

## Identification of Housing Units – Standard Operating Procedure<sup>1</sup>

While **Cash for Rent** (CfR) might stimulate the shelter market, it does not *directly* build or pay for the construction of new units. CfR programmes therefore rely on the available housing stock; yet, providing access to **adequate housing** remains a critical component of the intervention.

As a Shelter Emergency Response, – this is, when CfR is provided at the outset of a crisis (natural disaster or displacement) – the imperative of protecting saving lives, providing physical protection and privacy of people affected by displacement is prioritized. The average cost of rent might be included in the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) / as part of a Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) Assistance Package and distributed *prior* a technical assessment of the rental unit. **As soon as CfR is expanded or used as a Transitional Shelter<sup>2</sup> Response, the rented housing unit should meet minimum standards.**

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### Minimum characteristics of Adequate Housing Units

- CfR is intended to cover the rent for a shelter that meets minimum characteristics: protection from damp, rain, wind and extreme weather; free of structural hazards and disease vectors; with access to drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating and lighting; have proper refuse disposal; and means of storage, privacy and personal safety.
- Adequate Housing must allow access to employment options, health-care services, schools, and other social facilities, and should not be built on polluted sites nor in immediate proximity to pollution sources.
- Adequate Housing also includes security of tenure (the right to access and maintain shelter). Regardless of the type of shelter arrangement, all persons should have a degree of security that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats. At the assessment stage, beneficiaries will be asked about the rental agreement they might have and if they have any concerns about risk of eviction. If the family does not have any contract and/or is not satisfied with their agreement, the case should be directed to ICLA (information, counselling and legal representation) support.
- A quick technical assessment should make the following *ineligible* shelter options for CfR: a space *not* meant for human accommodation (such a barn or a storage container) or in a property damaged by fire; partially destroyed, or otherwise structurally weak; or, exposing the occupants to imminent health and safety risks.

### Assessing shelter conditions

- To evaluate the shelter conditions or adequacy of the shelter questions will start with the overall structural condition of the building. Second is the state of the roof: is the roof structurally sound, free of leaks and does it protect from the elements? Whilst the shelter conditions will be evaluated by its different components (walls, floor, windows...), the characteristics and condition of the roof is often the most useful indicator.
- Also evaluate the beneficiaries' access to clean water and sanitation following Sphere standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Miriam Lopez-Villegas, Shelter Adviser, NRC Afghanistan, June 2018.

<sup>2</sup> "Transitional shelter is an incremental process which supports the shelter of families affected by conflicts and disasters, as they seek to maintain alternative options for their recovery". Transitional shelter is a process that starts with the first support offered to families [emergency response] and extends over the period of securing land rights, [security of tenure] and reconstruction, which may take several years. Shelter Centre, 2012, *Transitional Shelter Guidelines*, <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Transitional-Shelter-Guidelines.pdf>

- The main reasons for families to move out include lack of privacy, lack of access to services and the worry the family will not be able to pay rent after the programme ends. Consider that disputes with homeowners and other households only account for a small percentage of move outs. To mitigate the risk of move-outs, the team must ensure the units included in the programme are affordable and meet the minimum characteristics listed above and that are close to essential services. The assessment form therefore, will also include distance and access to public transportation, markets, clinics and education facilities.

## Responding to families in substandard shelter conditions

- If a family is living in an inadequate space (ineligible shelter options as described above) the team should advise the family and if possible, accompany them to find an alternative affordable and secure shelter.
- Focus on the areas where displaced people can find rental units. As the team becomes familiar with the community, it might be able to advise new arrivals even though rental properties are in high demand in a context of high displacement and mobility.

## Overcrowding and Protection Considerations

- Addressing overcrowding is one of the main concerns and challenges in order to provide adequate shelter in Afghanistan. The assessment will also find out how many persons share the same room for sleeping and if there is adequate privacy in bedrooms and bathrooms (toilets and showers).
- In Afghanistan multi-family households with up to four generations are common and the average size is 7.4 persons per household.<sup>3</sup> Given the available housing stock, the occupancy ratio of families receiving short-term CFR support will most often be considered as *overcrowded* as defined by UN-Habitat with three persons or more persons per room and neither will meet the Sphere standard of 3.5m<sup>2</sup> per person.
- To follow Sphere standards, most families would need to be relocated from their current accommodation and will not be able to afford the rent after the CFR supports ebbs. Therefore, Sphere standards need to be reviewed alongside what is considered the norm and social acceptable in terms of living arrangements. Paying attention to gender-based violence (GBV) risks that increase with overcrowding, any case with particular protection or GBV concerns should be flagged to consider special considerations. In particular, assistance for two separate units might be offered for a HH that might be sharing rooms with non-relatives or more than two generations.

## Special needs considerations

- The CFR project should have the flexibility to provide additional support for People with Disabilities (PwD) which might represent a fraction of the caseload. The need for any shelter adaptation should be noted at the assessment stage of the rental shelter unit.
- An additional request might be presented to adapt the shelter for people with limited eyesight or limited mobility (e.g. due to disability or advanced age). Refer to the *Guide to Age & Disability in NRC Shelter Afghanistan* for specific Shelter Standards and Considerations and consult with the Shelter Project Manager and Shelter Specialist to facilitate the assistance (e.g. additional cash distribution to cover related costs).
- Beneficiaries with special needs should also be referred to a specialist agency for further support.

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<sup>3</sup> UN-Habitat, Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, 2017, *Afghanistan Housing Profile*.