

Collective centre rehabilitation

10 March 2019

Key points

- Complete and retain all relevant documents during the adaptation of a building into a collective centre. These include: The scope or works (Statement of works).
- A master plan containing survey and construction details.
- An implementation plan, including a bill of quantities (BoQ), detailed technical working drawings, and specifications of what materials will be used and their quality.
- Local or national permits and owner agreements.
- Local or international building codes and standards.
- Communications with local authorities, the local community, contractors, implementing partners or other organisations, and donors.
- Procurement and contractual documentation (tendering, accepted bids, payment arrangements, etc.).
- A quality assurance plan (including safety measures with respect to the building site, specifying responsibilities in case of accidents).
- Prepare the site (levelling, vegetation clearance, marking out, water and utilities connections, storage of topsoil, etc.).
- Monitor progress and prepare an evaluation plan, including a site book and photographs.
- Make arrangements for completion and handover by the contractor.

1. Overview

Collective centres are pre-existing buildings and structures where large group of displaced people find shelter for a short time while durable solutions are pursued. A variety of facilities may

be used as collective centres - community centres, town halls, hotels, gymnasiums, warehouses, unfinished buildings, disused factories.

A thorough assessment must be conducted to determine the conditions of the building and for how long it may be used.

In all cases – regardless of the services, and utilities they offer, collective centres should be rehabilitated and/or upgraded to meet the shelter needs of their residents, including facilitating the provision of basic services. They should be managed and maintained from the onset and throughout the period persons of concern live in them.

An exit strategy is essential. Determine whether after they cease to be collective centres buildings will return to their original function or use.

2. Main guidance

Protection objectives

- To provide a safe environment with dignity to persons of concern while durable solutions are pursued
- To safeguard social rights such as adequate shelter, water and sanitation
- To provide mechanisms to access services for persons with specific needs

Underlying principles and standards

Collective centres host persons of concern in buildings that are not designed for accommodation. Although the physical space may appear adequate, the living conditions they offer often fail to meet minimum standards and do not ensure a life of dignity. Individuals may stay in collective centres for an undetermined period of time and vulnerable groups tend to settle in them and can become isolated from mainstream society.

Collective centres should be rehabilitated and upgraded to meet the shelter needs of their inhabitants, including access to basic services. They should be managed and maintained throughout the period refugees live in them.

They should provide privacy - personal spaces should be lockable to increase personal safety, independence, and adequate accommodation. It is important to ensure that smoke from stoves or open fires does not pose a health and disease risk.

For practical advice on how to set up, coordinate and manage collective centres in a manner that will satisfy minimum standards and uphold the rights of displaced people, see the section on **Tools, Documents and References** below.

Protection Risks

Collective centres should not be considered for longer-term accommodation. Due to the high concentration of persons of concern in collective centres, safety and security become important issues. Violence, drug abuse, sexual and gender-based violence may occur regularly. Long term residence in a collective centre is likely to cause stress and tension, possibly leading to depression, social conflict, friction between or within families, conflicts between clans or ethnic groups, and other individual or psychosocial problems.

Long term collective centres can increase their residents' vulnerability to attack, especially for older and single people and other vulnerable groups.

The supporting infrastructure of the building (water, electricity, sanitation) can deteriorate quickly from concentrated use, to the extent that living conditions can become dangerously unhealthy.

Other risks

Collective centres may cause serious and often long-lasting problems, especially those related to water and sanitation and solid waste management, for residents and those living in close proximity

Furthermore, since the normal use of the building has to be suspended with various social and economic consequences, both local and national governments are reluctant to transform public buildings into humanitarian shelter. Their prolonged use may also cause tensions with the host community as the occupation of these facilities may limit the delivery of public services.

Key decision points

The ruling principle when setting up collective centres should be 'a fit structure on a suitable site'.

With this in mind, managers and staff should ensure that collective centres are safe for occupation, can be upgraded to meet standards, are secure, and that their location minimizes exposure to threats to its residents.

Existing public buildings or facilities that can become collective centres provide a short-term shelter option, especially when the weather is cold or very rapid action is required. Short-term becomes the key characteristic. A fast deteriorating infrastructure and building decay due to continued use will pose serious risks to the health of the residents. It is vital to maintain collective centres and their services adequately to protect the health of the residents, reduce the economic risks they generate for the host government, and limit their impact on local society and the environment.

Local and national governments may be reluctant to license or adapt public buildings for use as

humanitarian mass shelters. Even after approval is given, durable solutions should be sought quickly because approval may always be revoked if the building must return to its original use.

Key steps

Setting up collective centres should be implemented by means of the following steps.

- Consult the Government to identify suitable buildings. Involve representatives of persons of concern, and host communities, in order to avoid unrealistic expectations.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the site and structure including safety, access, facilities, location, proximity to hazards, etc. Avoid using buildings that contain asbestos.
- Calculate the cost of rehabilitation work that will be required to provide an appropriate level of comfort and privacy. (To enable residents to store their belongings safely, for example, and avoid fire hazards, etc.). Ensure that local building codes are met.
- Identify the owners of collective centres and sign an agreement (or a protocol of understanding), indicating maximum occupancy, arrangements in case of emergency, and the condition in which the building will be left after its use as a collective centre.
- Ensure that infrastructure, a water supply and facilities are available in the collective centre; or that adequate facilities are available externally, with the permission of the host community.
- Establish contingency plans for possible displacement scenarios.
- Make arrangements to upgrade the building as required (scope of works, design documents, [tendering](#), pre-selection of local contractors, etc.), as well as manage it (pre-selection of organisations or staff to run and maintain the facility, etc.).
- Work with relevant programmes to identify and appoint implementing partners. Project partnership agreements (PPA) may be appropriate.
- Develop and deliver maintenance and exit plans.
- Provide timely support, monitor service delivery, and prepare and disseminate effective advocacy messages.

Key management considerations

- Evaluate the composition and compatibility of ethnic and religious groups in the collective centre.
- In the selection of collective centres consider: security, accessibility, environmental factors, available infrastructure, access to livelihoods, and access to basic services.
- Sphere standards should be followed when upgrading, and facilities should meet the needs of residents. Be mindful of the cost, appropriateness and maintenance needed by the upgraded infrastructure. For example, do not install an expensive heating system if funds will not be available to fuel or maintain it.
- Lighting, and heating (in cold climates), must be sufficient and safe to avoid fire. This may be expensive to install or rehabilitate, and electrical and fuel charges may also be expensive for residents.
- Buildings should be fit to resist climatic and environmental hazards and structurally sound

to accommodate the proposed number of displaced people.

- Buildings used as collective centres will deteriorate. Maintenance and rehabilitation costs can be high. Always agree early with the building's owner how the building should be returned after its use.

Resources and partnerships

- Local or Central Government authorities (including military officials).
- Community and religious leaders.
- Host communities.
- National and international NGOs.
- IFRC and ICRC.
- Other UN and international organizations.
- National (particularly local language) and international news media.

Annexes

[UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Guidance Note 12, Coordination and Management of camps and other collective settings](#)

[UNHCR-IOM, Collective Centres Guidelines, 2010](#)

[UNHCR, Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter 2014-2018](#)

[UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls, 2008](#)

[Guidelines on emergency sheltering for refugees in Germany](#)

3. Links

[The Sphere Handbook 2018 UNHCR Share Point Settlement Information Portal \(SIP\) / Guidelines UNHCR Guidance Note 12, Coordination and management of camps and other collecti...](#)

4. Main contacts

Shelter and Settlement Section (SSS) – Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM).
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