



Temporary Displacement Site Management Tip Sheet

Shelter, Land & Site Coordination (SLSC) Sector – Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

This note is designed for local authorities, volunteers, and humanitarian organizations involved in establishing, managing, coordinating, or overseeing services in temporary safety centers and camp-like settings for families and individuals displaced by Cyclone Ditwah. It is also relevant for informal sites identified by communities or authorities.

The note does not replace formal training or technical capacity building. Instead, it provides practical tips and key questions to support those who may find themselves managing a displacement site with limited prior experience. Not all recommendations will be feasible in every location; they can serve as a reference point, a benchmark to work towards, or a tool to advocate for additional support from government and humanitarian actors.

2. Planning

All displacement sites—whether formal safety centers, newly established camp-like sites, or informal sites identified by communities—benefit greatly from advance planning and structured management. Each site will function differently depending on its capacity and the expected duration of stay. Careful preparation is essential to ensure that the site is safe, dignified, and able to meet the needs of displaced families and individuals, while anticipating and mitigating potential risks.

When planning for camp-like settings or collective safety centers, it is critical to recognize that such arrangements should only be established as a last resort. According to humanitarian principles and Sphere Standards, displaced persons should be accommodated through voluntary, dignified options wherever possible — such as staying with host families or rented housing.

Key Note: A significant proportion of those displaced by Cyclone Ditwah are **women, children, and elderly persons**. These groups have **specific needs** that must be addressed in site planning and management, including childcare arrangements, access to essential medications, and provision of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) items. Ensure that your plan incorporates measures to meet these requirements in a safe, dignified, and consistent manner.

Camp-like settings should only be considered when:

- No other safe or viable housing options exist for affected families.
- Immediate shelter needs cannot be met through host communities or other existing temporary housing solutions.
- Local authorities and communities agree that a camp-like site is necessary to ensure safety, access to services, and protection.

Planning must therefore:

- Document the justification for establishing a camp-like site, noting the absence of alternative housing options.
- Ensure that residents are informed and consulted about their options, site rules and services, reinforcing the principle of voluntariness.
- Design sites to be temporary and transitional, with clear strategies for supporting families to move towards more durable housing solutions as recovery progresses.

Once the decision to establish a safety center or camp-like site has been justified and agreed upon, detailed operational planning must follow. The aim is to ensure that the site is functional, safe, and able to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of displaced families.

Key aspects to address include:

- **Capacity and Site Layout:**
 - Determine the maximum number of people the site can host, based on Sphere standards (Section 3). Allocate separate areas for families, single men, single women, and persons with specific needs.



- Ensure proximity to essential services such as sanitation, water, and health facilities.
- **Access and Security:**
 - Define entry and exit points, with clear procedures for registration and controlled access. Ensure points are physically accessible, with ramps, clear pathways, and signage that follow Universal Design principles.
 - Establish security measures to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure the safety of residents.
 - Provide staff and volunteers with visible identification (vests, passes, or badges).
 - Conduct rapid accessibility checks of registration and access areas to identify barriers and implement small, low-cost improvements (e.g., seating, information in multiple formats) that enhance safe and equitable access for all residents.
- **Information and Communication:**
 - Prepare clear site rules and guidance for residents, displayed in Sinhala, Tamil, and English.
 - Ensure information boards include available services, focal points, and emergency contacts.
 - Provide orientation for new arrivals and ensure staff roles are clearly defined.
- **Waste Management and Cleanliness:**
 - Estimate the type and volume of waste likely to be generated.
 - Provide adequate facilities for collection and disposal, with responsibilities assigned to staff or volunteers.
 - Establish cleaning schedules to maintain hygiene and reduce health risks.
- **Water and Sanitation:**
 - Assess the reliability of water supply and ensure compliance with Sphere standards (Section 3).
 - If water is not safe for drinking, plan for bottled water or storage/distribution systems.
 - Ensure sanitation systems are functional; if septic tanks are used, plan for regular emptying.
- **Food Provision:**
 - If hot food is to be served, establish systems for preparation, distribution, and waste management.
 - Provide designated eating areas and facilities for cleaning utensils.
 - If food cannot be provided, ensure residents have information on nearby shops or community kitchens.
- **Privacy and Dignity:**
 - Ensure residents have sufficient privacy to change clothes, unpack belongings, and sleep comfortably.
 - Provide partitions or dividers where possible, especially in family areas.
- **Documentation and SOPs:**
 - Record all planning decisions in a site plan or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
 - SOPs should outline rules for residents and processes for staff and volunteers.
 - Train volunteers on SOPs and update them regularly as challenges arise.
- **Community Participation:**



- Involve displaced persons, particularly those staying longer term, in site planning and operations.
- Encourage feedback and participation to strengthen accountability and ensure the site reflects community needs.

3. Sphere Standards Reference Table for Site Planning

Area of Planning	Sphere Minimum Standard	Practical Application in Sri Lanka Safety Centers / Camps
Covered Living Space	Minimum 3.5 m² per person . The minimum usable surface area is 45 square metres per person in camp-type settlements, including household plots	Ensure adequate spacing in halls or tents; avoid overcrowding in schools or community centers used as safety sites.
Water Supply	Minimum 15 liters per person per day ; water points within 500 m of shelters	Plan for reliable piped water or trucked supply; if unsafe, provide bottled water or storage tanks.
Sanitation (Toilets)	1 toilet per 20 people ; gender-segregated, well-lit, and accessible	Allocate separate facilities for men and women; prioritize accessible toilets for elderly and persons with disabilities.
Bathing Facilities	1 shower per 50 people	Provide basic bathing areas with privacy screens; ensure drainage to avoid stagnant water.
Waste Management	Safe disposal systems; bins with lids for sanitary materials	Assign cleaning responsibilities; coordinate with municipal services for waste collection.
Food Provision	Minimum 2,100 kcal per person per day	Coordinate with local kitchens, volunteer groups, or restaurants; ensure culturally appropriate meals.
Privacy & Dignity	Safe, private spaces for families and individuals	Use partitions, curtains, or dividers; prioritize privacy for women, children, and elderly.
Protection & Security	Sites must reduce risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse	Controlled entry/exit points; visible staff/volunteers with ID; coordination with police and Grama Niladhari officers.

The larger your site, and the more services that are being provided, the more processes you will need to put in place. Below is a set of questions to help you consider different issues which will need foresight and planning:

- Imagine someone arriving at the space and spending two weeks to a month there. Think about their various needs and how the space will accommodate them. **What is the realistic number of people you can host?** You will likely be limited by the space and number of toilets you have.
- Imagine people's different needs and how the space will meet them: entrance/exit, security, privacy, hygiene (washing & toilets), sleeping, eating, health/medical issues, access to information.
- What information and rules need to be communicated about the center? How do people register, what information is visible / accessible for people entering the center? What information / plan do you have for your team members? Are their roles clearly structured with different tasks and responsibilities (such as daily cleaning of trash or providing orientations).
- How are you demarcating (visually separating) spaces? For larger open areas that need to be sub-divided, you can use tape or other visible markers on the ground to map out spaces during planning. Ensure that different spaces are designated for different needs, with clear signs indicating their purpose. Establish and communicate site rules to encourage appropriate use of spaces (e.g., prohibiting betel nut chewing within site premises).



- What kind of waste and what volume of waste will be generated by facility? Do you have adequate places for trash and ways to dispose of it as frequently as needed? Are you planning for other cleaning tasks and responsibilities?
- How reliable is the access to water in the facility, is it safe to drink from the tap? Would you need to store and distribute bottled water?
- If not connected to a sewer, how often would the septic tanks need to be emptied?
- If hot food is going to be served, how is this food going to be provided? Do you have eating areas, ways to clean plates, manage waste, etc. Ensure waste is collected and disposed of promptly to avoid attracting vectors such as snakes, rats, monkeys, or other animals that may compromise safety and hygiene. Establish clear responsibilities for cleaning and waste management to maintain a safe and sanitary environment for residents.
- Will people have enough privacy to change their clothes, unpack goods, and sleep without overcrowding and exposure
- Are you arranging for other people to come and provide services at the space? How do you ensure random people are not entering the space? Are staff/volunteers at the space wearing clear visibility (vests), visitor passes or identification.

Key Note: One of the most important functions of the people managing the site is **COORDINATION**. If there are multiple people donating items or providing services, these should be coordinated appropriately. Make sure to meet regularly with your team to understand some of the issues that are coming out of the site and hold meetings with those coming from the outside to provide services. You should be helping them figure out the best way to provide their assistance.

Note: You should document the plan for both your team and the people entering the site. These are often referred to as “Standard Operating Procedures,” but they can simply be understood as rules for the space and clear processes for how activities are managed. This document should be developed progressively as new issues arise. CCCM teams should be trained on the procedures, and the plan should be revisited regularly. Be prepared to adapt if certain arrangements are not effective. Where possible, involve residents—particularly those staying longer term—in the planning and operation of the site, to the extent that they wish and are able to contribute.

4. ARRIVAL / INFORMATION

- Have a welcome briefing ready for anybody who arrives at your center. For larger sites, a basic ‘site rules’ document may be required in Sinhala, Tamil and English— especially around topics such as noise levels after a certain hour, ‘lights out times’, and cleanliness. You can post this up in various points in the relevant languages. Consider literacy and impairment of population when choosing communication channels (it is recommended to use multiple communication channels when possible).
- The welcome briefing should include information on available facilities (e.g., toilets, showers), anything they may receive, or any items that can be made available upon request (donations of children’s clothes, etc.)
- Include information on who the focal point/site manager is, and how to reach them if they are not going to be always present
- Have a reception desk at entry point if it is a larger site. This should have someone stationed there if possible
- Register people who come into your site— take the name of the head of the household, and how many people are in their family. Also track when people leave the site. If possible, set up a system of giving each bed or group of family beds a number so you can track which ones are free and which ones are occupied.
- Have a big whiteboard (or similar) near the entrance. The whiteboard can present key information such as the services available and how to access them. Include contact details of the person in charge etc. Include local emergency numbers of police, fire brigade, etc.
- Have areas for people to place donations including inventory and storage.
- Inform local authorities or police of your activities at site level. This is important for transparency and coordination, ensuring that services provided at the center are recognized and supported. Engagement with authorities helps ensure they are seen as rights-holders and supported appropriately.

Key Note: Remember to have some basic protocols in place to mitigate the risk of infectious diseases. Have functioning hand hygiene infrastructures, such as handwashing stations with water and soap, or hand sanitizer situated at key locations. Try and establish a referral system with a medical actor if someone becomes sick and needs medical attention.



5. DURATION OF STAY:

Consider how long people might stay in your site, this will help in determining the services needed, and space requirements.

A rough guide would be:

1-2 weeks: Registration, information provision, sleeping arrangements, cooked food or prepared rations, basic non-food items, immediate access to medical services, places of worship.

Focus: Rapid setup, life-saving assistance, clear communication of site rules.

Up to 3 months: Registration, information provision, sleeping arrangements with improved privacy, cooked food, basic non-food items, access to medical services, places of worship, storage of belongings, structured recreational spaces, psychosocial support, functioning complaint and feedback mechanisms, education access for children, and livelihood activities where feasible.

Focus: Strengthening site management systems, enhancing coordination with authorities, and preparing for durable solutions.

Longer than 3 months: Registration, information provision, accommodation, subsistence and health care, sleeping arrangements with enhanced privacy, cooked food, basic non-food items, sustained access to medical care, places of worship, storage of belongings, establishment of community governance structures, functioning complaint and feedback mechanisms, vocational training opportunities, expanded psychosocial support, and pathways to durable housing solutions.

Focus: Transition planning, reducing dependency, and linking residents to government recovery and development programs.

6. ACCOMMODATIONS

- Wherever possible set up separate areas for: families, single men, single women. At minimum, a space for single men should be allocated. Do not allocate single men in the same areas as single women, adolescents and children.
- You should also have an area for any unaccompanied children/adolescents, who should be monitored by a volunteer/team member at all times. Unaccompanied children that arrive at your centre should also be immediately reported to local authorities. Reporting to the local authorities ensures child protection systems are activated quickly, allowing family tracing and safeguarding measures to begin. It also provides legal accountability and ensures the child is formally registered within national protection mechanisms.
- Clearly demarcate different areas. If not possible in different rooms/areas, consider putting up dividers between service spaces
- Establish a simple allocation plan to maximize the space available while still making sure people are reasonably comfortable. For instance, you may want to go along the lines of
 - 1 adult – 1 bed / sleeping area
 - 1 child over age of 8 years (make a judgment call on this depending on size of the beds)– 1 bed
 - 2 small children – 1 bed
- Family area: consider laying out the beds to accommodate families – groups of 3 or 4 beds. Couples with small children will want to push beds together, etc. so plan to accommodate for this happening. Some privacy dividers (even if it is just cardboard or bedsheet strung up on a clothesline between beds/groups of beds) would make people more comfortable.
- Consider reserving some of the beds closest to key facilities such as the bathrooms for elderly or people with mobility issues and their caregivers. Try as much as possible to give these people privacy if capacity to do so for the rest is limited.
- If your budget allows, consider small lamps, especially for the families. This will allow for the central lighting to be turned off for bedtime. Especially for areas where small children might be sleeping earlier than others.

7. ACCESSIBILITIES:

These links contain very practical physical upgrades recommendations to make shelters universally accessible: [Collective Centers](#), [Shelters](#), and [Non-food Items](#).



8. FACILITIES

- Think about access to facilities and who needs to access the services.
- Think about overall cleanliness – trashcans, waste management, observe a cleaning schedule identifying the responsible person for emptying the trash bins, make sure they are placed in areas that won't cause smells or other concerns if they will be used for food waste, children nappies, etc.
- Ideally have visibly marked gender-segregated bathroom, for women and men in different locations – this will also depend on how many bathrooms you have, where they are located, and demographics of people turning up – they will likely be used also for laundry, babies' changing, etc. People should have access to a well-lit facility, a functioning shower, a sink with hot and cold running water and available soap, and a lockable toilet. Facilities should be accessible in a safe manner, including for elderly people and people with special needs, and provide sufficient privacy and dignity.
- You might want to provide some basic cleaning products and ask people to make sure they are kept in good condition. Provide trash bins with lids for the appropriate disposal of sanitary materials (e.g., disposable pads, children diapers); ensure discourage direct disposal into toilets, for instance by hanging signs, to avoid blockages.
- People may need basic hygiene items, including menstrual hygiene management (MHM) items (or where to get them – see info board) or items like towels for having showers and clothing.
- Consider allocating common space(s) for children to play or people to unwind – maybe with a tea/coffee station, etc. with some toys/books/puzzles and some seating
- Provide signs for facilities (e.g., gender-segregated bathrooms), especially for larger sites
- Free places to charge electronics (especially phones) with plenty of extension cables
- If possible, provide free WiFi at the site
- If tap water is not drinkable, water dispenser or bottled water will be needed for drinking
- If there is capacity to provide food, or someone can provide food, this will need to be organized. You will need an eating area and clear system for how people receive the food. Consider coordinating with local temples, mosques or community groups who often play a central role in preparing and distributing food during emergencies. If food is not possible, provide information on nearby restaurants/shops on the information board where people can purchase food. Consider rotating responsibility with religious/community institutions, volunteer groups or local restaurants to bring food to the center. People will need information in advance for how much food is required. You will likely need to have baby food as well.
- The same applies for other needs in the site – clothes, non-food items, etc. – where and how will they be provided?
- Is there space for private or confidential discussions? This is useful for counseling, conflict resolution and other discussions that people do not want overheard.

Key note: Some groups of people will have different needs – mothers with small children may need baby items such as formula or diapers. Those with mobility issues may need walking aids. Some people might have chronic health issues such as diabetes. Try to identify these people, what their immediate, urgent needs are, and to either provide the assistance if you have capacity or solicit other actors to help provide it.

9. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- A team will be needed to implement all of the above. Size of the team will depend on the size of the site. You must have both male and female volunteers to assist, ideally able to speak relevant local languages such as Sinhala, Tamil and English.
- People may have complaints or feedback on the conditions. You will need to be prepared to receive and acknowledge these complaints, either by making someone available, or providing a suggestion book/box that you can review. Solicit feedback in a private manner and friendly way (especially as people are leaving) – be aware people are afraid to provide feedback when they are dependent on your service.
- Check to connect with NGOs, CSOs, Civil Protection, etc. working in the area – maintaining and ensuring on-going assistance can be expensive and places a lot of pressures on you. Advertise that you can help connect people with services they might need.

Here is a list of resources that you may find useful. Some are technical standards (which may not always be possible – but strived for) and other are guidance on processes and capacities you will need when you are managing your site:



- [Minimum Standards for Camp Management](#) outlines minimum actions required for management and coordination of displacement sites.
- [Introduction to Minimum Standards for Camp Management](#) This self-paced module introduces the Minimum Standards for Camp Management, explaining their purpose, scope, and practical application to help people and organisations improve the quality and accountability of assistance in displacement sites.
- [Sphere Handbook](#) sets out protection principles, core humanitarian standards, and provides minimum standards for sectors: WASH, Food and Nutrition, Shelter and Health. You may refer to [How to Use the Sphere Handbook](#) for more information.
- [Camp Management Toolkit](#) provides a range of information on managing displacement sites, with examples from different places.
- [Collective Centre Handbooks](#) draws on Camp Management Toolkit, with focus on collective Centres