

UNHCR's Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy, 2014-2018

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This first Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy sets the vision and strategic directions to address the major shelter and settlement challenges and opportunities that UNHCR and its partners will confront during the next five years. The implementation will be overseen by the Shelter and Settlement Section and guided by a corporate approach working with various Divisions, Bureaux, Regional and Country offices as well as a multitude of Government, national and international partners and donors to ensure that operational strategies are globally consistent and provide a high quality, predictable foundation for the collective work of UNHCR.

Since the Shelter and Settlement Section is the custodian of UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster leadership, the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Strategy will ensure linkages and will be implemented alongside the 5 year Global Shelter Strategy endorsed by the Cluster. This will enable stronger sectoral inter-connection, will inform mutual learning, and will provide greater consistency and coherence in enhancing assistance systems both in cross-border and internal displacement of populations in shelter and settlement.

1. Introduction

The 2014-2018 Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy will guide the work of UNHCR over the coming five years. It builds upon the directions set out by the UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Section activity plan implemented in 2012 and 2013, which laid the foundations for an improved shelter and settlement response to the needs of populations affected by humanitarian crises.

The 2012-2013 analysis of the achievements and shortcomings within the sector, and the subsequent establishment of enhanced global sectoral systems enabled UNHCR to design a Strategy that will frame the work of UNHCR operations globally, in accordance with clearly defined management priorities. Indicators and progress reports will be generated to adequately monitor the implementation and impact of the strategy.

The Strategy remains a dynamic framework that is responsive to changing contexts and circumstances. Thus, it will be periodically reviewed to reflect evolving context. It also invites UNHCR and its partners to engage in a creative and innovative way by providing practical methods and solutions to achieve the sectoral vision together with other sectors.

2. Vision

All refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR are able to safely and in dignity satisfy their shelter and settlement needs in a sustainable manner that will allow them to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life wherever they live in urban or rural setting.

This vision can be accomplished in part by using humanitarian diplomacy and sectoral leadership as a strong lever to advise governments and other stakeholders in placing emphasis on a long term planning strategy at the very early stages of the planning process since many new settlements last longer than originally intended.

The provision of shelter and settlement is one of UNHCR's institutional priorities. It is a fundamental human right recognised under Article 11 of the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Shelter is a critical determinant for survival in the initial stages of a disaster. Beyond survival, shelter is necessary to provide security, personal safety, human dignity, protection from the climate and to promote resistance to ill health and disease. However, shelter and settlement cannot be seen in isolation; any response must consider the context in which the settlements are located and households are sheltered. Where people live - be it in an urban or a rural settlement - largely determines their ability to meet their basic needs and to strengthen their resilience to humanitarian crises, mitigating the protection concerns that may arise from their displacement.

Therefore, a more systematic, comprehensive and holistic approach to shelter and settlement planning is at the forefront of UNHCR's response. People's needs remain at the centre of UNHCR work, and a sharper focus on shelter and settlement solutions is anchored in the core components of UNHCR's protection and durable solutions mandate.

The process of planning for shelter and settlement should not only be viewed as a technical process, but as part of the managerial process.

3. Guiding principles

- Human rights: The right to adequate housing was first recognized with Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The principle: “Everyone has the right to adequate housing” is applicable in all stages of the displacement cycle – prior to, during and after displacement and is accessible to all people of concern, including women, girls, men, boys and children. Adequacy of housing includes security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructures, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.
- Age, Gender and Diversity: Policies and programs must respect diversity of the communities, their gender equality and their access to rights despite the age and the cultural, religious and educational background. Particular attention must be paid to those who have traditionally been excluded and disenfranchised, that is, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and minority groups.
- Participation: Refugees and others of concern to UNHCR as well affected population at large should be empowered at all stages to participate in programme planning, needs assessment, implementation and monitoring and evaluation in order to design acceptable, appropriate, sustainable and culturally sensitive programmes. In addition, they should be involved as much as possible in the design, construction, and maintenance of any shelter, settlement, and CRI support. Particular emphasis should be made to engage with groups that may have specific protection concerns and needs including women and girls the elderly, people affected by disabilities, those that are ill, and children who typically have less access to decision making mechanisms and who also spend more time in shelters. This participatory process should feed into developing shelter and settlement policy so that they will take into consideration persons of concerns’ needs, requirements and diverse profiles within the framework of international standards and human rights.
- Sustainability: Policies and programmes should be developed and implemented with sustainability and durable solutions as the ultimate goal. Various issues must be considered including appropriate technology, capacity building of both people of concern and local communities, and use of local skills, materials, techniques and knowledge.
- Environmental Considerations: Shelter and settlement interventions need to be planned and implemented to mitigate, to the extent possible, the impact on the natural environment and to prevent hazard risks, including landslides, floods, earthquakes etc. Attention should be given to laws and regulations governing the use of environmental impact assessments prior to the design and planning of the shelter and settlement programme.

4. Context/Situational Analysis

Today's armed conflict and other situations of violence present a multitude of complex challenges. Most of the conflicts tend to be long, rarely coming to a clear cut end. They often evolve around competition for access to critical resources such as energy, land and water and have ethnic or religious dimensions. The plight of many people affected by these disasters is further exacerbated by the combined effect of migration, food insecurity, urban vulnerability, climate change, accelerated urbanization, environmental degradation which all pose a growing threat to global security.

It is estimated that UNHCR is currently assisting more than 35.8 million¹ people: refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless people and others of concern. Their patterns of displacement are sometimes very complex and further exacerbate the vulnerabilities already existing in the hosting areas be it urban or rural.

While a number of shelter and settlement options are provided to respond to people's needs, available data does not currently allow a comprehensive analysis and breakdown of the number of people of concern associated with their respective settlement solutions. It is however recognized from 2012 statistical analysis that over 2.6 million refugees are currently encamped worldwide. This figure includes over 60 percent of all UNHCR's assisted refugees in Africa and over 35 percent of those assisted in Asia. Many have been displaced for over five years, which makes them an integral portion of what is considered to be the most protracted refugee situations.

While the camp model allows aid to be easily delivered, distributed and monitored, it is also recognized that it is not ideal and in some instances can increase protection concerns, exacerbate dependency on humanitarian aid and limit the range of options for developing self-sufficiency mechanisms.

In 2011, the emergency response to thousands of people seeking refuge in countries neighbouring Mali reinforced the importance of ensuring that affected populations need to play an increasingly active role in formulating their own requests and assessment and be part of the planning and programming cycle. In this specific context, while applying camp models, limited consideration was given to include beneficiaries' preferences and local context opportunities. Some of the refugee families opted for their own traditional way of settling and they adapted the means given to them to better suit their life style. It should be emphasized that this example is not an isolated case. While refugee preferences cannot always be accommodated due to the sudden nature of emergencies it nevertheless remains of utmost importance that settlement planning starts during the preparedness phase and project cultural and traditional practices.

Moreover, nowadays population movements equally affect rural as well as urban areas where large numbers of refugees self-settle within host communities. Many share accommodation, live in non-functional decadent public buildings, collective centers, in slums and informal type of settlements; often their living conditions are substandard. The crisis affecting countries neighbouring Syria clearly demonstrates these challenges. In a situation of mass displacement in urban areas, UNHCR is still challenged in undertaking an overall analysis of settlement options at the onset of the crisis and in mapping shelter options that require comprehensive surveys of housing affordability and availability.

¹ UNHCR Global Report, 2012

In this context, UNHCR recognizes the need to enhance its capacity to better adapt settlement and shelter assistance to suit the context of hosting areas and address the variety of political, environmental, socio-cultural and economic variables that usually challenge the potential standardization of settlement solutions.

With this in mind, UNHCR as the reference lead Agency in the sector for conflict related crisis, has begun to identify ways to capitalise on in house expertise, to enhance synergies among various Divisions and Bureaux and to strengthen collaboration with sectorial partners, academia and private sector in order to develop faster, innovative and more cost efficient shelter and settlement solutions that can take into account local practices and encompass social, economic and environmental dimensions from the outset of an emergency.

5. Strategic objectives

The UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Global Strategy focuses on two mutually reinforcing objectives that aim to improve the living conditions of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR seeking protection and assistance in rural and urban settings.

Strategic Objective One - Settlement

To enable refugees to access and live in dignity in secure settlements that prevent and reduce underlying causes of socio-economic vulnerabilities and allow for improved quality of life.

A human settlement derives from the structured landscape of a territory. It takes into consideration spatial allocation of functions while maintaining equilibrium between population needs, availability and allocation of resources, economic dynamics, amelioration of living conditions, provision of services, communication transportation networks, as well as recreational spaces. A settlement addresses community needs at large. It includes service provision and encompasses socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The design of a settlement must be inclusive of all these factors and it is envisaged that that affected populations, partners, and all sectors are actively involved in the design of a settlement

The global environment in which UNHCR operates is continuously evolving. It is expected that UNHCR's enhanced capacity to design and deliver settlements in the future may reduce some of the refugees' vulnerabilities, facilitate camp management, and increase the self-reliance opportunities as well as sets the foundations for more durable solutions. It will also reduce negative impacts on existing habitats, boost local economies and limits dependency on humanitarian aid.

Settlements can exist in both rural and urban settings.

A rural settlement is where displaced populations settle on land outside cities and towns. The population is often dependent on agricultural and pastoral practices, and has fewer community infrastructure systems than in urban settlements. Rural contexts are defined by population thresholds that differ around the world. For example, in Africa and Latin America the rural population limit is 2,000 people, whereas in Iceland is 200. Currently, UNHCR defines a

rural population as <5,000 persons.

An urban settlement is where displaced populations settle within an urban agglomeration such as a town or city. A master plan usually divides towns or cities into zones regulated by norms based on specific sectors such as housing, hygiene, habitat, and environment. Zones are inclusive of residential areas, services and infrastructures, spaces for administrative, commercial and industrial activities.

Within urban and rural settings, settlements can be formal or informal whereby:

- Formal settlement refers to land that has been classified by relevant government or council authorities as a residential zone or is occupied by a formal housing.
- Informal are unplanned settlements where housing, shelter, services have been constructed on land to which the occupants have no legal claim or which they occupy illegally.

While it is difficult to give a rigid typology for settlements, it is recognized that most frequent settlement options plan for accommodating refugees in planned camps, in public buildings usually referred as collective centers, reception and transit centers, as well as in houses or apartments located within host communities which resides either in villages or cities and town.

Nevertheless, it is important that settlement options are designed based on the existing capacity and resources available within villages, towns, cities and their communities.

The **Enabling Actions** to deliver this strategic objective are the following:

- o Strengthen UNHCR's engagement in ensuring that settlement strategies are embedded in contingency planning processes and preparedness plans.

Settlement planning should start at the earliest stages of contingency planning and should include the development of preparedness measures including settlement design and shelter solutions for settlement inhabitants. It should take into careful consideration the specific context of the affected area, the host population as well as the adverse effects and dynamics created by an evolving crisis.

Contextual analysis informs discussions and negotiations with hosting Governments who are responsible for the land allocation and the provision of security. This analysis should identify advantages and disadvantages of various settlement options and establish whether ethnic and cultural affinities exist between the potential refugees and the host communities. Settlement planning and responses should mitigate friction, reduce potential tensions between various groups, and ultimately reduce security risks. It should also take into consideration the socio-economic dynamics and natural resources available in a given settlement location.

This process needs to be undertaken prior to the emergency response. Sectoral experts should be involved throughout the planning process. Architects and land use planners must interact with a multifunctional team including but not limited to health, water and community service specialists, engineers, economist, sociologists, as well as community service specialists, and programme

managers. These professionals should work together with Government counterparts, local communities and other stakeholders so that the population affected by crisis is able to live in dignity and security and work towards self-reliance.

- o Enhance UNHCR's capacity to deliver a combination of settlement options.

The application of a combination of settlement options will require a change in the mindset and attitude of the Organization. For decades, the establishment of planned camps constituted UNHCR's 'preferred' response to population displacement, especially in rural areas. While mainly focusing on assisting people in camps, the needs of displaced populations living elsewhere ('outside camps') represents a considerable challenge mainly due to their geographical spread. The limitations of current policy guidance as well as limitations in sectoral strategic approaches often result in shortcomings in addressing the needs of people seeking refuge in host settlements.

Adapting ways of living to a changing world requires a strong capacity in strengthening community resilience. All settlement responses should support existing coping strategies and promote self-sufficiency and self-management of those affected by the crisis. Local skills and resources should be maximized where this does not result in adverse effects on the host population or local economy. Any response should take into account known risks and minimize long-term adverse impacts on the natural environment, while maximizing opportunities for both the refugee and host populations to establish, maintain or enhance livelihood support activities. The creation of appropriate spaces and infrastructure for economic activity is critical for livelihoods. Thus, it is important to develop mixed land-use strategies that combine settlements with livelihoods, and respond to market demand and the potential of the informal sector. Settlement design should encompass adequate land management and take into account environmental impact on affected areas.

To this end, UNHCR aims to promote planning of range of settlement options:

- a) In rural settings, the establishment of a planned camp cannot always be avoided, but can be mitigated by associating various alternative arrangements such as residing in host settlements and ensuring linkages between camp and host settlements. This could ultimately help to minimize the camp size and ensure that minimum standards are applied (maximum size 20,000 people per camp).
- b) In urban settings, the creation of camps is unlikely. It is therefore important to map out availability of social and low cost housing opportunities. The provision of a range of options that are affordable to refugees and address issues related to land and property tenure is needed.

Options should be tailored around existing capacity and resources available within cities, towns and villages and their communities. In some instances, refugees require support with cash contributions for rental opportunities. If due consideration is not given to adequately establish an appropriate level of assistance and monitor the impact of cash assistance, refugees may seek cheaper and often substandard housing solutions in informal settlements with limited access to services and a high risk of eviction.

- o Promote the Master Plan concept² that will be applied while designing and developing settlements.

Master planning should reflect a consensus reached by the host community, affected population, government and humanitarian and development actors as to how a settlement should be laid out. It must take into account land management, existing development plans, and environmental and habitat considerations. This should help to mitigate some of the negative impacts that a new settlement may have, especially when established in fragile environments. Political and social sustainability as well as controlled use of natural resources should be the key elements of the planning, and could offer solid ground for negotiation with governments while selecting site locations.

Master planning is a continuous process that frames the overall assistance strategy. It remains dynamic and should reflect changing priorities, population movements and profiles, be informed by regular detailed assessments as well as consultations among various stakeholders, including the inhabitants. This is to ensure that the allocation of functions that include residential areas and services should be tailored around a spatial analysis where populations live, grow and interact. Improved allocation of space is vital to ensure that women, men, boys and girls benefit from equal access to adequate living conditions, safety and security in their new settlement, adequate protection in their homes as well as enhanced co-existence with neighbors.

A 'response master plan' should define the best settlement typologies to be adopted in a given context and should ensure that settlements relate to each other and to the existing habitat. The plan is informed by the population profile, their specific needs, their origin and location as well as their relationship to existing settlements, communal service infrastructure and natural resources. It should be based on macro, meso and micro scale analyses whereby a particular settlement is designed taking into account network of services, infrastructure and resources available in the surrounding of the settlement itself. It is crucial that humanitarian response can learn from and contribute to long-term development objectives and also take into account potential settlement exit strategy at the very onset of the planning stage.

The application of the master plan concept in UNHCR operations is meant to support the core components of UNHCR's protection and durable solutions mandate whereby enhanced settlement planning links land, shelter, services (water, sanitation, education, health, community services and recreational activities), infrastructure, livelihoods, environment and governance.

- o Strengthen capacity to address housing, land and property issues

² A **master plan** denotes the set of planning documents that describes and maps an overall urban/rural situation or development concept. It incorporates present and future land use, landscaping and land management and integrates the spatial, social, cultural, environmental and economic analysis of a particular location, thereby ensuring that all basic needs are addressed within one master plan vision. It is a living long-range planning document which seeks to achieve a vision by concentrating on a set of programmes rather than solely focusing on a single one.

In any shelter and settlement programme, the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) considerations are essential and must be adequately prioritized throughout all stages of the shelter and settlement planning and response phases.

Emergency responses influence land tenure and settlement patterns in both urban and rural contexts. Certain activities, such as the construction of shelters, the establishment of refugee or IDP settlements, the organization of the return to area of origin, as well as the distribution of agricultural tools for livelihood restorations, have significant impact on land tenure of local communities and the livelihoods of beneficiaries. During displacement, the challenge of determining who has rights to the land may impede crucial site selection, shelter allocation as well as water, pastoral and agricultural access. Providing HLP support can provide food, shelter, access to assistance and aid the reduction of protection concerns including tensions among communities, discrimination of groups especially that of women and girls, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Moreover, the right to return and to property restitution or compensation should be a post-conflict priority for refugees and IDPs because it can promote a sustainable return and reduce the number of land conflicts. In addition, these measures can contribute considerably to peace processes by removing politically, economically and socially destabilizing factors. Also, there is the potential for income generation by renting a repossessed house or land for displaced people seeking local integration.

Addressing issues of HLP will empower women and promote gender equality. The right to housing and land for women is a crucial element in social status and economic growth. A positive move towards gender equality is the guarantee of security of tenure and the right to own and inherit HLP assets for both women and men.

Strategic Objective Two - Shelter

To enable refugees to access shelter solutions which provide privacy, security, protection from the elements, emotional support and a space to live and store belongings in a dignified manner.

A shelter is defined as a habitable covered living space providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity. Refugees and others of concern to UNHCR have the right to adequate shelter in order to benefit from protection from the elements, space to live and store belongings as well as privacy, comfort and emotional support.

Shelter should be adapted according to geographical context, climate, cultural practices and habits, local availability of skills within the affected population at large as well as accessibility to adequate construction materials in any given country. Considering that shelter assistance should be tailored around these variables, it cannot be standardized; it is a contextual and dynamic process.

It is widely recognized that the emergency shelter assistance should gradually evolve into more durable and sustainable solutions. Therefore, the timely development of comprehensive shelter strategies as early as possible is crucial to ensure that a set of shelter options is available for all stages of the

displacement cycle. Any shelter strategy should embed transitional shelter approaches to ensure that an incremental process for sheltering populations is undertaken and that long term strategic orientations are set together with affected populations and host governments.

The **Enabling Actions** to deliver this strategic objective are the followings

- o Enhance UNHCR 's capacity to establish shelter strategies

Emergency shelter preparedness and response relies on the capacity to timely develop shelter strategies. These must be informed by the projection of needs, the surveys of potential displacement areas, the analysis of resources available in situ, and the demographics of the potential affected population. Shelter assistance should be tailored around the preferences of the affected households to meet their needs.

UNHCR must strengthen its capacity to develop shelter strategies at the early stages of contingency planning. During the response phase, the strategy must reflect the changes of the shelter needs that gradually evolve during the emergency to a more durable situation.

The development of shelter is a 'process' rather than solely the provision of a product such as a tent or a temporary shelter solution. Shelter strategies should support timely and quality procurement, warehousing and delivery of shelters to the remotest operational areas. It should also seek range of alternative shelter options that could potentially be available *in situ*. This will boost local economies and ensure that any potential gap in timely delivery and in sufficient quantities is immediately addressed. Local shelter solutions should be promoted to ensure that traditional building practices and cultural habits are taken into account in the shelter design, and to facilitate active participation of beneficiaries throughout the construction process. Involvement of the communities is vital for the sustainability and efficiency of the shelter assistance and support families in their efforts of re-building their lives.

Shelter strategies should ensure that shelter is not considered as an isolated tent or building, but as a component of its surroundings. Shelter must be considered as part of the whole settlement, particularly with regard to infrastructure. The type of shelter assistance given to the population affected by humanitarian crises is informed by the type of settlement chosen or adopted. Hence, it is crucial that shelter strategies are designed and embedded in the settlement designs, including access to basic services that ensure healthy, comfortable and dignified space for living.

- o Strengthen UNHCR and partners' shelter responses

The development of shelter responses should be informed by the results of preliminary needs assessments as well as by the data on population demographics. The analysis of beneficiaries' profiles and their vulnerabilities is essential when designing shelter models and methodologies for shelter delivery.

Needs Assessments

The effectiveness of technical approaches depends on the capacity to conduct needs assessments that include qualitative and quantitative data, including sex and age disaggregated data. While standard operating procedures and

guidelines exist for a humanitarian coordinated assessment, it is increasingly evident that tools for collecting information related to shelter, settlement and living conditions need to be improved; particularly at the community level. UNHCR with partners will undertake a desk review of existing tools, analyze their effectiveness and propose their update taking into account the joint and coordinated assessment tools. This will be linked with data collection and information management systems at the global level.

Shelter Design

Preferred shelter solutions are informed by the context specific structural and performance requirements, and then designed and engineered accordingly. Set of emergency shelter options still limits to the tent or the shelter kits, though when displacement situation is protracted or when displacement occurs in urban settings, alternative shelter options are to be taken into account. This entails consideration of traditional homestead typologies, such as huts, mud houses, and dome shelters as well as consideration of housing briefs and templates including house repairs, construction and rehabilitation. In other instances may entail the use of cash and vouchers as an alternative option to shelter.

There is no one size fits all shelter solution, therefore, a menu of options must be made available. The development of catalogues collecting best practices and sets of traditional homestead typologies relevant to different locations, context and climates are crucial to guide and facilitate specialists in applying appropriate shelter designs. The collection should include best practices in designing shelters that mitigate protection concerns, such as SGBV, promote culturally sensitive practices, facilitate access to disable and place focus on women and girls habits. Checklists for shelter design should guide the development of shelter projects underlining the key features to be taken into account to ensure that all designs respect standard minimum technical criteria. Hazard risks and safety, timeliness and construction speed, life span, size and shape, privacy, security and cultural appropriateness, ventilation and thermal comfort, environmental considerations, cost, standards and building codes are some of the aspects that the checklists need to address.

Shelter Programming

A crucial element in judging the success of a shelter programme is the capacity to measure the changes in people's life that results from the shelter assistance. Shelter programming should be designed and developed to take into account the views of both men and women. They must respect codes, principles and standards throughout all the phases of the shelter project cycles.

UNHCR needs to capitalise on its and its partners' expertise and to ensure that lessons drawn from the *ad hoc* development of shelter programmes are translated in harmonised and standard set of guidance for a more systematic approach to shelter. Hence, Shelter Standard Operating Procedures are designed and published to assist field teams in the development of shelter programmes. Shelter specialists should become an integral part of the programming processes ensuring that the shelter component is given adequate priority while achieving protection goals.

- o Invest in research and development for alternative shelter options

For decades, UNHCR and its partners have been confronted with the challenge of delivering timely and efficient provision of adequate shelter. UNHCR delivers thousands of tents worldwide. The tent option can be rapidly delivered and installed, providing life- saving shelter assistance. Nevertheless, tents remain expensive and have limited life spans.

An Inter-Agency Committee composed of UNHCR/IFRC/ICRC has been active since 2009 in researching increased quality of tent performance. Along with the effort of researching increased quality by reviewing specifications of tents, the Committee also continues to invest in the amelioration of shelter related Core Relief Items (CRIs) which include the plastic sheets for roofing, flooring or walling, shed nets for shelter insulation, winterization kits for tents as well as other shelter accessories aiming to improve living conditions in emergency settings.

In parallel, UNHCR continues to research shelter products which are suitable for the specific operational and environmental context and can be internationally procured. A shelter market survey conducted in 2012 has informed the development of a catalogue of shelter options available in the global market, including foldable and modular light shelters, pre-fabricated options and other innovative type of housing. The technical review of these products should be undertaken to inform a cost benefit analysis and prioritize the most suitable products. Potential frame agreement can be developed with suppliers and manufacturers so as to enlarge the scope of the shelter emergency global stockpile. Testing of products as well as Refugee Housing Prototype is underway and the output of the testing may generate potentials for shelter option to be produced globally.

To build on the research and development efforts undertaken thus far, UNHCR should continue to work in partnership with sector organizations, private sector and academia. Up-to-date, the result of innovative partnerships has been a greater creativity, more productive enterprise and a greater flexibility to realign with the changing nature of community' needs.

Given the evolving nature of the shelter technology and materials, it is essential that research and development in the sector is continuous, vibrant and flexible. Testing, quality control, visual inspection of products should remain at the forefront of the shelter innovation process.

Long term investment in human, financial and material resources is the key to succeed in this process that should remain constant throughout the years to come.

- o Focus on shelter solutions in urban settings

Shelter response is even more challenging when provided in urban setting. Displacement to cities frequently results in people living in substandard and overcrowded shelters, squatting in shanty towns or on land owned by others. In many instances, refugees and others of concern to UNHCR are forced to settle on peripheral land which is unsuitable for residential development, such as on waste sites; along rivers, canals, roads, or railways; or on steep slopes. In such locations, residents are often exposed to high levels of risk from natural disasters, as well as the problems of living without security of tenure.

Refugees, IDPs, and returnees must compete in the low-cost housing market but often do not have enough money for a deposit or the necessary local references. Regulations requiring proof of residence or citizenship may restrict access to formal tenancy arrangements. As a result, people of concern to UNHCR are frequently exploited by landlords.

Shelter assistance in urban settings should minimize protection risk of eviction, exploitation and abuses, overcrowded situation limited access to services and decent hygiene condition. UNHCR should closely work with sectorial humanitarian organizations as well as development agencies that have expertise in assisting and developing urban areas.

Thus, it is crucial that provision of shelter/housing solution is developed taking into consideration urban planning strategies, including analysis of residential areas, housing affordability and availability.

Indicators of achievement for strategic objective one - settlement

1. Settlement strategies are embedded in contingency plan processes, and are inclusive of a range of suitable settlement options and of settlement layout for a given situation.
2. Settlement planning and design capacity is enhanced within UNHCR including physical planning, topographic studies and contour line assessments as an integral part of the preparedness plans.
3. Master plan approach is adopted in at least two countries during 2014 while application of this approach is expected to exponentially grow in the forthcoming years.
4. Operational guideline for refugee living in host villages, cities and town is designed and rolled out

Indicators of achievements for strategic objective two- shelter

1. Develop and disseminate a standard format and standard operating procedures for designing and implementing shelter strategies.
2. All country operations implementing shelter programme have a shelter strategy.
3. Set of shelter models for emergency, transition and durable solution phases in urban and rural settlements is developed, maintained and disseminated.
4. A challenge among architects and students across various countries in Africa is launched to collect a set of designs for “traditional homestead typologies” applicable in range of climatic areas.
5. Research and development for the improvement of tent performance as well as development of alternative shelter options applying innovative technologies continues to be pursued.

Joint indicators of achievement for strategic objectives one and two - settlement and shelter

1. Shelter and settlement needs assessment methods and tools are enhanced and available to operations
2. Shelter and Settlement Handbook is published, including provision of standards, development of tools as well as sets of shelter and settlement typologies and layouts.
3. The number of shelter and settlement experts available in the emergency rosters is increased.
4. Deployment of senior shelter and settlement experts is systematically ensured at the onset of emergencies.
5. Local shelter and settlement capacity is enhanced whereby national officers are recruited and trained to support sustainable settlement planning and implementation.
6. Shelter and settlement experts are available within country operations to monitor and evaluate settlement activities and impact, and to ensure evolution of the settlement throughout various assistance phases that ends with durable solutions and final decommissioning of the settlement.
7. Shelter and settlement experts are equipped with updated set of tools to advice managers and provide specialised support in establishing sectoral programme and in determining the resource requirements
8. Catalogue a set of standards and flexible UNHCR shelter and settlement options (with all related technical documentation) through inventory of

the existing best practice that is published and regularly updated.

9. Shelter and Settlement platform is established as a community of practices.

10. Shelter and Settlement working sessions are regularly organized to ensure a homogenous approach to responding to sectoral needs and regularly capitalize on field experiences.

How to deliver the strategic objectives?

6. Approaches

The overarching approaches that enable effective and efficient delivery of the Global Shelter Strategy are fundamentally five: a) Partnership and Coordination, b) Capacity Building, c) Measure, d) Innovation and e) Communication.

a. Partnership and Coordination

For sixty years, UNHCR has performed the role of Lead Agency in the delivery of shelter relief response in cross border emergency operations. In addition, in 2005 the Agency was called upon to lead the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) to assist internally displaced populations in times of conflict.

While providing leadership to the humanitarian community and responding to the shelter needs of the affected population in coordination with local Governments, UNHCR has aspired to improve predictability, accountability, timeliness and effectiveness of the response both at the strategic and operational levels.

Nonetheless significant challenges remain: these are dictated not only by the increasingly complex and unpredictable nature of the humanitarian crisis often erupting within insecure environments and translating into sudden mass displacement, but also by the fact that nowadays exodus trends are primarily to capital cities or other urban centers.

These emergencies need to be managed in innovative ways rather than in a traditional manner placing focus on the impact that a new settlement may have especially when established in fragile environments. Emphasis on a long term planning horizons should be placed at the very early stage of the planning as many new settlements last longer than originally intended. Political and social sustainability as well as controlled use of natural resources should be the key elements of the planning.

Confronted with these realities, the Organisation is re-thinking relevant policies so as to keep the pace with the evolving operational context and to support the enhancement of the leadership role while setting the adequate vision. This is a milestone in augmenting the Organisation's credibility and in reinforcing the successful coordination of complex multi-agency responses.

Partnership

It is institutionally recognised that UNHCR can achieve more with the help of partners, by bringing together organisations with different skills and building on respective complementarities.

UNHCR works in partnership with a broad range of sectorial organisations, including Governments, UN system, nongovernmental organisations, Universities, donors and the private sector. Among the sectorial organisations, partnership exists with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), RedR, Canadem, OXFAM, CARE, ACTED, Save the Children, Habitat for Humanity, UN-Habitat, UNRWA, IOM, International Federation Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Service (CRS), MSF. Moreover, UNHCR is committed to the principle of participation, believing that refugees and others who benefit from the Organization's activities should be consulted for decisions which radically affect their lives.

Despite the fact that these partnerships are proving to be productive and help to assist millions of people in need of shelter and settlement, it is recognised that innovative and more diversified quality partnerships should be further explored. While traditional partnership with IFRC, UN-Habitat and IOM are revamped, the dialogue with private sector, academia, architect boards and sectorial national networks should be strengthened and widened. This aims to consistently tap into the range of expertise, know-how and technology available worldwide.

Moreover, as the role of the Government remains key in ensuring that viable land for shelter and settlement are allocated and that the open and closure of settlements is undertaken in a sustainable manner, UNHCR should continue to enhance cooperation with governmental authorities and better understand national rules and regulation, local administration roles, environmental plans as well as more holistic development plans existing within a given country.

The humanitarian response at large depends on the selection of the adequate settlement option thus special attention should be given to negotiation with Government whenever the site proposed for the establishment of new settlement is not consistent with minimum technical and protection requirements. UNHCR should continue to enhance its capacity to work with relevant Technical Departments of the Hosting Government so as to enhance the appropriateness of the impact that shelter and settlement operations may have on affected population lives.

Coordination

Working in partnership, entails a high degree of coordination among stakeholders, reducing the risk of duplication and or gaps of resources, systems and approaches. Thus the Agency, while performing its leadership in emergency shelter both in refugee and IDP related crisis, has invested in maintaining multilateral coordination mechanisms and in developing bilateral arrangements. Mutual dialogue and efficient synergisms among various stakeholders has enabled optimization of resource mobilization and triggered the development of comprehensive strategies.

Recognizing the importance of leading the sector in both refugee and IDP situation generated by conflict related crisis, UNHCR strives to enhance its capacity to coordinate sectorial interventions and maintaining cross-fertilization of expertise between the two coordination systems whenever possible.

Furthermore, while applying and leading the Cluster approach in IDP related crisis, UNHCR actively participate to the IASC Principles initiative namely the Transformative Agenda process initiated in 2011 which called all clusters to improve coordination, leadership and accountability. In response to the Transformative Agenda recommendations, UNHCR within the GSC is strengthening its capacity to provide and support humanitarian coordination global, regional and country level.

It is expected that UNHCR will continue to invest in sharing vision, guiding harmonization of processes for shelter and settlement policies as well as building on existing capacity to enhance sectorial solutions. The investment entails a two pronged approach enhancing both external and internal coordination.

- External Coordination

As part of the effort of building trust and credibility among the international community, UNHCR should envisage strengthening the participation of UN-Agencies, IFRC, IOM, NGOs and donors in the reform of shelter and settlement delivery at the global level.

Consultation sessions are convened at global level to involve the international community in the process of re-thinking ways of performing as the Lead Agency in Shelter. External views may enrich and inform the in-house debate and contribute a different perspective: external audiences can better identify shortcomings and provide constructive inputs towards sustainable changes.

While the Global Shelter Cluster led by UNHCR and IFRC offers already a sound coordination platform in response to crisis provoking internal displacement of the population, it is envisaged that at the global level the sectoral coordination mechanisms for refugee related crisis become more vibrant and regular coordination fora are convened especially when emergencies erupt.

The fora, should among others, trigger sectorial Real Time Evaluations, led by UNHCR and composed of mixed evaluation teams, to assess the effectiveness of the shelter operational response: the findings of the evaluation are to be used as an immediate catalyst for operational changes.

- Internal Coordination

UNHCR is collectively responsible for achieving the objectives of the Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy. Responsive and well-functioning internal coordination is crucial to ensure that the strategic directions set have a greater practical value on people life and prevent or reduce people vulnerabilities.

Shelter and settlement assistance goes beyond the provision of a tent as a roof at the outset of a crisis thus requires a collective response based on effective interrelations between various Divisions, Bureaux, Regional and Country offices and effective interaction between Sections in DPSM.

With this in mind, the Shelter and Settlement role should be widely communicated and acknowledged so as to promote better technical integrity of sectorial processes. UNHCR staff global, regional, and country levels should involve the Shelter and Settlement Section at all stages of assistance and align with its technical recommendations. Consequently, structural issues need to be

revised to better reflect UNHCR's accountability responsibility and authority framework.

The expansion of cross sectorial interaction is relevant to ensure that shelter and settlement strategies optimize the well-being of populations of concern. Gender, child protection, GBV, education, HIV, WASH, health, nutrition, livelihood and environmental issues should be streamlined throughout the process of delivering adequate shelter and settlement solutions.

DPSM at large will further strengthen synergisms between respective UNHCR Units developing joint plans of action. This should be accompanied by the undertaking of regular revision and the promotion of annual evaluation sessions to bridge gaps and refocus the plan if need be.

b. Capacity Building

Building staff, partner and organizational capacity contributes to ensuring that affected population benefit from shelter and settlement assistance which positively impacts on their living conditions.

The creation at the global level of UNHCR Shelter and Settlement Section already contributed to enhancing sectorial capacity by providing a pool of experts, dedicated to deliver a specialized support to country operations. Yet, this does not suffice.

The provision of sectoral service is still limited and discontinuous at the country level. Specialized support is mainly met through *ad hoc* arrangements based on consultancies and on standby agreements with other organizations. Nevertheless, the number of site planners, engineers, architects, construction managers and shelter coordinators available in the existing roster is still insufficient compared to the frequency and scale of emergencies. In addition, limited career opportunities and the temporary nature of the deployments within UNHCR, hinder the sustainability of the roster. Experienced specialists often opt for more attractive and durable job opportunities with other sectoral organizations

At the heart of a stronger sector engagement is the understanding that specialized technical capacity is key to develop and deliver quality programmes. Pool of expert positions available within UNHCR structures need to increase so as to ensure among others a certain level of continuity also after the emergency phase, when affected population need to be assisted to develop more durable shelter and settlement solutions.

Meanwhile, it is crucial to promote recruitment of national staff tapping into technical local expertise. The capacity building at local level ensures sustainability of the process and enables creation of capacity that can subsequently be deployed in the region, if need be.

Along with this effort, UNHCR explores alternative ways of tapping into knowledge existing within specialized Universities, Institutes, private sector including architects boards and associations. Within the stand by partner arrangements, UNHCR develops innovative approaches to facilitate mentorship and or internship of students with a proven excellence in their courses and with a willingness to serve the humanitarian cause.

Moreover, capacity building efforts should focus not only on the number of specialists available but also on the quality of their expertise, knowledge and understanding of the Organization’s mandate. In many instances, specialists should combine their set of technical skills with coordination, management and leadership skills.

The creation of sustained training opportunities is crucial to enhance staff capacity and learning should not be segregated from mainstream learning, nor should it be targeted at only a specific “cadre” of shelter and settlement specialists.

Accordingly, the sectorial learning strategy developed in collaboration with GLC will focus on two pronged approach: a) training for all UNHCR staff on shelter and settlement issues encompassing all sectors, including Protection and Programme and b) training for specialists on very specific technical aspects. E-learning programmes and field guidelines are being developed to meet these requirements and ensure that staffing at all levels reach a good and updated understanding of the sector. On the job training are pursued by the Senior Regional Expert based on specific needs identified in given operation.

In parallel, training opportunities for sectorial practitioners are maintained and embedded in University courses so as to provide specialist with insight of the shelter and settlement issues related to the humanitarian work experience.

On the other end, training schemes are developed to ensure that specialists deployed through stand by arrangement enhance their knowledge of UNHCR rules, programming systems as well protection issues. This will ensure efficiency of the deployment and better integration of the specialist in UNHCR operations.

a) Measure

The impact measurement of shelter and settlement programmes as well as the accountability to beneficiaries and donors community is fundamental to any UNHCR operation. Nevertheless, it is recognized that to achieve better measurements and improve impact of shelter and settlement assistance on people’s life, UNHCR needs to revise and harmonize current monitoring and evaluation systems and tools as well as reference sectorial indicators.

Global Focus, UNHCR's business intelligence tool, is currently the main sources of shelter and settlement data in UNHCR. There are currently two objectives and six impact indicators in the framework that relate to the sector:

Objective	Impact indicators	
Shelter and infrastructure established, improved and maintained	Shelter	% of households living in adequate dwellings
		% of female-headed households living in adequate dwellings
		Average covered floor area per person (m ²)
		# persons per shelter
	Settlement	Average camp area per person (m ²)
Population has sufficient basic and domestic items	NFIs	% of households whose needs for basic and domestic items are met

While significant progress has been made by UNHCR in improving the number of countries reporting on these indicators and the quantity of data available, there is need to explore how the quality and consistency of shelter and settlement

data can be enhanced, while maintaining compatibility with the UNHCR reporting tool (*Focus*).

The measurement of “adequate shelter” remains a challenge, not only to UNHCR but to the sector as a whole. To report comprehensively on the “% of households living in adequate dwellings”, a minimum amount of technical data, which measures the quality aspects of the shelter, needs to be collected. UNHCR works in a wide range of contexts, climates, cultural settings, etc., and each operation is required to define the “adequacy” of dwellings applicable to the specific local standards. Detailed guidance on what technical shelter data should be collected and how to collect it does not exist and the definition of “adequate” remains subjective and inconsistent between operations.

While UNHCR has been supporting affected population in a range of settlement types for many years, the emphasis on monitoring the impact of settlement interventions has been less than that for shelter. Infrastructure projects that support the enhancement of settlements are included within the objective “shelter and infrastructure established, improved & maintained”, however the only settlement-related impact indicator under the objective, “average camp area per person (m2)”, relates solely to settlement size. Settlement planning requires a holistic approach including access to essential services such as shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, livelihoods, etc. As with adequate shelter, detailed guidance on the data and analysis required to measure the quality of a settlement does not currently exist. In addition, UNHCR is increasingly working in out of camp settings and settlement data collection should be made relevant to urban areas and host villages

The provision of Core-Relief Items is inherently linked to the adequacy of shelter and settlement. In fact, CRIs may include tents and other shelter-related construction materials, as well as other domestic items. While there is an indicator for the “% of households whose needs for basic and domestic items are met”, it is not straightforward to separate the shelter and non-shelter components and measure the impact of the CRIs on the quality of the living conditions of the population of concern.

In order to enhance UNHCR’s ability to monitor and evaluate shelter and settlement programmes, UNHCR intends to explore ways of improving the quality and consistency of data collected. To this purpose, the following steps will be undertaken:

1. Analysis and report on UNHCR M&E systems and the main uses of shelter and settlement data
2. Analysis and report on relevant external M&E systems used by other organizations
3. Field mission and assessment of the capacity and systems used by the field to undertake data collection
4. Mapping and analysis of existing shelter and settlement standards and indicators and recommendations for data collection requirements
5. Consultation with key shelter and settlement actors and consensus of priority standard and indicator requirements for the sector
6. Produce a list of all sectorial indicators, along with a simplified/concise list of recommended indicators which will inform the content of the M&E tool

This project will enhance the capacity of UNHCR and partner management to monitor gaps, needs, trends in the sector for strategic planning, decision making and coordination.

The M&E system shall aim to support and complement the existing planning, monitoring and reporting systems in UNHCR at field and HQ level, and will comply with existing standards and indicators that are internationally agreed and commonly accepted.

b) Innovation

UNHCR continues to draw inspiration from its history and tradition, but is equally committed to finding creative and innovative solutions to shelter and settlement problems that threaten human wellbeing and dignity in a changing world.

While moving forward to assist more people and better, UNHCR should also work differently when it is necessary. Maintain vigilance and dynamism to address sectorial challenges is paramount and requires a continuous modernization of working methods and application of new technologies and innovative construction materials.

In recent years, considerable efforts were made to improve the quality and types of shelter and settlement design. Research initiated at various level and informed concept development of settlement design, improvement of tent technical specifications, development of self-standing tents and accessories such as winterization kits, delivery of shelter prototype and testing. Mobile phone applications for site planners are being developed while tools for assessments will be enhanced and modern Global Positioning System will be adopted.

To make this research more effective, UNHCR will continue to interact with other organizations within the sector, will explore partnership with private sector (Architect Boards) as well as will expand existing dialogue with Universities (Stanford, Copenhagen).

Launch of thematic competitions among groups of students can result in creative pilot projects for alternative shelter solutions and homestead traditional typologies while promotion of regular market surveys can inform on availability of new shelter products. Modern technology can be applied to traditional solutions enhancing durability of options culturally acceptable.

In a world characterized by increased interconnectivity and interdependence, UNHCR will explore ways of creating platforms, networks and community of practices that enable sharing knowledge and expertise on thematic issues, through the lens of innovation.

UNHCR will also enhance dialogue with donor community so as to ensure that investment in sectorial research and development are understood and maintained.

c) Communication

UNHCR intends to widely disseminate the Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy to enhance awareness of its engagement in the sector as well as to reiterate the

organisation's commitment to capitalize on its experience meanwhile applying innovative approaches.

One of the critical elements in demonstrating and building leadership role is the ability to ensure adequate and timely mobilization of resources and rapid deployment of knowledgeable specialists from the very onset of a humanitarian crisis. This requires a considerable investment.

Donor community interest in the sector is evident, though to maintain and reinforce it, the Organization needs to make greater effort to draw attention to the sector needs and challenges. Stronger and clearer communication strategy in the sector is one of the utmost priorities in the years to come to be able to reach out the public and create a better understanding of existing gaps.

UNHCR will engage in stronger information-sharing platforms and open discussion fora to share knowledge, promote sectorial innovation, networking and create awareness on the sector priorities. Achievements against strategy expected outputs will be regularly published through UNHCR webpage, dissemination of newsletters and other means of communication.