in urban planning and upgrading to avoid the proliferation of slum areas in urban centers” and provide “access to land and housing”. The Somalia Interim protocol on Land distribution for housing refugees, returnees and IDPs, 2019 provides for priority in land allocation, when allocating land, priority shall be given to vulnerable groups, including but not limited to, widowed, the elderly, or chronically ill persons¹⁷.

The National Eviction Guidelines in Somalia¹⁸ provide safeguards in undertaking eviction. Evictions shall not render individuals, groups of persons or communities homeless or vulnerable to violation of their human rights guaranteed under the Provisional Constitution, other applicable national laws and international human rights instruments. In addition, appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure protection to those unable to provide for themselves and, in particular, women, children, persons with disabilities or chronic illness, and the elderly.¹⁹

This exploration also takes into account Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable solutions for Internally displaced people²⁰ and OCHA's concept on the New Ways of Working, which mentions that:

“Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are among the world’s most vulnerable people. They face key humanitarian and development challenges such as limited access to health and education services as well as economic and social marginalization. In the absence of durable solutions to their plight, the number of IDPs in protracted situations keeps rising. There is a growing consensus emerging for a **new and comprehensive approach to meet the challenges of displacement that goes beyond addressing immediate humanitarian needs**. Applying the New Way of Working to situations of protracted internal displacement will provide a coherent approach to reduce the vulnerabilities of IDPs and host communities, build their resilience over time, harness the respective expertise of humanitarian and development actors, and leverage international financial institutions and the private sector...”²¹

¹⁵ [The National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020 – 2024](#), The Federal Government of Somalia, 2021.

¹⁶ [Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia](#), Ministry of Interior and Federalism Federal Government of Somalia, 2014.

¹⁷ [Somalia: Interim Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2019

¹⁸ Somalia [National Eviction Guidelines in Somalia](#), 2019.

¹⁹ Article 4, Somalia National Eviction Guidelines, 2019.

²⁰ [Framework on Durable solutions for Internally displaced people](#), IASC, 2010.

²¹ New Way of Working, OCHA, 2017

Women's Housing Land and Property Rights

Somaliland, Puntland, other Federal Member States, and the Banadir Region apply different legal and policy frameworks with common elements. The 2012 Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Constitution of Puntland, and the Constitution of Somaliland, are all based on and cannot contravene Sharia Law; thus, Islamic rights and a significant part of customary norms as pertains to women's HLP rights are the same throughout the country. These include family laws (in particular laws related to marriage and divorce), inheritance laws, and land and property laws. Such laws determine who has control over assets, who has the ability to make economic decisions in their own name, and who can own, administer, transfer or inherit property.

Under Article 26 of the Provisional Constitution of Somalia, every person has the right to own, use, enjoy, sell and transfer property. The Puntland Constitution provides for the right of ownership under Article 30. Hence, in Puntland, every citizen shall have the right to have his/her own property, within the framework of the law. Article 18 of the Puntland Constitution further protects women's rights and ensures the women's rights of independence, socio-economic and political rights that are not forbidden in the Islamic Sharia. Further to this, it states that the Puntland State shall protect the women's rights.

In Somaliland, by virtue of Article 8 of the Somaliland Constitution, all citizens of Somaliland shall enjoy equal rights and obligations before the law, and shall be accorded precedence on grounds of colour, clan, birth, language, gender, property, status, opinion etc.

In general, all three Constitutions affirm women's rights to equality before the law, the right to life and dignity, the right to be free from discrimination, and the right to own property.

In Somaliland, the draft policy framework on Internal Displacement echoes the provisions of the Somaliland constitution and measures to guard against arbitrary displacements, and protections to prevent forced evictions. In the draft policy framework, the state commits to protecting the rights of all IDPs including women to own land and property. Article 15 of the Puntland Policy guidelines²² on internal displacement states that government has the obligation to respect and protect property rights. This includes the rights to property and possessions of IDP women, girls, boys, and men in accordance with the constitution, international human rights and humanitarian law standards and that the Government shall a) Ensure that no one is arbitrarily deprived of property and possessions; b) Recognizes the rights of IDPs to their abandoned property and possessions, including the right to protection, restitution and/ or compensation.

²² [1] Puntland Policy Guidelines on Displacement, 2011

6. Objective

The overall objective of seeking dignified and safer living conditions for protracted IDPs in Somalia is to improve the living conditions and resilience of IDPs, and to contribute to durable solutions. To achieve this, the Shelter Cluster activities aims to provide:

- **Safe, dignified and adequate shelter solutions** for vulnerable and protracted IDPs, including safe access to water and sanitation.
- **More transitional and durable shelter solutions** that do not need to be replaced every year.
- **Security of tenure for IDPs and prevent evictions** that regularly affect IDPs. Evicted IDPs need additional assistance they could have already received in the past.
- **More cost-effective and affordable shelter solutions**, considering the large number of IDPs living in makeshift shelters and the small number of IDPs integrated in their new community, who have already benefitted from permanent shelters.



Durable shelter in Galkayo, enclosure wall built by the owner.

UNHCR/DRC

7. Guiding Principles and Minimum Standards

The following guiding principles and minimum standards aim to provide a guide for implementing safer, more adequate and dignified shelter and settlement solutions in protracted crises. This includes a community-based and homeowner driven approach and the use of more durable materials where appropriate.



Transitional shelters for 350 displaced persons in Baidoa. IOM

Housing Land and Property

The main barrier to improving the shelters and the living conditions of the IDPs is access to land. When IDPs do not own the land, they are often restricted by the landowners from using more durable materials when building their shelter²³. Therefore, IDPs are confined to living in makeshift shelters that do not provide safety or good protection against the weather, which can increase the risks of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse for girls and women. The Shelter Cluster and the Housing, Land and Property Area of Responsibility (HLP AoR) recommends strict HLP due diligence in line with international standards should be conducted to ensure security of tenure of IDPs. In addition to the security of tenure, the plot size allocated for a household should take into account contextual and cultural aspects and be large enough for an adequate house, a kitchen, a latrine and a vegetable garden.

According to the [Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia](#), IDP settlements should be included in urban planning and upgrading to avoid the proliferation of slum areas in urban centers; Access to land, shelter and housing should be supported by:

- “Providing schemes to gradually increase the degree of security of tenure of land or forms of usufruct providing safety against evictions and allowing for land use by IDPs for livelihoods; [...]
- Providing for land allocation schemes to landless IDPs;
- Facilitation and recognition of community-based arrangements for land tenure;
- Mapping and public recording of land and identification of property and ownership relations in areas where IDPs live to facilitate such measures and the functioning of such schemes;
- Ensuring access to legal aid by IDPs on any matter related to housing, land and property in areas they settle”²⁴.

²³ Improving the security of tenure for IDPs is also part of the [The Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024 \(NDP-9\)](#) strategy, (page 239).

²⁴ Source: [Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia](#), Ministry of Interior and Federalism Federal Government of Somalia, 2014.

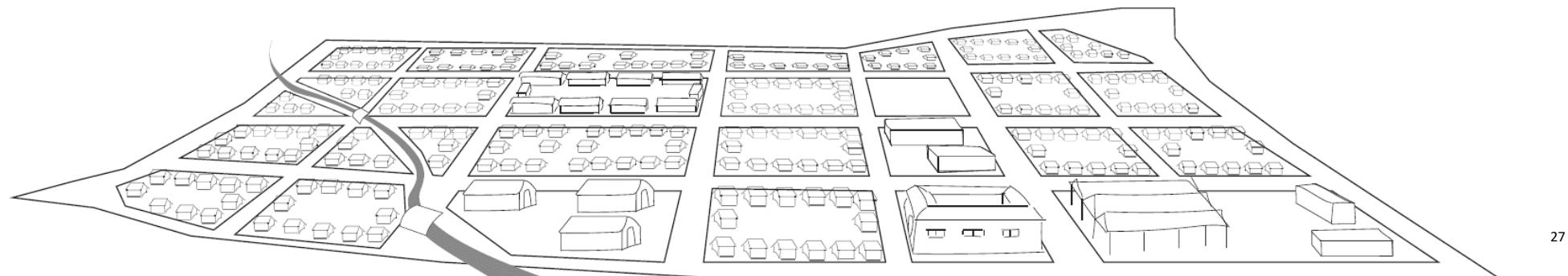
Safer IDP Settlements

In line with the Sphere Standards, shelters and settlements are inter-related and need to be considered. The location, planning and design of shelters and settlements are important to ensure safe, dignified, and adequate shelter solutions, especially in situations of protracted crises, and contribute to the safety and well-being of the affected population. In the site selection for new settlements, safe and secure locations should be selected that offer adequate space and access to essential services and livelihoods²⁵. The settlements should not be far from the town as a majority of IDPs or newly integrated communities will seek jobs there, be it housework or in the construction sector. Where possible, new settlements could also include lands for agriculture and/or livestock.

When selection of sites for new settlements, areas prone to hazards like flooding, landslides and animal crossings should be avoided however, where this is not feasible, appropriate civil engineering and site planning should be used to mitigate the risks. It is also important to consider investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, as is outlined in the Sendai Framework.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

‘Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment. These can be drivers of innovation, growth and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses and ensure effective recovery and rehabilitation. To achieve this, it is important [...] to strengthen, as appropriate, disaster-resilient public and private investments, particularly through structural, non-structural and functional disaster risk prevention and reduction measures in critical facilities, in particular schools and hospitals and physical infrastructures; **building better from the start to withstand hazards through proper design and construction.**²⁶



²⁵ Sphere Standards 2018

²⁶ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

²⁷ Source of the drawing: [Site planning - Guidance to reduce the Risk of Gender-Based Violence](#)

Stronger Protection, More Privacy, Dignity and Accessibility

The Protection Cluster outlines the responsibilities for humanitarian actors to ensure the protection of affected populations, and to not exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. It is advised to, 'Provide safety and privacy through well-designed facilities and shelters', through the use of adequate infrastructure (for example interior locks on public facilities like latrines) and sex-segregated facilities (that do not intensify existing vulnerabilities).

Prior to interventions being carried out, actors must assess the protection risks that the intervention may pose, specifically for groups with specific needs and vulnerability profiles, such as girls and women, female headed households, and persons with disabilities. Including beneficiaries through the different phases of the program cycle is one way to ensure participation and mitigate potential protection risks.

With these protection issues in mind, more durable shelter solutions, such as adobe or Baaroko houses, benefit of locked rooms and segregated rooms, which are safer and can mitigate GBV risks. In addition, settlement planning should ensure integration and access to services for both displaced and hosting communities so as to promote peaceful co-existence.

Safer, More Resilient Shelters, Adapted to Harsh Weather Conditions

Considering the specific climate of Somalia, it is recommended to use heavyweight construction materials (such as earth or stone) to ensure thermal comfort despite changes in night and day temperatures²⁸. Good settlement planning to avoid congestion and shelter designs that minimise the use of flammable materials can mitigate the risk of fire.

The roof and walls of the shelter should protect against heavy rain or solar heat radiations. A ceiling or double roof with ventilation between the two layers is recommended to prevent overheating. In areas where the risk of flooding is high, the foundation of the shelter should be constructed using stone and the floor raised to ensure more resistance is provided. The roof, walls and foundations of shelters should be well secured and robust to increase resistance in areas of high wind.

²⁸ Sphere Standard recommendations for hot and dry climates.



Value for money

While the cost of construction of one transitional shelter is higher than that of an emergency shelter, the lifespan of the transitional shelter is considerably longer. In addition, the harsh weather conditions in Somalia contribute to the faster deterioration rate of plastic sheeting frequently used in emergency typologies faster than their designed life expectancy and requires replacement every six months. This means that in the long run, the cost of housing one family per year in a transitional shelter is less than the cost of housing a family in an emergency shelter that necessitates regular renewal. Furthermore, the transitional shelter provides better protection against the elements and enhances protection and privacy through lockable doors and space for girls and women. Finally, transitional shelters can eventually be upgraded with durable materials for permanent shelters.

Each dollar invested in transitional shelters will also support the local economy through local employment, production of local construction materials, reinforcement of the national supply chain, etc.

Adaptable Shelters, Improved Self-reliance and Impact on the Local Economy

Shelter solutions have the potential to promote self-reliance and have a positive impact on the local economy. For example, out of all the shelter solutions, building shelters with local materials has the best impact on the local economy and creates job opportunities. This is of particular importance in the current economic climate. Common local materials and techniques also help shelters withstand local hazards. Local materials also have less impact on the environment as they require less transport. However, whenever local wood is involved in the construction, the impact on the environment should be measured. Alternate eco-friendly materials such as Adobe (mud bricks) can be produced and have been already successfully implemented in Somalia.

Increased self-reliance, dignity and well-being can be facilitated by incorporating flexibility into the shelter design for livelihood opportunities and potential for IDPs to adapt the shelter.



Baarako house



Adobe (mud brick) house

Financing housing for the poor

The Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024 (NDP-9) shows that “there is a concern about lack of access to good housing among the poor”. “Although financing for high-end housing is increasingly becoming available, (innovative) financing schemes to help constructing housing for the less wealthy and poor are still to be developed on scale”²⁹.

Better Access to Multi-Sectoral Services

Ensuring access to multi-sectoral services is a key element in providing safer, dignified shelter. Settlements in general should include basic services such as health, education, spaces for children and women, livelihoods, water and sanitation. These elements need to be incorporated in the site planning phase, in line with Sphere Standards.



School in Berbera in new durable settlement

Improved Living Space

The construction of safer, more dignified shelters for protracted IDPs has the potential to improve IDPs’ living conditions and wellbeing. Access to services is improved even further when made accessible within the shelter unit. Although shared latrines are acceptable during emergencies, it is recommended to include private latrines, bathing facilities, and cooking areas within the shelter whenever possible. In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, these basic services being available within the shelter plot would mitigate the transmission of the virus when compared to using collective sanitary.

In line with Sphere Standards, shelter designs should include:

- 4.5–5.5 square meters of living space per person, including cooking space and bathing and/or sanitation facilities.
- Internal floor-to-ceiling height of at least 2.6 metres at the highest point (as per Sphere Standard recommendations for hot climates).
- Two rooms for a household of five persons.
- Living space should be adequate for daily activities such as sleeping, preparing and eating food, washing, dressing, storing food and water, and protecting household possessions and other key assets. It must ensure privacy and separation as required between sexes, different age groups and families within a given household according to cultural and social norms.

²⁹ [The Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024 \(NDP-9\).](#)

Protection mainstreaming and AAP

Protection risks and mitigation measures must be considered throughout the program cycle. Site planning strategies can help to mitigate protection risks, like GBV, through the design and layout of the settlement. Involving IDPs and host communities in the design of the shelter unit creates opportunities for including different needs and concerns resulting in shelters that address risks using measures such as lockable doors, good lighting and gender segregation options. Involving beneficiaries after shelter construction to learn from their experience and receive feedback on shelter designs, can also help make sure shelters are safe, comfortable and culturally acceptable.

Beneficiary selection

Fair and transparent procedures need to be closely monitored, to ensure that external actors do not interfere with the process according to their own agendas. Autonomy in the selection of beneficiaries is therefore a key mitigation measure. It is important not to inadvertently create additional protection risks, by targeting and separating households according to vulnerabilities only. Targeting only vulnerable families, such as female-headed households, could have a negative impact on social cohesion with the external community. This approach to beneficiary selection could lead to stigmatization and risk increasing the household's vulnerability rather than enhancing their quality of life.

Shelter design and site planning

Regarding the designs, a toilet and kitchen would be included, and there are options about the layout of the two rooms; making sure to follow Sphere minimum standards. The purpose of having two rooms, and in response to feedback from the beneficiaries, is to have gender segregation. The complexity of the design is related to the protection and safety of the unit, as well as the cost; and thinking about possible expansion.



Construction of hybrid shelters in Kismayo - UNHCR/NRC



Durable shelter, five years after completion - UNHCR

Community-based and homeowner driven approach

Conventional approaches rarely draw upon IDP engagement, which can result in growing dependency on humanitarian assistance. The community based and homeowner driven approach empowers communities, by helping them to identify their needs and priorities, and decide on solutions for themselves, prioritising their household and community needs.

The homeowner-driven approach entails providing IDPs with cash and/or materials in kind to build their houses. They may undertake the construction work by themselves, by employing family labour, local laborers, or by using a combination of these options.

Not only is this approach more empowering and dignified for households, it is also often faster and cheaper. In addition, it reduces the risk of corruption linked to selection of contractors. It also encourages and enables the owners to maintain or repair their shelter when needed.

A common misunderstanding regarding this approach is that the owners will build their houses by themselves. It is possible but many examples show that this is rarely the case because people tend to hire local contractors or laborers for at least part of the work. Therefore, this approach is also appropriate to support vulnerable families, including persons with disabilities. The owner driven approach requires technical support and good oversight to ensure the quality of construction.³⁰

Good practice of community participation from NRC, Shelter Cluster partner

Community participation is ensured throughout the project period. Starting from the design phase of the project, beneficiaries are involved in the design/typology selection of the shelter. They have their say in the selecting location of their shelters and its orientation. They are also involved in site planning to have adequate spaces for cooking and other necessary facilities. The shelters (all three types including permanent, transitional and emergency/temporary shelter) are constructed through two subsequent cash instalments. NRC through Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Programme supports households with individual or communal land title deeds. The Shelters are constructed through owner driven approach using cash. The cash is distributed in two subsequent instalments. The first instalment is usually paid at the beginning of the project so that selected household can buy shelter materials. Once the construction has reached a certain level, usually foundation and walls, and has been verified by the technical engineers then the second instalment is released (conditional cash). Thus, beneficiaries are involved right from planning stage, formulation, design, implementation and then evaluation. Even in the post construction monitoring exercise, which is conducted three months after the completion of shelters, beneficiaries in involved in focus group discussion and the questionnaire of Post-Construction Monitoring (PCM) exercise.

³⁰ Source: [Safer Homes, Stronger Communities, A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters](#), The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2010

8. Conclusion

After decades of conflict and natural disasters, durable shelter solutions would provide more adequate and safe housing for IDPs in protracted situation, many of whom have been exposed to multiple displacement and have specific needs. While emergency shelters are appropriate and essential as an emergency solution, they are not a sufficient solution for a long period.

The Shelter Cluster is therefore advocating for shelter options to be considered that will provide a comparatively adequate, safe, private, and dignified shelter solutions that reduces the impact of displacement in protracted crises.

Key Recommended activities

- Provision of land ownership for IDPs in coordination with municipalities and other relevant authorities
- Community-based participatory design of safe settlements
- Owner-driven housing construction approaches
- Provision of conditional cash-based interventions and technical support to facilitate the construction of safe and dignified shelters

9. Resources

- [Framework on Durable solutions for Internally displaced people](#),
- [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)
- [IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- [The Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024 \(NDP-9\)](#)
- [The National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020 – 2024](#)
- [National Eviction Guidelines in Somalia](#)
- [New Way of Working, OCHA, 2017](#)
- [Policy Framework on Displacement within Somalia](#)
- [The Right to Adequate Housing](#)
- [Safer Homes, Stronger Communities, A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters](#)
- [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#)
- [Sphere Standards, 2018](#)