

Module 1 | Emergency Shelter Response in Gaza

January 2026 Revision

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Introduction

Shelter Cluster Palestine’s Transitional Shelter Assistance Technical Working Group (TSA TWG) has developed two iterations of Module 1 in 2024 and 2025, giving a comprehensive overview of technical guidance for Gaza’s protracted emergency shelter needs. The third revision of the document in January 2026, post ceasefire, provides a structured compilation of updated and available resources for humanitarian agencies to provide a coordinated response aligned with Shelter Cluster recommended standards.

Compared to the first two iterations, this version includes additional resources and learnings from partners’ efforts to provide assistance in the protracted emergency response amid ongoing access restrictions and operational constraints.

Acronyms

EHA – Explosive Hazard Assessments

ESK – Emergency Shelter Kit

HH – Household

HLP – Housing, Land, and Property

IEC – Information, Education, and Communication

SC – Shelter Cluster

SMC – Site Management Cluster

SOK – Sealing Off Kit

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure

TSA – Transitional Shelter Assistance

TWG – Technical Working Group

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

WISE – *what is Secure enough*

Ongoing Emergency Shelter Response Options

The response options below may be for households on sites, in scattered locations, or also in damaged buildings or collective centers for distributions of SOKs and ESKs. The table below links to various resources developed to guide a humanitarian emergency shelter response in line with Shelter Cluster Palestine’s recommended standards. This section does not include emergency shelter interventions through cash modalities; SC is developing separate guidance on this through the CMS (cash and markets for shelter) Sub-TWG.

Type of Assistance	Technical Guidance	IEC materials	Notes
Tents Assistance	Technical Guidance on Tents Assistance in Gaza	Installation of Geodesic Tents Installation of Family Tents	Provision of tents on sites must be coordinated with SMC
Distribution of SOKs and Tarpaulin Packages	Technical Guidance on distribution of SOKs and Tarpaulin packages	Temporary Occupancy of Damaged Buildings (includes SOK IEC)	
Provision of Emergency Shelter Kits (ESKs)	Technical Guidance on Emergency Shelter Kits	How to Build an ESK? IEC Annexes in English and Arabic	Partners' ESK pilots ACTED's ESK Pilot CRS ESK Pilot

Please note the Emergency Assistance Packages are being revised in parallel and an update will be published.

Targeting and Prioritization of Emergency Shelter Assistance

TSA TWG developed [guidance on targeting of assistance](#) for households in sites, collective centers, and damaged buildings, including the matching of assistance type to caseloads based on displacement, technical shelter criteria and household's vulnerabilities.

It is recommended that agencies provide shelter assistance based on needs assessments as far as possible and develop and update their distribution SOPs based on Shelter Cluster's Targeting and Prioritization Technical Guidance. Partners may also contact coordinators for latest developments on targeting approaches considering the fluid and changing response context.

Site Considerations

Based on Site Management Cluster's recent site assessments, by January 2026, there were more than 1.3 million persons in displacement sites across the Gaza Strip¹. Around 1 million of them were living in 777 makeshift sites, 270,000 were living in some type of collective centre (176), and 12,000 were in 21 scattered sites (sites consisting of less than 10 HH)

¹ Note that this number is limited to displacement sites and does not equal to the overall number of people displaced by the conflict

Site Type	HH	Individuals
Makeshift site	227,881	1,083,773
Collective centre - UNRWA	35,776	197,383
Collective centre - non-UNRWA	21,648	76,079
Scattered site	2,803	12,186
Total	288,108	1,370,421

For information on population movement and displacement tracking across the Gaza Strip, refer to Site Management Cluster’s monitoring updates [here](#).

For prioritization of most vulnerable sites, partners may reach out to Shelter Cluster and Site Management Cluster. Site Management Cluster maintains a database of sites with its profiling and a broad outline of site-level sheltering conditions. Shelter Cluster has recently mapped partner-presence and is setting up a zone/area-based coordination with one-two lead agencies for designated areas.

Emergency Shelter Assistance to Households in Damaged Buildings

With the staggering levels of damage across the Gaza Strip, very limited, rapidly repairable housing stock remains. Shelter Cluster is currently planning damage assessments, and some partners are already carrying out emergency damage assessments to provide SOK assistance.

While these households are also in need of humanitarian assistance, it is recommended that partners assess the following before provision of emergency shelter assistance:

- Building is structurally sound
- Risk level following an EHA by Mine Action²
- Debris removal and presence of hazardous debris³
- HLP considerations
- Household’s socio-economic vulnerability and shelter vulnerability⁴

² [EHA Request Form Link](#).

³ [Debris Management Working Group Resources](#)

⁴ [Shelter Cluster Palestine’s Vulnerability Criteria](#)

Emergency Housing Land and Property Considerations

Shelter partners in coordination with Site Management Working Group can examine potential locations to identify appropriate sites or confirm if a site is safe and suitable. As part of HLP good practice, the characteristics of any proposed plot of land are evaluated against a set of minimum requirements to prevent forced eviction, secondary occupation, and future land or housing disputes, and to ensure compliance with do no harm principles. This evaluation includes, at a minimum, verifying whether the land is public or privately owned, and confirming that the site enables safe, dignified, and equitable access to essential services.

Through this due diligence, conducted prior to site establishment, HLP practice aims to **mitigate protection risks for displaced households**, avoid harm to landowners or other rights holders, and ensure that emergency shelter interventions do not create or exacerbate tenure insecurity or long-term disputes. The creation of sites managed by humanitarian actors is considered a last resort and, under current conditions, may be accepted on a case-by-case basis to house displaced households who would otherwise be exposed to the elements or housed in extremely overcrowded conditions and lack of available lands and sites. In any case HLP rights should be considered:

- Adopt the of *what is secure enough*⁵ (WISE).
- If necessary, consider a shorter but renewable agreement and ensure that the duration of the agreement is clear and clearly defined and communicated to all parties, including displaced households, landowners, and relevant authorities.
- In addition to confirming the 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 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. In order to identify potential disputes, overlapping claims, or protection risks.
- Shelter Cluster Palestine and HLP Technical Working Group have published a brief explanation on the basics of HLP rights in Gaza's context and potential HLP support by shelter partners, [HERE](#).
- In addition, partners may refer to HLP WG's guidance for humanitarian aid workers on [negotiating the stay of IDPs on private land in Gaza](#).

Essential Household Items

Kitchen sets, bedding sets, and solar lamps are included under Shelter Cluster's essential household items for affected families in Gaza, and should be based on needs assessments as far as possible.

Partners have also carried out clothing distributions, especially in response to winter needs. While last year the clothing response was through in-kind with limited numbers through vouchers under local

⁵ Refers to providing the highest degree of protection to beneficiaries that is feasible in the context.

vendors, in the winter of 2025, there is a bigger shift to use of vouchers for winter clothing assistance due to entry of clothes through commercial trucks. As of January 2026, partners have reported supporting 148,600 HHs with winter clothing assistance this winter season.

Refer to [SC’s winter clothing lessons learnt](#) from clothing distributions in 2024-2025.

Partners responding to shelter needs in Gaza, determine program modalities of in-kind, CVA or hybrid approaches based on access constraints and material availability.

Linking Emergency Shelter Assistance to Transitional Sheltering Options

The Shelter Cluster aims to improve emergency shelters while working towards transitional and longer-term solutions. Recognizing this will go in parallel as Gaza is in a protracted emergency. There are limited shelter materials available in Gaza, with little to no options for households to progress from current makeshift shelters and tents to improved emergency or transitional shelters. These improvements can be facilitated through direct distributions or cash/voucher assistance, depending on market conditions.

Shelter Cluster recommends an incremental approach from rudimentary emergency shelters to improved emergency and transitional shelters, the trajectory for which is outlined through the graphic below.

Stand-alone shelters

Transitional Shelter Standards apply to stand-alone and other solutions



Additional Resources by Shelter Cluster to Support Emergency Assistance

Local Coping Mechanisms by households considering limited entry of shelter materials

1. [Local Coping Mechanism for Improving Makeshift Shelters](#)

[2. Local Coping Mechanisms for Adapting Partially Damaged buildings](#)

[3. Inclusive Shelter Adaptation Practices for Persons with Disabilities and Limited Mobility](#)

Winterization

[Winterization recommendations and IEC](#)

[Urgent Actions and Advocacy for Winterization](#)

Revision History

Version	Status	Date	Comments
1.0	Superseded	March 2024	
2.0	Superseded	November 2024	
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