

## Shelter Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Improvements | Peer Sharing Workshop Report

18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Venue: SARD Office, Mersin, Türkiye



**Report compiled and reviewed by:**  
SNFI Cluster Coordination Team

## 1. Introduction:

This workshop aimed to bring together experts and practitioners from the active members of the Shelter Cluster in Northwest Syria to exchange best practices, discuss challenges, and explore innovative solutions for enhancing our collective impact in humanitarian shelter and infrastructure. Nineteen participants from thirteen organizations attended the workshop.

Over the course of a day and a half, participants delved into crucial topics such as shelter repairs and rehabilitation, implementation methods, integration of infrastructure projects, community and stakeholder involvement, and linkage with early recovery. This workshop provided a valuable opportunity for networking, collaboration, and learning from each other's experiences in the field. The main objectives of the workshop focused on three pillars:

- Gather, share, and discuss best practices and lessons learned by active cluster members involved in shelter repair, rehabilitation, and infrastructure programming and implementation.
- Collaboratively develop key messages on topics such as shelter types and recommended intervention methods in Northwest Syria, the integration of shelter and early recovery, capacity building, and complementarity and synergies.
- Reach a collective conclusion on the current state of sheltering knowledge in Northwest Syria, identify gaps that need to be addressed, and outline the way forward in terms of complementarity and synergies among the active cluster members.

## 2. Day 1: Shelter Repair and Shelter Rehabilitation

Below, are key summaries from the presentations:

### a) S/NFI Cluster Shelter repair and shelter rehabilitation response and strategy

- Response Overview: Since the February 2023 earthquake, the cluster has supported 24,158 households with shelter repair and rehabilitation in 117 communities. 65% of the households reached were in Idleb Governorate and the other 35% in Aleppo.
- The top 4 sub-districts reached, from highest to lowest, were Salqin, Harim, Dana, and Jandairis.
- In terms of modalities: Voucher: 952 (4%) HH, In-kind: 11,025 (46%), and Cash: 12,181 (50%).

Shelter rehabilitation scope of work included:

- Minor and moderate levels of shelter rehabilitation, where there is no structural damaged and it is safe to access the buildings.
- Inclusion of solar panels for the households.
- Integration and complementarity with the ERL cluster for cash-for-work and debris management.
- Collaboration with local authorities and the syndicate of engineers in Northwest Syria.

The Shelter Rehabilitation and Repair TWIG has been formed to:

- Update the guidelines for damage levels and criteria, modalities, and EQ standards to be incorporated into the shelter rehabilitation guidelines. Provide a clear intervention framework that partners can refer to and prioritize minimum standards when applicable.
- Consider other modalities of assistance in shelter rehabilitation, such as self-help.
- Re-evaluate the level of damage to expand it beyond the 3 scales. This will increase flexibility for the actors involved.

- Update and revise the shelter rehabilitation minimum standards to adapt to current needs and context.
- Develop guidance on implementation modalities within the same community and selection tools for modalities.
- Update existing tools, guidance, and templates.

**b) Presentation from Care on Shelter Interventions through Cash**

After the earthquake, CARE expanded its capacity to address the growing demand for shelter rehabilitation, increasing the planned support from 300 households to more than 2,275 households in 2023.

**Pros and Cons of shelter modalities?**

Modality	Pros	Cons
<b>Shelter Rehabilitation - Contractor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt Response</li> <li>• Heavy works</li> <li>• Big numbers</li> <li>• Professional labor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Close-up continues supervision</li> <li>• Prioritize the technical view,</li> <li>• Not relying on local markets</li> </ul>
<b>Cash for shelter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize BNFs needs</li> <li>• Strengthen local market</li> <li>• Cash advantages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not prioritizing construction works</li> <li>• Less implementation quality</li> <li>• Lack of commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing local labor capacity</li> <li>• Creating work opportunities</li> <li>• Targeting direct needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Small scale</li> <li>• Close-up continues supervision</li> </ul>

**Why is CARE investing more in a cash-based approach instead of contractors?**

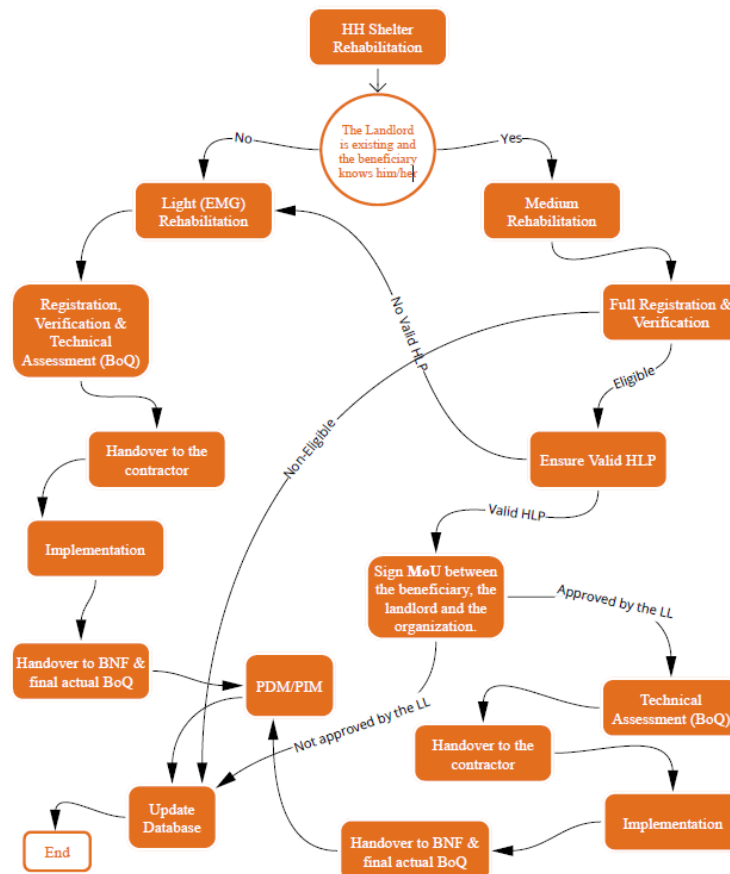
1. **Strengthening the role and agency of the Project Participants** in responding to their needs and enhancing their participation in sharing opinions and implementation.
2. Strengthening social capital and **increasing the self-confidence** of the community.
3. **Promoting greater ownership** over rehabilitation and involving Project Participants.
4. Linking beneficiaries to local suppliers and skilled laborers to **stimulate the local economy**.
5. Stimulating local markets to support economic recovery and **lowering the cost of project implementation** by reducing the role of contractors.
6. **Promoting financial inclusion of Project Participants** through efficient cash transfers.
7. Focusing on shelter upgrades to **improve health and psychosocial well-being**.
8. Adhering to Sphere and Shelter Working Group standards, where possible.

**Workflow of cash for Shelter:**

**Activity**

1. Community selection.
2. Market assessment and viability of works.

3. Conduct FGD sessions with the community's KIIs to inform project objectives and mechanisms.
4. Advertising through different channels for a minimum of seven days.
5. Door-to-door registration and verification.
6. Review data and apply scores based on selection/vulnerability criteria to generate the final list.
7. Contracting with a money facilitator.
8. Conduct technical assessments to identify exact needs and detailed measurements (BoQs and narrative assessment).
9. Review the BoQs and approve the final list with needs and installments.
10. Sign MoUs with beneficiaries and owners, verify Housing, Land and Property documents (contractors if needed), and provide the list of items/minimum standards for items, available suppliers, and skilled laborers for the households.
11. Provide 70% of the cash assistance through the PTT/H money facilitator to selected households according to the BoQs and number of installments.
12. Conduct quality control and verification of purchased shelter upgrade items by visiting households during the rehabilitation.
13. Perform the final technical visit, sign off, and collect handover notes from recipients, documenting the implemented activity.
14. Transfer the final payment (30% of the cash assistance) to households once the beneficiary has finalized the required shelter upgrades.



### Challenges with Cash Modality:

- **Low quality:** Some participants used second-hand items of low quality to save money.
- **Targeting the most vulnerable impacted people by the EQ:** CARE initially targeted only household owners with clear Housing, Land and Property documents.
- **Delays in completing the work:** Some participants couldn't finish within the agreed timeframe, despite confirming their capacity to do so within three weeks when signing the MOUs, delaying the second installment.
- **Not completing all agreed work:** Some participants did not finish all assigned tasks without clear justification, leading CARE to deduct some amount from the second installment.
- **Mixed modality:** Some participants were confused about the work they should complete versus the contractors' work, despite this being clarified in the MOU.
- **Mixed modality:** Participants couldn't complete their work on time while waiting for the contractor, delaying the second installment.
- **High vulnerability:** The targeted community is impoverished, and most shelters do not meet the minimum SPHERE standards, requiring more work and increasing the average cost per household.
- **Supervision over large numbers:** This creates challenges in calculating the implemented quantities in each house and determining if they earned the second installment.

### Recommendations:

- **Increase team monitoring capacity:** To avoid delays and ensure high-quality implementation, the field team should have more presence, increase the frequency of visits, and enhance communication channels with beneficiaries.
- **No deduction approach:** Consider a GO or NO-GO decision to encourage high-quality work. CARE advises either giving the full second installment or none, based on the case committee's recommendations.
- **Go with only Cash for Shelter modality:** Most work should be under Cash for Shelter, with contractors supporting only in very limited and specific cases.
- **Increase efforts in community engagement:** Conduct more FGDs at the beginning to consult people on ensuring quality, timely completion, and other project aspects.

### Success:

- **Timely response** – especially after the EQ.
- All participants are either **satisfied or highly satisfied**.
- 41% of female heads of households collectively agreed that the **Cash for Shelter approach improved their safety and privacy**.
- CARE shifted to a more **community-driven approach**.
- CARE noticed an **increase in job opportunities** within the community and a positive impact on the local market.

### Pilot – Work for Shelter (WfS)

#### Implementation processes:

1. **Rapid Need Assessment:** Assess shelter needs and labor market gaps.
2. **Community Engagement:** LER and Shelter staff present the activity objectives for both shelter rehabilitation and CFW activity, selection criteria, timeframe, and requirements.
3. **Market Assessment:** Assess the daily wage rates of skilled/unskilled laborers one month before launching the activity.



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4. **Public Announcement.**
5. **Shelter / Livelihood Registration:** This announcement provides key information about the project and the selection criteria for damaged shelters.
6. **Technical Studies:** After verifying Housing, Land and Property and legal documentation, BoQs for shelter rehabilitation are prepared.
7. **Training and Onboarding:** CfW laborers are trained by the LER team and contract staff on safety measures, protection, accountability, and security before the activity begins.
8. **Implementation and Monitoring:** Oversee shelter rehabilitation (after signing MoUs with homeowners) and laborers.
9. **Activity Closeout:** Terminate labor contracts and sign off the handover note for shelter rehabilitation works.

### Challenges with WfS modality:

- **Frequent Movement Between Workshops:** Participants often move between multiple workshops, hindering their ability to focus and master a specific craft, reducing overall skill development.
- **Financial Issues:** The daily wage was \$5 per participant, which was insufficient, especially for unskilled laborers.
- **Program Duration Limitations:** The program lasted around 20 days, which was not enough time for some participants to master new crafts.
- **Absence of Female Participants:** There were no female participants due to social barriers, customs, and traditions reserving such work for men.

### Recommendations:

- Assign **specific workshops for participants** so each participant joins one or two workshops instead of all workshops. Select semi-skilled workers to help increase the focus on learning a specific craft.
- **Mainstream Work for Shelter:** Integrate the Work-for-Shelter program into shelter interventions and link participants with other livelihood opportunities. Assess the feasibility of a similar program for females, considering cultural sensitivities and norms.
- **Increase Program Duration:** Extend the program duration beyond one round for CFW activity to ensure participants acquire new skills.
- **Improve and Strengthen Networks and Communication:** Enhance communication channels between workers, suppliers in the same sector, and local authorities to increase long-term work opportunities.

### Success:

- Enhanced population access to **safer living conditions** while creating longer-term job opportunities, especially for those impacted by earthquakes.
- **Acquisition of new skills** in the construction sector. It also facilitated building connections and networks between workers, suppliers, and homeowners, who may need their services in the future.
- Feedback from suppliers was positive. **Suppliers appreciated** the labor efforts, which sped up the process. They also indicated they might contact some workers for longer-term jobs in the future.

**c) Summary of Discussions : Day 1**

- **Housing, Land, and Property Issues:** These should be considered when choosing the modality. There is often a preference for using contractors over cash, especially when supporting tenants who do not own the house and may lack motivation to repair it. If the beneficiary does not own the house, the risk of failure with a cash-based project is high.
- **Distance to markets:** This should also be considered, especially for farmlands.
- **Households sharing:** When multiple households live together, deciding who gets the cash can be challenging, often leading to a preference for using contractors.
- **Evidence-based decision making:** We should analyze and back up the rates of failure or success of the modalities with data from completed projects. As a cluster, our goal is to base our decisions on evidence and data, not perceptions or assumptions. Our vision is to have evidence-based and smooth analysis of which modality to choose. If two organizations assess the location, the preferred modality outcome should be the same unless factors like organizational experience are considered.
- **Time spent: Contractor vs. Cash:** Cash modality can be faster as it does not require rigorous tendering like contracting does. Additionally, all shelters can progress simultaneously, unlike contracting, which might be limited by the contractor's capacity.
- **Cost Efficiency: Cash vs. in-kind:** There is potential for cash to be cheaper.
- **Batches of transfers/installments:** It is good to distribute small amounts at the beginning to reduce drop-offs. It is also important to ensure that families have enough funds to initiate construction and continue through the stages. Avoid installment plans that put the beneficiary in debt.
- **Cash vs. in-kind Modality:** It is important to assess the pros and cons, as well as the risks, considering various scenarios when selecting the modality—Cash vs. contractor.
- **Cash for Work:** Consider if the market needs these kinds of workers—assess the labor market gap. Ensure there is a gap in specific skill sets.
- **Cluster members' Capacities for cash implementation:** This is a limiting factor for many partners who lack experience, especially in cash modalities. The cluster will organize capacity-building sessions on cash assistance.

**For the shelter repair and rehabilitation TWiG, below are some points for their consideration:**

- There is a need to **explicitly indicate** that the final costs should be based on assessment.
- We need to define Repair, Rehabilitation, and Upgrade, and provide necessary guidance.
- Classifying the damage based on cost may confuse partners. Change the wording to indicate that the estimates are for cost estimation purposes and not for classifying damage.
- It is important to ensure that after shelter rehabilitation, beneficiaries are supported in securing tenancy agreements that either have no rent increase for a period or offer rent-free living for a period.
- We need to consider minimum repair requirements to avoid putting families at further risk, e.g., getting into debt to finalize the shelter.

### 3. Day 2: Infrastructure improvements

Below, are key summaries from the presentations:

#### a) SNFI Cluster Infrastructure Improvements Overview

- In 2023, a total of 15,158 households benefited from infrastructure improvements, while in 2024, a total of 36,537 households benefited.
- The scope of infrastructure improvements includes:
  - I. Full package of activities.
  - II. Complement and link directly to dignified shelter whenever possible.
  - III. Cash for work initiatives.
  - IV. Clear exit strategy, complementing with CCCM.
  - V. Housing, Land and Property due diligence and collaboration with the protection cluster.
  - VI. Early recovery and livelihoods cluster complementarity is always an asset.

#### b) IYD Presentation on minimum standards for WASH and Shelter Infrastructure in Northwest Syria

##### Introduction to topic

On May 27, 2024, in Sarmada, Idleb, IYD organized a Shelter Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Improvements Physical Workshop with the objective of sharing experiences and best practices among humanitarian actors and reviewing the minimum required standards for infrastructure activities. Below is a summary of the recommendations from this workshop.

##### Recommendations on Dignified Shelter

- Organizations are strongly recommended to follow shelter cluster guidance and designs.
- Unify shelter designs in the same targeted area to avoid community-sensitive issues.
- Align infrastructure with dignified shelters and connect them to sewer and water networks.
- Review the living space area norm; SPHERE and CCCM standards may not suit the current Syrian context.
- Use locally made materials instead of imported materials.
- Ensure proper ventilation calculations for the units.
- The minimum required height of a unit is 2.3 m.
- Install units on a concrete slab of at least 25 cm thickness, equipped with sewer and water pipes.
- Use a half-filled cement brick with a width of 15 cm or 20 cm to resist dynamic and static loads.
- Use 0.3 mm sheet metal (at minimum) to avoid corrugation and distortion caused by high temperatures.
- The minimum accepted density of a sandwich panel is 35 to 40 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- The spacing between units should be no less than 2 meters.
- A skylight in the unit is recommended.

##### Roads

###### *Formal / Planned Camps*

- The distance between the unit and the road is at least 1.2 m.
- Road width:



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- Main road: at least 7 m.
- Sub-road: at least 5 m.
- Access road to the beneficiary's unit: at least 3 m.

### *Informal Camps:*

- Main road: at least 6 m.
- Sub-road: at least 4 m.
- Access road to the beneficiary's unit: at least 3 m.

### **Sewage Connections**

- The sub-connections between the unit and the main line must be spiral and made of polyethylene.
- The minimum diameter of pipes for external drainage connections must be 150 mm.
- The shelter unit sub-manhole's dimensions are 303030 cm.

### **Challenges**

- **Housing, Land and Property:** Obtaining ownership documents remains a challenge due to the lack of sources.
- **Adopting Unified Engineering Standards:** There is a need to adopt a single, unified engineering standard.
- **Manhole Covers:** Manhole covers still pose a risk to human life due to poor quality.
- **Lack of GIS Maps:** There is a significant shortage of GIS maps.

### **c) Summary of SARD Presentation on Protection Mainstreaming in Shelter action**

- Activities should follow Sphere and cluster standards, providing inclusive and gender-disaggregated public facilities. Safety risks are reduced by installing lights, stabilizing light/medium damaged structures, securing staircases, terrace parapets, and/or windows, and ensuring access with proper entrance doors.
- Local communities and authorities should be actively involved in project design through needs assessments (at the planning stage) and community FGDs (at the implementation stage). For infrastructure projects, local communities help identify public infrastructure and buildings that need support.
- The inclusion of women in the construction phase of shelter activities is a significant challenge. While women are involved in designing BoQs and assessing shelter repair and rehabilitation needs, their participation in actual construction work remains limited. Participants stressed the importance of respecting cultural norms but also emphasized empowering women to decide their involvement in construction work, rather than making decisions for them.

### **d) Summary of Discussions – Day 2:**

- Ensure gender equality in shelter job opportunities by providing equal rights, opportunities, and a conducive work environment, considering the social and cultural norms of the community.
- Build capacity in using software, tools, and applications like flood simulation (ARCGIS, GIS) and IYD simulation for floods.



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- Improve accessibility to existing resources related to flood simulation. IYD volunteered to support flood simulation, and the cluster should also check with REACH, which has previously worked on this.
- Provide training on infrastructure-related issues.
- Ensure that infrastructure facilities are designed adequately to mitigate floods.
- Establish linkages with ERL Cluster for flood-prone areas.
- Conduct quick surveys and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making and advocacy on challenges faced by partners.
- There is a need for capacity building on beneficiary selection criteria standards, especially considering the move to targeted assistance for winterization.
- Finalize the agreement with the CCCM and SNFI cluster on activities.
- Propose similar workshops for brainstorming with small and grassroots organizations.

#### 4. Recommendations and Action Points:

##### Issues:

1. **Evidence-based Decision Making:** There is a need to analyze and back up the failure or success rates of the different shelter modalities using data from completed projects. Current decisions are often based on perceptions or assumptions rather than concrete evidence.
2. **Capacity Building:** Many partners lack experience in cash implementation modalities, which is a limiting factor. There is also a need for training on using software, tools, and applications like flood simulation and infrastructure-related issues. Capacity building is needed for beneficiary selection criteria standards, especially with the shift to targeted assistance for winterization.
3. **Communication with Authorities:** There were obstacles in communication with local authorities, especially around Dignified Shelter Action in NW Aleppo. Participants reported difficulties in interacting with authorities coordinated by AFAD.

##### Recommendations:

1. **Evidence-based Decision Making:**
  - Conduct quick surveys and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making and advocacy on challenges faced by partners.
  - Base decisions on evidence and data rather than perceptions or assumptions.
  - Strive to come up with systems that ensure that if two organizations assess a location, the preferred modality outcome should be the same unless factors like organizational experience are considered.
2. **Capacity Building:**
  - Organize capacity-building sessions on cash assistance to improve partners' capabilities.
  - Provide training on using software, tools, and applications like flood simulation (ARCGIS, GIS)
  - IYD to provide support on simulation for floods.
  - Build capacity on beneficiary selection criteria standards, particularly for targeted winterization assistance.
3. **Communication with Authorities:**
  - Adopt unified messages toward local authorities to avoid creating double standards.
  - Improve communication strategies to address the challenges faced in interacting with local authorities, particularly in areas coordinated by AFAD.

Looking Ahead:

- Workshop participants appreciated the proposal of joint field visits involving SNFI cluster focal points at the district level. These visits will be designed to brainstorm and share knowledge to address issues affecting the cluster, and will involve field teams and shelter sector coordinators/managers in Turkey. It was also suggested to organize similar workshops for brainstorming with small and grassroots organizations, as well as discussions on other issues and activities related to the cluster.

**Acknowledgment:** The S/NFI Cluster would like to thank SARD for their support in providing the workshop venue and refreshments.