Shelter Cluster Iraq
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

GUIDANCE NOTE ON CRITICAL SHELTER UPGRADE

V1 – March 2021

Abstract

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Shelter and NFI Cluster Team | IRAQ

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INTRODUCTION

In line with the HRP 2021, humanitarian actors assist extremely vulnerable IDPs/returnees living in non-owned critical shelter through both in-kind and cash-based interventions, in close coordination with other relevant clusters and particularly the HLP Sub-Cluster. This support allows highly vulnerable families to meet minimum shelter standards, whilst they re-establish their lives in areas affected by the recent conflict, regain possession of their HLP rights, start repairs of their damaged houses (with or without external support), hence avoiding secondary displacement.

In view of the scale of shelter repair needs across the country, and within the limited resources available, this guidance note provides technical and strategic support for stakeholders, in line with humanitarian principles, and in order to maximize the impact of the shelter response in a harmonized manner. Scope of works that goes beyond this guideline would be embraced by the Durable Solution Task Force, relevant line ministries and other stabilization actors.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

In line with the HRP2021 CSU programme targets the following population groups:

1- IDPs out of camp:
2- Returnees

Highly vulnerable people living in critical shelter and those in secondary displacement due to premature camp closure are priorities. Based on current realities, foreseen operational challenges are mainly related to the post-conflict scenario: areas with high access constraints due to a still volatile and insecure situation in specific areas, presence of Explosive Hazards (EH), as well as Housing Land and Property (HLP) issues related to secondary occupation, tribal issues and stigmatization. These factors may negatively impact all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle, such as assessment, implementation, and monitoring. The Shelter Cluster will continue to work closely with the Humanitarian Access Working Group, Mine Action and HLP Sub-clusters to help partners overcome these challenges and develop joint programmes to maximize the impact of everyone' interventions.

ADEQUACY OF SHELTER[1]

Shelter Cluster partners in Iraq have been involved in upgrading/rehabilitating residential structures occupied by displaced and returned families who do not have an ownership title over them, in order to ensure their shelter is adequate. While some form of tenure security may exist, many of these buildings are in sub-standard condition, are unfinished or abandoned, damaged by the effects of the conflict, have not been maintained for long time, thus providing little to no protection, security, safety, dignity or privacy. However, the term "adequacy" is often interpreted in different ways. The main objective of this document is to provide a guidance note to Shelter Cluster partners in assisting those in need of critical shelter upgrade.

Adequate housing must provide more than four walls and a roof. A number of conditions must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered to provide an "adequate housing." These elements are just as fundamental as the basic supply and availability of housing. The Habitat Agenda (1996) lists the key

[1] For more details please refer to the Guidance Note: Defining Adequacy of Shelter developed by the Iraq Shelter Cluster

parameters of adequate shelter. Below is a list of substandard/inadequate/critical shelter most commonly found in Iraq.

Important note: War-damaged shelters also fall under the category of "critical shelter" but are **not** part of this guideline. As a matter of fact, this guideline illustrates critical shelter upgrades for non-owned properties (e.g. shelter where IDPs and/or returnees have settled, with or without the agreement of the owner). For more details on the minimum scope of war-damaged shelter repairs for extremely vulnerable shelter owners, please refer to the guideline developed by the Iraq Shelter Cluster.

SUBSTANDARD/INADEQUATE/CRITICAL SHELTER:

- Unfinished building
- Abandoned building
- Makeshift shelter
- Religious building
- Public building
- Non-residential building (such as commercial structures including shops, garages, chicken farms, and any other dwelling not meant, planned and built for residential purposes)

THE PROCESS

Partners engaging in Critical Shelter Upgrades (CSU) should follow the below minimum steps which are essential to ensure the humanitarian imperative and protection principle of "do no harm" are achieved:

1. Identification of beneficiaries, based solely upon humanitarian need (principle of impartiality) and through clearly established vulnerability criteria[2]
2. Communication with communities for awareness raising on the selection criteria of beneficiaries
3. Verification of right to live in the targeted shelter to ensure House, Land and Property (HLP) rights do not complicate the activity
4. The Owner(s) knowledge about and willingness in applying for a compensation claim (if applicable, for instance when the building has been rented to IDPs or returnees, and is damaged by the consequences of the recent conflict)
5. Preparation of a Bill of Quantity by qualified engineers, taking into consideration the minimum scope of repairs (see Annex 1)
6. Communication with, and consent from, building owner and beneficiaries living there (not the owner) on the scope and timing of upgrades prior to execution
7. Communication with, and consent from, building owner and beneficiaries living there (not the owner) on the collection of the geographical coordinates of the shelter for reporting purposes
8. Implementation of Critical Shelter Upgrades according to the minimum scope of repairs (see Annex 1)
9. Monitoring during and after execution of works, and evaluation upon expiration of the liability period, run by technical experts only (i.e. civil engineers)

[2] For more details on the vulnerability criteria recommended by the Shelter Cluster please refer to Vulnerability Criteria of the Shelter and NFI Cluster 2020 - 2021

ON HLP ISSUES

Beneficiaries of critical shelter upgrades shall preferably be able to display a form of tenure security, i.e. confirming they have gotten the agreement from the official owner to reside in that shelter. Would this title be missed, the risk is to engage in the upgrades while the owner may evict the family(ies). At the same time, the owner shall be able to prove the ownership title. Such verification process should be considered as a preventive measure against falsified/fraudulent documents, potential illegal occupation and secondary occupations or forced eviction. If the verification is not completed, shelter actors should refer the case to HLP specialists and put on hold the implementing of shelter activities, as they may result to HLP violations. At the same time, as many families lack such official documentation, alternative solutions should be sought for those who are unable to prove their tenure security. More guidance is provided in the HLP Rights in Shelter Due Diligence Guideline prepared by the HLP Sub-cluster. Would a rental agreement be missing, and the owner not reachable/found, shelter partners are recommended to intervene with very light upgrades, or to prefer provision of Sealing-Off Kits[3] which provide a non-invasive intervention while still allowing meeting some of the minimum standards.

Shelter partners should also verify whether the house owner has filed, or intends to file, a request for property-related compensation, in case the shelter would qualify for that[4]. If not, the owner may wish to do so before the works commence. For more guidance refer to the Property Compensation Guidelines for Iraq prepared by the HLP Sub-cluster.

ON THE MINIMUM SCOPE OF CRITICAL SHELTER UPGRADES (ANNEX 1)

- The scope of Critical Shelter Upgrades (whose beneficiaries do not own the shelter itself) does not differ from the one of war-damaged shelter repairs (whose beneficiaries are the owners of that shelter). Nonetheless, it is important to note that a CSU shall be negotiated between the partner and the shelter owner against a free-rent period, of at least the same corresponding value of the upgrade. The direct beneficiaries will then be the hosted family(ies) as well as the hosting family (owner).
- The minimum recommended standard is **5.5 m² of covered space per person** including circulation, kitchen and bathroom facilities. That results in a target of a **minimum of 33 m² per family of 6**. Thus, the main and only focus should be on determining minimum repairs for the portion of the shelter unit that can be upgraded/repaired with least effort both in terms of budget, timeframe, type of works and specialised labour required.
- The Shelter Cluster in consultation with SAG members set the cost of Critical Shelter Upgrades cost to an average of 1200 USD[5] per family.

ON IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

[3] For more details on the composition of SOK please refer to Sealing Off Kit (SOK) Technical Guidance - V3
[4] As per Article 1 of Law 57 (first amendment), in relation to the compensation of all Iraqi citizens affected by damages caused by war operations, military accidental mistakes and terrorist actions.
[5] This cost is variable, with a Cluster set average of $1,200. However, the exact cost is dependent on the status of the structure to be upgraded/repaired, the size of the HH, proximity to specialized markets, availability of skilled labour and what is necessary to reach minimum standards. The total cost includes the staffing necessary to conduct detailed technical assessments and Bills of Quantity preparation, as well as the relevant support costs for the program. For more information please refer to the 2021 HRP SHELTER CLUSTER – COSTING OVERVIEW v1 – December 2020

Carrying out upgrades could be done through different modalities but should preferably contribute to local economies by engaging in local capacities, skilled workers or cash-for-work. In the latter case, strong risk mitigation measures shall be put in place, to avoid the risk of cash not being used for the ultimate purpose, be this delivered to either the beneficiary or the owner. Cash transfers in tranches are recommended, with a monitoring visit between the different phases to verify that the funds have been used in alignment with the approved by all sides BoQ. Technical support through contractors or cash for work might be especially relevant for household who are unable to contract workers on their own or supervise works – e.g. female or children-headed households, elderly persons or persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, or in areas where the market is lacking in supply of specialised workers and/or quality materials.

FURTHER NOTES AND TECHNICAL ADVICES

- **WARNING: Any structure where there is presence of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), or where there is an imminent threat of collapse from a neighbouring building should not be considered safe for habitation**.
- Clearance of ERW, dead body handling and rubble removal are outside the scope of the humanitarian shelter activities and minimum standard repairs. These issues should be addressed by the relevant entities before commencing assessment or shelter repair.
- **Local building codes and regulations must be strictly respected**.
- **Buildings with cultural and historical value**: buildings targeted that have historical and cultural value must be restored in their original layout, preserving specific historical characteristics, using specific materials and specialised craftsmanship. Partners that do not have necessary competencies are strongly advised not to engage in shelter upgrades in such areas, while referring cases to the expertise of **UNESCO**.
- **In assessing burnt shelters**: shelters affected by fire must be assessed by an expert technical engineer looking into the causes, consequences and spatial variability of burn severity to determine the safety of the structure.

ANNEX 1 - TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS - MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPAIR

In addition to the items described below, the required works will be determined by a structural inspection and must be designed by a qualified engineer. Works may include underpinning foundations, cement of chemical filling of cracks, wall stitching, jacketing columns and beams, applying shear collars, removal and replacement of crushed concrete, replacement/splicing of damaged reinforcement, pouring new or repairing floor/roof labs, etc.

Item		MINIMUM TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS	Remarks
Structural safety	1	Structural cracks, spalling, loss of material, and /or holes are repaired as needed in columns, beams, lintels, loadbearing walls, and slabs to protect structural integrity of the entire building.	The load carrying capacity and stiffness of structural elements must be restored in order to reduce the risk of structural failure due to deterioration. This should be completed at the discretion of the lead engineer.
Covered living space	2	Minimum 5.5 m^2 of covered space per person including circulation, kitchen, and bathroom facilities. E.g. floor area required for a 6 person household is 33m^2.	Calculation must include all persons living in the housing unit.
Fire damage	3	All evidence of fire damage is removed (soot, smoke deposits, peeling, minor spalling) from required covered living space.	
Boundary walls	4	Where security and privacy are a concern, repair damaged boundary walls and repair/provide a solid lockable entry gate.	
External Walls	5	All external walls of the required covered space are free from cracks or holes. Note: non-structural plaster cracking is acceptable.	Plastering or painting is outside the scope of upgrades. Use concrete block, or bricks to fill larger holes. Small holes may be repaired with expanding foam.
Roof	6	Roof and ceilings are free from cracks and holes, and there are no leaks, or stagnant water.	Where necessary apply waterproof silicon compound to fix leaks, and/or a layer of asphalt over concrete roof.
Floor slab	7	Cleanable, level floor in the required covered space (e.g. smooth concrete screed), sealed around the edges to prevent insects and rodents. If damaged evident, repair to smooth surface. Note: non-structural plaster cracking is acceptable	Tiling of floors is outside the scope of repairs.
Stairs, balconies and roof terraces	8	Stair shafts, balconies, and/or roof connected to stairs have a stable parapet to prevent children and adults from falling (including common stairs in multi-unit buildings). Required parapet height min 1 - 1.2m, however where parapets already exist lower than 1m, and are considered stable and safe they do not need to be replaced.	Cement block wall preferred, but other materials may be acceptable if they are stable and well-secured (e.g. metal or wooden guard).
External and internal doors	9	All external doors into the housing unit (including roof access door) are solid, lockable, and securely fixed to frame.	Metal, wood, or UPVC insulated doors may be used.
	10	Solid lockable doors into toilet/shower.	
	11	At least one room/bedroom with solid lockable door per household.	Particularly important to ensure privacy where there is sharing/hosting arrangements.

Ventilation / Windows	12	Natural light opening area per habitable room is minimum 10% of floor area.	To calculate natural light, add the area of windows and any internal wall openings to bring light from one room to another. For ventilation add all openings (closable or permanent) directly into external air including openable windows, ventilation grills or louvers, air bricks, or any external door. Divide this by the area of the room. E.g. 1m^2 of natural light / 10m^2 room = 10%, 0.5m^2 of ventilation / 10m^2 room = 5%. Mechanical ventilation may be an option where other openings are not feasible. Optional: Where feasible fly mesh may be applied to openable windows.
	13	Ventilation openings per habitable room of a minimum 5% of floor area.	-
	14	All window units in the required covered area are sealed from rain, water, and wind, and have solid panels (glass, polycarbonate sheet or equivalent) securely fixed to frame.	Existing/damaged windows can be reused if the frame and pane are repaired to ensure no gaps or leakage. Optional: Where security is a concern and where there is no capacity for beneficiaries to do this themselves, protection bars may be installed on the ground floor of the required covered area.
Internal walls	15	Interior walls in habitable spaces are free from holes. No signs of structural problems. Note: non-structural hairline cracking is acceptable.	Plastering or painting of internal walls is outside the scope of repairs, except in wash facilities (see below).
Internal partitions	16	Where privacy is a concern, provide minimum 1 internal partition separating sleeping and living spaces.	Use concrete block, gypsum, plywood, metal, or plastic materials.
Water supply	17	The housing unit is connected to municipal water network where it is available, and there is a minimum of 1 functioning water tap per plot.	Optional: Where feasible provide 3 water sources per housing unit (1 in kitchen sink, 1 hand wash basin in toilet, and 1 shower tap). All must have sewage network connection and be functioning and free from leaks.
	18	1 functioning 1,000 litres water tank is required if there is no municipal water connection available.	Calculated for a family of 6, assuming 50-60 litres/person/day, storage capacity for 2-3 days.
Kitchen	19	Housing unit has 1 adequate space for sanitary food storage, preparation, and cooking separated from toilet facility by solid wall.	Recommended minimum space for kitchen of 3m^2, based on counter length of 2m, depth of 60cm, and 90cm space in front of counter for safety.
Toilets and showers	20	Minimum 1 toilet and shower/bathing space per housing unit of with lockable door and means of ventilation.	Shower and toilet space may be combined. Recommended minimum area of 3.5 to 4m^2. Toilet type (squatting/sitting) according to beneficiary preferences.
	21	Toilet with no marks of leakage, trapped and vented to the outside, and connected to public sewage system, or to private sewage disposal system (e.g. cesspit, septic tank).	
	22	Toilet/shower floors are smooth and cleanable, shower walls are plastered up to 1.5m.	
Electrical connection and lighting system	23	Damaged / burnt electrical wiring, distribution boxes and circuit breakers are removed from the housing unit or disconnected to prevent fire hazards.	
	24	Housing unit is connected to the electricity network where itis available according to applicable regulations.	

	25	Electrical panel, outlets, switches and fixtures are in good working condition without risks of electrical fires, and wherever possible wiring is concealed in electrical conduits.	
	26	In the required covered areas, minimum 1 outlet and 1 light per room.	Outlets in kitchen, or shower room are covered (waterproof) to prevent electrical fires. Light in shower must be waterproof.
Accessibility	27	If there are persons with disabilities, ensure they have safe access to the housing unit facilities (toilet/shower, kitchen) and can safely exit the housing unit.	For further guidance refer to the following guidelines: HI General Accessibility Guidelines for Iraq, 2016 All Under One Roof Disability-inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies