Guidance Notes for

Informal Tented Settlements

Shelter Intervention Projects
In Dar'a and Quneitra, Syria

care ®

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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A C R O N Y M S

CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFI	Non-food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RFP	Request for Proposals
SoW	Scope of Work
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WG	Working Group

1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance note was produced for the Shelter-NFI sector working group, and highlights the importance of understanding the risks of making shelter interventions in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS), and the necessary preliminary steps of assessing and evaluating each ITS and its context before planning interventions.

One aspect of the local context – strongly linked to the lack of international humanitarian access – is that there are no recognized formal camps in southern Syria run by accountable humanitarian actors, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) sector functions for southern Syria are managed and coordinated through the Jordan Hub of the Shelter NFI working group. This document draws on CCCM principles and other international standards, on lessons learnt locally and on information recently gathered through a mapping exercise; however, such is the informal nature of ITS that their make-up, management and histories vary greatly, and are likely to remain fluid over time. As such, much of the following guidance is general and cautionary.

2. DEFINITION

Informal Tented Settlements are self-established unplanned camps, set on either publicly or privately owned land, and could include multiple types of shelter ranging from handmade tents to rigid structures. There is no minimum number of camping units within the definition of an ITS. Next to host families and collective shelters, informal tented settlements are one of the main settlement typologies in southern Syria, with a dynamic, fragile and variable context compared to other settlement types. Camps can quickly emerge, relocate or fluctuate in population, and may have more fluid management accordingly.

3. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE SELECTION OF INFORMAL TENTED SETTLEMENTS FOR SHELTER INTERVENTIONS

Prior to planning an intervention in an ITS, it is advisable to conduct a preliminary risk assessment to identify threats to a positive outcome, as well as their likelihood. The risk assessment will inform the 'go/no go' decision for making shelter interventions in the ITS and should include the following:

3.1 Type of Shelter Intervention

What types of shelter interventions could be appropriate, that could be remotely managed, in line with do-no-harm principles, and that would not risk forming new ITS? Note that the Shelter/NFI working group advises against activities that would form new ITS, due to access

and management constraints that limit capacity to ensure the humanitarian nature of the camp, and the protection of its residents. Shelter interventions for ITS are recommended only to repair or replace the shelters of people living in ITS.

3.2 Safety and Security

How safe and secure is the site from

- Air strikes, bombardment and shelling? Consider the proximity of military bases, checkpoints and gun emplacements.
- Clashes along lines of conflict or shifts in territorial control?
- Health hazards such as sewage, contaminated land, hazardous substances such as asbestos, landmines, unexploded ordinance?

3.3 Settlement Stability

How long IDPs can or will stay in an ITS must be considered, as well as whether departing IDPs might be replaced by new arrivals? Information regarding intentions, expectations and risks should be gathered through interviews or focus group discussions with residents, landowners and local leaders. Further considerations for ITS include whether making shelter improvements will cause the camp to grow (in population or area), and whether departing IDPs will be willing and able to take their shelter infrastructure with them when they leave. Depending on other risk factors, long-term sites might be suitable for infrastructural improvement (e.g. drainage) and improvement to communal facilities such as toilets and kitchens. Rehabilitation with rigid non-relocatable structures may be cost-effective for some long-term sites, while for short-term residents' provision of relocatable items might have more lasting value if they can be re-used in an onward displacement or a return to the place of origin.

Factors affecting the permanency of the ITS include:

- The intentions and level of authority of the local council, either to protect IDP tenure in an ITS, or to vacate the site
- The risk of eviction by the property owner
- The intentions of IDPs and their opportunities to return to their homes
- Various push-pull factors for onward displacement of IDPs, including:
  - o Employment opportunities in other locations
  - o Better safety and security in other sites, including response to the spread (or fear of spread) of disease locally
  - o Better access to livelihoods and services
  - o Reunion with other family members.

3.4 Size and Condition of the Informal Tented Settlement

The population size and general condition of the ITS in terms of number of camping units and households should be quantified and categorized (using gender and age disaggregated data) during the assessment stage. Accordingly, the humanitarian actor (and partners) should assess their capacity to deliver shelter assistance in an equal, satisfactory and holistic manner to all households that are eligible, based on transparent vulnerability criteria. This approach is important to mitigate the risk of creating or exacerbating conflicts or disputes between residents in the ITS.

3.5 Access

Humanitarian agencies should consider:

- Who has access to the ITS, as a resident or to deliver services, considering that sex, gender identity, age, or ethnicity can all influence who has access to an ITS?
- Can residents access essential services and markets and can those markets be used as a source for shelter rehabilitation materials?
- Can humanitarian agencies have impartial and unhindered access to the ITS?

3.6 Housing Land and Property (HLP)

Section 5.2 addresses HLP in shelter interventions in more detail; however, before an ITS is considered eligible for rehabilitation agencies should assess HLP risks, following sector guidance on due diligence. As a minimum, the due-diligence assessment should include triangulating information on the property ownership history and possible disputes, tenure arrangements, security of tenure, host community relations and accepted dispute resolution mechanisms.

3.7 Coordination with Stakeholders and Partners

Agencies should consult and liaise with stakeholders (such as local councils, NGOs operating in the area, property owners, neighbors and IDPs) for reasons including avoiding duplication, identifying ways to strengthen community cohesion (and avoiding weakening it), strengthening local HLP rights, and ensuring shelter interventions are tailored to the needs of the resident IDPs and other relevant stakeholders.

3.8 Other Considerations.

- Equal treatment: where other IDP camping units are nearby, consider delivering humanitarian services of all camping units to a similar standard.
- Protection cases: seek to identify and adapt to the specific needs of highly vulnerable people and ensure that they receive appropriate specialized support.
- Synergies: where possible, integrate other programs along with rehabilitation works and activities. These might include protection monitoring, distributions of core relief items and livelihoods activities, awareness-raising and WASH interventions.
- ITS can become high-risk environments for violence and abuse. Women and girls can become target of violence and exploitation, especially if there are perceptions of inequity in access to assistance favoring women, girls or other specific groups.

4. STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

A stakeholder is any individual, group or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by the shelter program. Managing stakeholders from the early stages of a project can mitigate risks and improve project outcomes, since successful planning, design and completion of an intervention often depends of ensuring stakeholder consultation and support. The three major stakeholders in ITS shelter interventions are:
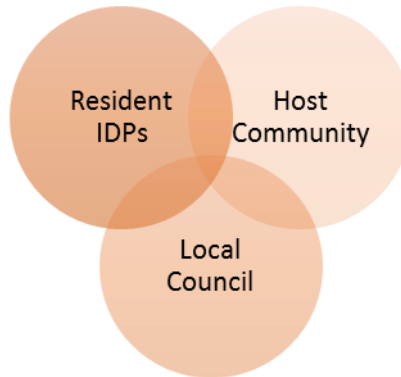
> ⚠ *When consulting with stakeholders, keep in mind the different groups within each stakeholder type, as they are not necessarily homogeneous, and views between groups will be different.*

4.1 Resident IDPs

The culture and customs of IDPs in ITS in Dar'a and Quneitra who have originated from different parts of Syria can vary greatly. For a shelter intervention in an ITS to be successful, it is very important to inform and consult with resident IDPs.

A participatory approach is essential to consulting with camp committees and IDPs in the assessment phase and subsequent stages (see section 7.1). This should help to identify specific needs, privacy concerns and protection issues whose solutions might be integrated into the project design. IDPs (and host community members) may also want and be able to participate in the shelter intervention work itself.

> ⚠ *Establish mechanisms that allow all sections of IDPs to give their input and feedback.*

Understanding the management of an ITS and the relationships between residents, should help design relevant and well-placed communal space, utilities and infrastructure for all parties, facilitating fair use of the ITS following the intervention.

ITS management structures can vary greatly even where they have been formalized, and it is important for humanitarian agencies to evaluate how they are structured. They may, for example, include landowners and members of the local council, or may be male-dominated

and drawn only from male heads of families or households. The ability to which they can identify vulnerable people and accountably represent all residents may vary greatly too.

4.2 Host communities

The arrival of IDPs into a community that hosts them can bring additional strain to an environment already affected by the prolonged conflict. Market prices may increase, as well as the strain on utilities, public resources and employment opportunities, and there may be a negative impact caused by the rapid change of use to the land and the number of people living there. Consultation with neighbors, private land owners and other members of the host community should help to understand local concerns, which may reveal information about issues including social cohesion and HLP rights including the security of tenure of IDPs in the ITS. Additionally, in the case of an ITS, the host community may include one or more land-owners of the site on which the ITS has been established.
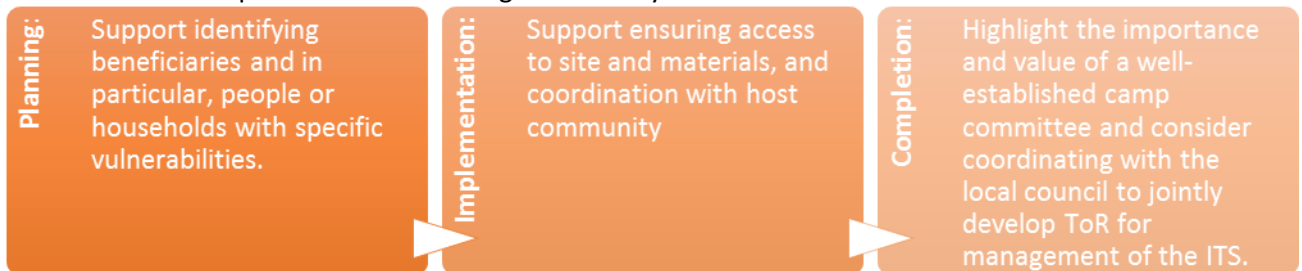
⚠ *Some host community members might be residing in the settlement with IDPs.*

4.3 Local Councils

Local Councils in non-Government Controlled Areas are de facto authorities, and agencies should exercise caution in how they engage with them, bearing in mind that coordinating with councils may indirectly empower them "as both humanitarian responders and revolutionary political actors."[1] The local councils formed throughout Syria in response to context-specific conditions, and their maturity, capacity, efficacy and mandate can vary widely. The membership of these bodies may change over time, and humanitarian actors should take steps to confirm that the Local Councils with whom they engage are viewed as legitimate and credible by the relevant stakeholders. Where this is this case, the following actions are recommended:

- With particular reference to Informal Tented Settlements, encourage local councils to see the support of humanitarian action and principles as part of their mandate.
- Consult with and seek information and suggestions from the council – for example through interviews with council members – always being very clear that the humanitarian actor has the final say in project decisions.
- Note that local councils may have particularly valuable information relating to project risks.
- Adopt a process of clear and steady interaction with the council, clarifying expectations at each stage which may be as follows:

Planning:	Implementation:	Completion:
Support identifying beneficiaries and in particular, people or households with specific vulnerabilities.	Support ensuring access to site and materials, and coordination with host community	Highlight the importance and value of a well-established camp committee and consider coordinating with the local council to jointly develop ToR for management of the ITS.

[1] Mercy Corps (2015) "Humanitarian Access Through Local Councils in South and Central Syria."

5. PROTECTION

5.1 Protection Mainstreaming

It is essential to incorporate protection principles into Shelter interventions. As a minimum, the following four principles should be considered throughout the intervention. Additional elements of protection mainstreaming can be added, as relevant to the context, the agency and the specific intervention.

DO NO HARM AND PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND DIGNITY

- Identify vulnerable individuals and address their specific needs, which may include need for additional space, separated camping units, mobility assistance and bathroom access.
- Create separate living areas (camping units), for each household, and separate sleeping areas for different families, sexes and generations, and vulnerable individuals such as single women, people with disabilities and unaccompanied children,
- Create separate communal toilets for males and females, or provide facilities for each household
- Ensure shelters (tents, or rigid structures) are well covered in a manner that respects and ensures privacy and protection.
- Carefully examine fire risks, and risks of violence, especially Gender Based Violence (GBV)*, to boys, girls, men and women in their daily activities
- Identify any possible conflicts or disputes between different groups of IDPs

ENSURE MEANINGFUL ACCESS

- Through consultation and design, tailor common spaces and utilities to the vulnerabilities of the target group.
- Create equal access to communal spaces and utilities (kitchen, electrical points, bathroom etc…) noting that vulnerable people may require special assistance to achieve equal access.
- For the elderly and people with certain disabilities, reduce distances/slopes from sleeping areas to common spaces and utilities.

PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY

- Receiving feedback is valuable to monitoring, evaluation and learning, and is an essential part of accountability to the affected population.
- Throughout the project stages, provide a structured feedback mechanism that is managed by an individual who can treat feedback confidentially, and can take remedial action.
- Note that poorly managed feedback mechanisms can raise unmet expectations and can expose beneficiaries to harm, through confidentiality breaches.

PROMOTE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- In addition to consultation with IDPs and host community, consider opportunities for their participation in the intervention works, for example through vouchers/cash-for-work, particularly where households have unemployed persons, and/or those with construction skills.

* http://sheltercluster.org/gbv-shelter-programming-working-group/documents/good-shelter-programming-tools-reduce-risk-gbv.

5.2 Housing, Land and Property

Housing, land and property rights are likely to be a crucial issue requiring close attention, whether the ITS is located on private land or public land. The southern Syria Strategic Shelter Assessment (Care 2017) found that most ITS in southern Syria are on privately-owned land. Humanitarian agencies should follow sector guidance on making due diligence checks, to avoid doing harm to the HLP rights of IDPs, host communities or other stakeholders. In summary these checks include identifying and verifying:

- who is the owner of the property and the type of rights they have (i.e. right to use, right to control, right to transfer the property)
- For how long have IDPs been living in the settlement site?
- What tenure arrangements, if any, do IDP residents have (how long, how secure, at a cost)? Are there written agreements confirming occupancy?
- What individuals or what kind of group decides who can live in the settlement site? What are the selection criteria?
- Even if residents have lived a long time in the site, is there still a high eviction risk?
- Have there been any property use disputes between residents or with host community members? If so, how are they resolved?
- What can the humanitarian agency do to identify, mitigate or facilitate resolution of any HLP rights issues arising during or after intervention works are completed?

6. CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM)

Given the current context of southern Syria, in particular with the challenge of cross-border remote management, there are no formal camps, and CCCM sector functions for southern Syria are coordinated and managed through the Jordan Hub of the Shelter-NFI working group. Key principles of CCCM should be applied and promoted where possible through ITS shelter intervention projects. Developing well-established residents' coordination committees empowers residents and encourages participation in decision-making. They can also serve as an entry point for the delivery of other services including protection.

When a shelter intervention in an ITS is being conducted, it is generally important that the property owner is closely connected to the residents' committee, whether through frequent contact with the committee, or participating in committee meetings.

The size of a residents' committee vary, but the following composition is recommended:

- Minimum size: 4 people (2 men, 2 women)
- Maximum size: 14 people (7 men; 7 women)
- There should be at least one male and one female representative for each group of ten households, with each committee member elected by households that they will represent.

The main responsibilities of the committee members are the following:

- Act as focal points for any issue related to the site;
- Liaise between residents and humanitarian service providers;
- Ensure effective information dissemination among site residents;
- Hold regular community meetings to discuss communal issues;
- Support the process of establishing ITS communal rules;
- Coordinate the cleaning, maintenance and repair of communal areas and sanitation facilities;
- Report out of school children to humanitarian agencies providing education services;
- Support fire safety through monitoring of fire safety equipment and awareness;
- Report incidents of violence to relevant authorities;
- Assist in mediation of disputes;
- Ensure equal access to communal areas and services for all settlement site residents;
- Plan communal festivities or recreational activities.

Keeping in mind that there is no way to ensure the humanitarian nature of a camp, building the committee's capacity around the minimum standards for shelters should be considered, while also including safety, protection and environment. For example, can the committee assist residents in reallocating their camping units to meet SPHERE standards, or find ways to mitigate risk factors? Another example could be introducing low-cost or zero-cost fire safety measures, such as clearing flammable vegetation, and having sand buckets readily available.

7. SHELTER PROGRAM DESIGN IN INFORMAL TENTED SETTLEMENTS

7.1 Assessment

Prior to designing a shelter intervention in an ITS, a participatory assessment should be made, that includes the following actions and considerations. The assessment should be social (e.g. considering gender, dignity and cultural aspects of the settlement site) and technical, considering the scope of intervention, in order to determine the needs of the IDPs.

- Hold interviews or focus group discussions with resident IDPs, ITS managers or a residents' committee, local council and other relevant stakeholders.
- In consultation with stakeholders, seek to identify diverse types of possible hazard associated with the ITS, including weather and health hazards and protection threats.
- Develop an understanding of the different roles of men, women, boys and girls in the shelter.

Ensure that interviews and focus group discussions include a balanced representation of women, men and youth.

- Determine the scope of the assessment, and develop a site map identifying the current layout and boundaries of the ITS, the sleeping areas, family centers, utilities and other communal areas.
- Create a thorough photographic record as a baseline by which to monitor improvements, as well as an archive of key project documents.
- Consider conducting the assessment in multiple stages, establishing a preliminary overview, followed by a more detailed assessment (with protection and CCCM principles integrated within it)
- Avoid collecting data that is unnecessary for the intervention. Store the data securely, and only for as long as is legally required for the completion of the project.
- Rehabilitation work should begin as soon as possible after the assessment is completed. If there is a delay between the assessment and the start of works, agencies should verify that the assessment findings are still valid.

7.2 Beneficiary Identification

As the southern Syria response increases its focus on delivering needs-based assistance rather than status-based assistance, humanitarian agencies are advised to select and prioritize beneficiaries according vulnerability criteria that have been developed logically, and where relevant, have been harmonized with other agencies. The following four steps provide a general logic that can be followed to identify beneficiaries.

I.   **Developing the Beneficiary Eligibility Criteria**
Define criteria that identify, select and prioritize which IDPs should receive that specific assistance or benefit from that intervention. In the interests of accountability and transparency, these criteria could be circulated to relevant populations.

II.   **Beneficiary Selection**
Although methods may vary according to context, agencies should consider liaising with the local council, its relief office and/or the IDP committee or ITS residents' committee. Always be very clear that the humanitarian actor should have the final say in project decisions such as beneficiary selection.

III.   **Verification of Selected Beneficiaries**
The remote management constraints of southern Syria cross border operations, make beneficiary verification particularly difficult and important. Methods may vary, but it is common that verification would be done by field consultants or a third party monitoring organization verifying

the presence and circumstances of a statistically significant sample from the beneficiary list.

IV.   **Level of assistance vs. the Number of Beneficiaries**
Following the selection and verification of the lists of beneficiaries, it is important to balance the level of assistance and the number of beneficiaries. This is best achieved by ensuring that all eligible beneficiaries can be assisted by the program in an equitable and equal manner. Being transparent and consultative with regards the prioritization of certain vulnerability factors should help mitigate the risk of creating disputes or conflicts within the ITS.

7.3 General Notes on the Distribution of Tents and Shelter Kits

The Shelter/NFI Working Group has produced guidance on the composition of Shelter and NFI kits. As well as providing technical specifications for tents and shelter kits, the document provides guidance on the distribution of tents, noting that they should be seen as a shelter-of-last-resort, and that tent-based interventions should target the repair or replacement of existing tents, avoiding creating or enlarging ITSs.

Shelter kits

There are three categories of shelter kit:

- Emergency Shelter Kit
- Top-Up (extended) Shelter Kit
- Tool Kit (can be provided separately, alongside or as part of either Shelter Kit.)

The kits should consist of material and items which are adaptable and can be used flexibly during the displacement period, the recovery phase, and in case of multiple displacements. Depending on the beneficiaries and the nature of the kits, a kit should assist with:

- Emergency shelter – for people with no shelter at all, mostly in rural areas; or,
- Sealing off existing substandard structures, especially in winter.

Tents

The standard family tent has $16m^2$ main floor area, plus two $3.5m^2$ vestibules, for a total area of $23m^2$, double-fold with ground sheet. It is the standard tent used by UNHCR/ICRC/IFRC and suitable for a family of 5 people, following the recommended minimum living area in hot and temperate climates ($3.5m^2$ per person), and providing additional space for cold climates.

Winterization:

Driven by the need to guide shelter winterization programming in southern Syria, the Shelter/NFI working group has issued a document that outlines the imminent need for funding and procurement of seasonally adjusted core relief items and shelter assistance for the winter of 2017-2018.

The document encourages agencies to consider winterized shelter programming in informal tented settlements based on people-in-need (PIN) numbers and geographical location, while also giving guidance on preparedness, stock levels and meteorology.

7.4 Environmental impact

Where possible, the environmental impact of the human habitation and the humanitarian shelter response in an ITS should be assessed, and mitigation measures undertaken to minimize the long-term impact on the environment.

The environmental impact mitigation measures can also include:

- Mainstreaming environmental awareness when engaging with stakeholders
- Integrating environmental impact reduction measures into the responsibilities of the camp committee.

7.5 Other General Shelter Program Design Considerations in ITS

- Agencies should adopt an incremental approach to shelter programming that starts by addressing basic and immediate shelter needs. An intervention might begin with replacing uninhabitable tents that are inadequate, distributing insulating material (particularly if pre-empting cold weather), or distributing shelter repair kits and NFI. These activities might serve as an entry point to more ambitious, longer term interventions.   If even the basic needs of a community cannot be met, information highlighting the gap should be shared through the Shelter/NFI working group to mobilize a response, if possible.
- Considering the context and characteristics of each specific ITS, study and analyze the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats of a planned program. Such an analysis should be highly mindful of potential risks of the program and of the challenges of remote management.
- The design of the intervention should be contextually and culturally appropriate, as well as meeting minimum humanitarian standards; a consultative approach should assist in this regard.
- Agencies are advised coordinate through the working group to ensure that planned interventions do not duplicate the work planned by another agency and do not clash with the coordinated sector strategy.
- Design a practical and SMART monitoring and evaluation process for the program activities and delivery.