NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

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2019-2022

GLOBAL SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS CORE COMPETENCY STRATEGY

Creating Homes, Building Communities

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NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent humanitarian organisation helping people forced to flee. We work in crises across 31 countries, providing emergencies and long-term assistance to millions of people every year. We stand up for people forced to flee, advocating their rights. NORCAP, our global provider of expertise, helps improve international and local ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from crises. NRC also runs the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva, a global leader in reporting on and advocating for people displaced within their own country.

www.nrc.no

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1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO NRC'S SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS APPROACH

Losing one's home and community is devastating. Shelter and settlements support is the foundation of humanitarian assistance for people who have been displaced. Providing a safe place for families and communities to call 'home' can be life-saving.[1]

NRC provides physical safety, an identity and a foundation for recovery through its shelter and settlement programming. Working hand-in-hand with other NRC Core Competencies (CCs) through an integrated approach, NRC aims to *create homes and build communities* to protect people from the risks of displacement and enable them to live in dignity.

This strategy reinforces the long-established notion that reaching our collective impact of protection and dignity is a process. This starts with saving lives by facilitating access to temporary shelter during the emergency phase and continues even in protracted displacement, and for durable solutions. The shelter and settlements response is based on learning from displaced people what makes a shelter a *home* and how to transform a settlement into a *community*.

WHAT DOES THE SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY AIM TO DO?

This Global Shelter and Settlement Strategy provides a strategic overview of how NRC will provide the most appropriate assistance to those most in need in the countries where we work. It sets out five foundations for maintaining quality in our programmes, four areas of strategic development and three modalities to be embraced. This plan does not intend to cover the requirements or approaches among all shelter and settlement activities implemented by NRC.[2] Rather, it highlights areas of work that require focus and development to achieve the shelter and settlements CC objective of *creating homes and building communities*.

[1] NRC is a long term member of the Shelter Advisory Group (SAG) of the Global Shelter Cluster and both contributes and draws extensively on its work and principles. This strategy is aligned accordingly (see Shelter Cluster Strategy 2018-2020).

[2] SPHERE 2018 Handbook lists 24 different Assistance Options in the Shelter and Settlements chapter – Appendix 4, page 282.

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, THE STRATEGY WILL SERVE...

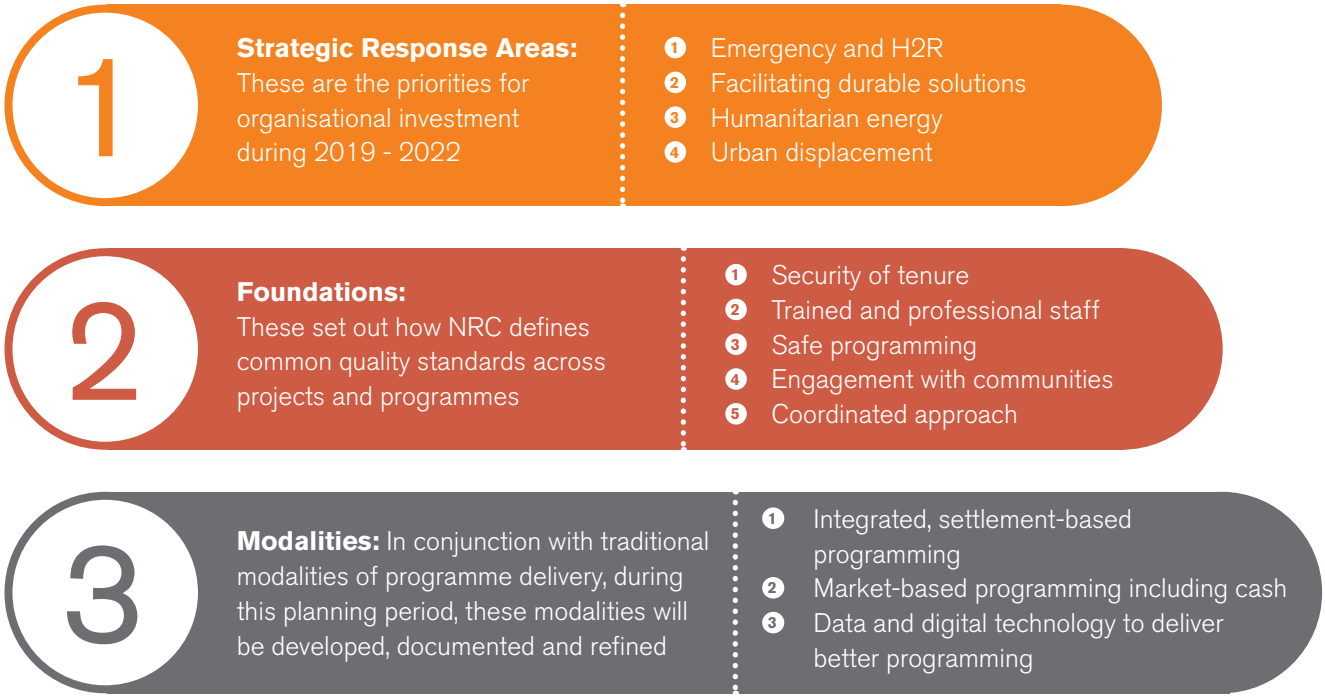
- As a **communication tool** to better articulate the scope of NRC's shelter and settlement activities.
- As the basis for a **common, coherent vision and direction** for shelter and settlements teams in NRC.
- As a **guide for programme priorities** and development across the organisation.
- As a **framework for measuring progress** and gaps in NRC's shelter and settlements programming.
- To move us closer to **creating homes and building communities** as a programme portfolio.

HOW DOES THE STRATEGY RELATE TO NRC'S ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY AND GOVERNING DOCUMENTS?

The strategy aligns with the Global Shelter Cluster strategy (2018 – 2022), the Sustainable Development Goals 4[3], 7, 8, 9 and 11 and the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions. It explains how the shelter and settlements CC will contribute to NRC's Global Strategy 2018–2021 and NRC's four Global Ambitions:

[3] Shelter and settlements programming contributes to "Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all" through its school construction activities.

STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY



The strategy will be followed by a series of technical framing papers which support and elaborate on the 12 elements of the framework.

HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

The strategy was designed with input from NRC's global network of shelter and settlement specialists and is expected to guide the work of all Area Offices, Country Offices, Regional Offices, Representational Offices and Head Office.

NRC's Programme Policy remains the framework that defines the scope of the shelter and settlements CC. The local context and country strategies will guide which of the Strategic Response Areas and Programmatic Modalities country offices engage in, while all country offices will ensure the five Foundations are the building blocks of their programme.

2 STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREAS

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 1

EMERGENCY AND HARD TO REACH (H2R)

NRC has over 25-years of experience of providing life-saving shelter and settlement support working in 25 countries around the world. Our reputation as a leading agency in the sector will be strengthened by integrating our emergency response into our long-term shelter and settlement programming.

Emergency shelter and settlement programming presents opportunities for early access in hard to reach areas. For example, providing emergency community infrastructure in H2R locations can be a way for other NRC areas of programming to get access and provide in-roads for broader shelter and settlements programming.

Sample interventions include provision of essential household items (such as stoves, cooling and heating items for thermal control in extreme weather conditions, clothes, mosquito nets and bedding); provision of complete shelter solutions (tents, short-term cash for rent, hosting, collective centres); and contribution to shelter solutions (temporary or transitional shelter hardware, maintenance kits, repair kits, sealing-off kits).

Our outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Displaced populations have timely access to appropriate and quality life-saving shelter and essential household items supported by technical assistance where feasible.

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 2

FACILITATING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Durable solutions for displaced people are voluntary return, local integration or settlement in a third location (resettlement for a small number of refugees). Our shelter and settlement strategy for durable solutions is anchored in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons and UNHCR's Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern.

In accordance with the IASC Framework, a durable solution is achieved when the displaced:

> ***"No longer have specific assistance or protection needs or vulnerabilities directly linked to the displacement; and can exercise their human rights without discrimination related to it."***

Within this response area, NRC shall move beyond providing physical shelters to facilitate access to homes and communities. Where appropriate, NRC will take on the role of facilitator, providing shelter and settlement outcomes that contribute to durable solutions. NRC's shelter and settlements activities can contribute to voluntary and dignified return through housing reconstruction and to integration by increasing the local housing stock.

Interventions include negotiating tenure security on communities' behalf, assisting local authorities to define low-cost housing strategies, undertaking housing damage surveys in urban areas and providing basic tools and materials for a housing (re)construction project.

Our outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Promote self-reliance and resilience of displaced populations during displacement, voluntary return and local integration. Facilitate access to essential information, material and financial support for durable solutions.

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 3

HUMANITARIAN ENERGY

Humanitarian Energy refers to power that is derived from the use of traditional and renewable sources. NRC focuses on electrical (lighting, operating machinery), thermal (heating/cooling, cooking) and chemical (batteries) forms.

Recent estimates show that refugees and internally displaced people (over 68.5 million individuals) spend over 2.1 billion USD on energy each year.[4] The majority of this is spent on high-cost fuel sourced unsustainably and used inefficiently – mostly in the form of firewood.

Limited access to energy cuts across all sectors affecting human activities from lighting for schools and evening study through the health sector (chronic smoke-related conditions) to income generation via small and medium business enterprises. NRC believes that access to sustainable, affordable and healthy energy is a cornerstone to *creating homes and building communities*.

[4] Moving Energy Initiative, Resources 2018

NRC's approach to Humanitarian Energy focuses on four areas:

ENERGY AND NRC OPERATIONS:
Alternative to diesel generators, procurement of services (fee-per-service), renewables, off-grid, standalone and solar diesel-hybrid systems, energy efficiency (building and appliances) and feed-in systems.

ENERGY AT HOME:
Energy efficiency building upgrades (insulation / passive cooling), heating, lighting, lanterns, cooking fuel and alternatives, electrification, standalone solar home systems, construction technology, awareness raising.

ENERGY AND THE COMMUNITY:
Lighting and heating at schools, battery recharging for educational tablets, standalone power hubs, solar pumping, mini grids setup, street lighting.

ENERGY AND LIVELIHOODS / MARKETS:
Electricity business/trade (battery charging, phone charging, solar home system), skills training, business training, market-based cooking fuel solutions.

Our outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Displaced populations have access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy that will improve their living conditions, access to safe and reliable services (hospitals, schools, transport, etc.) and self-reliance (markets). NRC significantly reduces its carbon footprint by promoting a culture of energy efficiency; tracking and reporting on energy expenditure; and using modern and renewable energy sources to power field offices.

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 4

URBAN DISPLACEMENT

Urban is defined as "a built up or densely populated area containing the city proper or continuously settled peri-urban areas" (IASC definition). Displacement to urban areas creates complex challenges of communicating with beneficiaries, conducting vulnerability assessments, beneficiary selection and identification and response option analysis. Urban responses require modified approaches compared to providing humanitarian assistance in rural areas and camp-like settings.

Forced displacement is increasingly urban with more than 50 per cent of the world's refugees and IDPs living in urban areas.[5] NRC will explore, document and articulate how shelter and settlement programmes can meet the needs of those living in urban contexts.

Key areas to consider include enabling access and retention to housing through market-based programming, working through existing urban structures using a spatial lens, considering livelihoods, social services, urban mobility, and as an enabler of other sectoral outcomes.

Sample interventions include working with urban planners to identify zones for low-cost housing that enable access to markets and livelihoods; supporting the establishment of housing cooperatives; working with existing providers to ensure those most in need have equitable access to reconstruction schemes; upgrading communal buildings; urban rental market interventions and provision of low-cost urban housing solutions.

Our outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Displaced populations living in urban areas have access to adequate and affordable housing and essential services, through flexible, multi-sectoral, area-based programmes that strengthen housing markets and empower local institutions; and promote better governance.

[5] Global Trends forced displacement in 2017, UNHCR, 2017

3 FOUNDATIONS

FOUNDATION 1

SECURITY OF TENURE

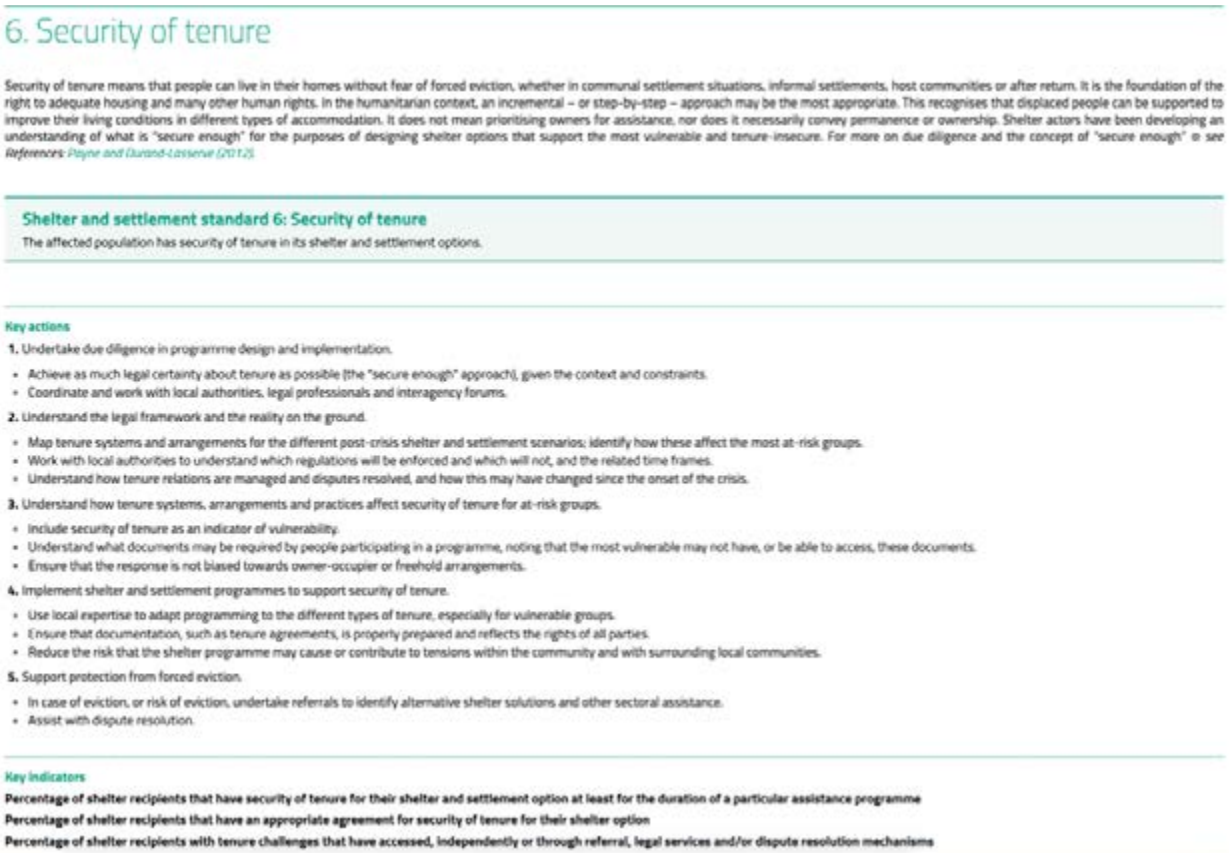
Security of tenure means that people can live in their homes without fear of forced eviction, whether in communal settlement situations, informal settlements, host communities or after return. It is a foundation of the right to adequate housing.

In the humanitarian context, an incremental approach may be the most appropriate to secure tenure. This recognises that displaced people can be supported to improve their tenure arrangement in different types of accommodation.

Attention to security of tenure in shelter and settlements programmes does not mean prioritising owners for assistance, nor does it necessarily convey permanence or ownership. Shelter actors have developed an understanding of "what is secure enough" for the purposes of designing shelter options that support the most vulnerable and tenure-insecure.

Section 6: Security of Tenure of the Shelter and Settlements chapter of the 2018 SPHERE handbook sets out five key actions which NRC will adopt across its shelter and settlements programmes. Over the next four years, NRC will ensure that these are adopted by all shelter and settlement programmes and become hallmarks of the NRC approach.

Our outcome for this Foundation is: The affected population has security of tenure in its shelter and settlement options.



6. Security of tenure

Security of tenure means that people can live in their homes without fear of forced eviction, whether in communal settlement situations, informal settlements, host communities or after return. It is the foundation of the right to adequate housing and many other human rights. In the humanitarian context, an incremental – or step-by-step – approach may be the most appropriate. This recognises that displaced people can be supported to improve their living conditions in different types of accommodation. It does not mean prioritising owners for assistance, nor does it necessarily convey permanence or ownership. Shelter actors have been developing an understanding of what is "secure enough" for the purposes of designing shelter options that support the most vulnerable and tenure-insecure. For more on due diligence and the concept of "secure enough" ⊙ *see References: Payne and Durand-Lasserve (2012).*

Shelter and settlement standard 6: Security of tenure

The affected population has security of tenure in its shelter and settlement options.

Key actions

1. Undertake due diligence in programme design and implementation.

- Achieve as much legal certainty about tenure as possible (the "secure enough" approach), given the context and constraints.
- Coordinate and work with local authorities, legal professionals and interagency forums.

2. Understand the legal framework and the reality on the ground.

- Map tenure systems and arrangements for the different post-crisis shelter and settlement scenarios; identify how these affect the most at-risk groups.
- Work with local authorities to understand which regulations will be enforced and which will not, and the related time frames.
- Understand how tenure relations are managed and disputes resolved, and how this may have changed since the onset of the crisis.

3. Understand how tenure systems, arrangements and practices affect security of tenure for at-risk groups.

- Include security of tenure as an indicator of vulnerability.
- Understand what documents may be required by people participating in a programme, noting that the most vulnerable may not have, or be able to access, these documents.
- Ensure that the response is not biased towards owner-occupier or freehold arrangements.

4. Implement shelter and settlement programmes to support security of tenure.

- Use local expertise to adapt programming to the different types of tenure, especially for vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that documentation, such as tenure agreements, is properly prepared and reflects the rights of all parties.
- Reduce the risk that the shelter programme may cause or contribute to tensions within the community and with surrounding local communities.

5. Support protection from forced eviction.

- In case of eviction, or risk of eviction, undertake referrals to identify alternative shelter solutions and other sectoral assistance.
- Assist with dispute resolution.

Key indicators

Percentage of shelter recipients that have security of tenure for their shelter and settlement option at least for the duration of a particular assistance programme

Percentage of shelter recipients that have an appropriate agreement for security of tenure for their shelter option

Percentage of shelter recipients with tenure challenges that have accessed, independently or through referral, legal services and/or dispute resolution mechanisms

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FOUNDATION 2

TRAINED AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

NRC has a global reputation for its trained, dedicated and professional staff. Over the next four years, NRC intends to invest more in our staff through training and development, and through a strengthened network of shelter and settlements specialists, advisers, programme managers, coordinators and field teams.

Regular webinars, staff exchanges and adviser country visits will ensure teams have the adequate tools and knowledge to meet the complex programming needs of ever-changing contexts. Only by dedicating resources to training and developing staff can we ensure that we are able to analyse the context and design a quality response.

To do this NRC will develop the guidance and tools requested by field colleagues to support the implementation of this plan; set up an Office 365-based technical library; develop a structured internal communication flow between country, regional and head office level; identify effective capacity development models for programme rollout; recruit qualified technical staff; implement talent management and cross-country exchange schemes; and compile a shelter and settlement induction package.

Our outcome for this Foundation is:
NRC shelter and settlements staff have the required expertise for quality and well-designed programmes, and are continuously engaged in strengthening their knowledge and skills.

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FOUNDATION 3

SAFE PROGRAMMING

Creating homes and building communities provides NRC's Shelter and Settlement staff with unparalleled access into the lives and private space of displaced populations. We have a duty to uphold the principle of do no harm and build upon NRC's safe programming approach. We shall do this by ensuring that safe programming is at the heart of our approach and that our staff and partners share our value and visions.

Our outcome for this Foundation is: All staff understand and uphold NRC's minimum safe programming standards for shelter and settlements.

We shall:

PRIORITISE SAFETY AND DIGNITY AND AVOID CAUSING HARM:
Prevent and minimise any negative effects of our Shelter and Settlement programming.

MEANINGFUL ACCESS:
Arrange for people's access to assistance and services in proportion to need and without barriers (physical, legal, social). Make sure that our shelter and settlement programmes are inclusive and designed for the most vulnerable.

ACCOUNTABILITY:
Set-up appropriate mechanisms, through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT:
Support the development of communities and individual capacities and assist people to claim their rights to adequate shelter and settlements and to live in a protective community.

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FOUNDATION 4

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES

NRC asserts the primacy of affected populations in decision-making and implementation, and acknowledging the wide range of personal, family and community contexts which inform their preferences and priorities for *creating **their** home and building **their** community*, and the varied paces and paths taken by communities through crises and into recovery.

People's capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of humanitarian response. Interventions, therefore, need to support and complement the efforts of affected populations who are always the first and main responders. Effective and efficient programming is achieved by building upon their skill-sets and tapping into their resilience.

Displaced populations will seek shelter solutions immediately and where possible take a mid- to long-term perspective. In many contexts, shelter and housing arrangements are organised by the affected people, mostly informally. The affected communities hold a range of capacities, skills, knowledge and abilities, individually and collectively, that should be harnessed. It is fundamental that shelter and settlement assistance supports the local dynamic and self-recovery process in the sector, building on the prevailing technical practice, culture and knowledge, and taking into account household and livelihood activities.

And so, we shall work closer with the communities, the different groups with different needs and their representatives to really understand the context and the situation rather than approach it as a 'one-size' fits all and an automated response.

Our outcome for this Foundation is: NRC programming supports and complements efforts of affected populations and ensures that they are part of the solution and their voices are heard and respected.

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FOUNDATION 5

COORDINATED APPROACH

With human and financial resources far outstripping the needs of the displaced, we must adopt a coordinated approach to ensure that we do not duplicate our assistance and that we find and fill the gaps. Working together with common standards and approaches ensures that our responses are predictable, equitable, maintain a sound technical quality and are based on a collective decision-making process to maximise the overall impact of the resources available.

NRC shelter and settlement staff in all countries work within the relevant coordination networks. NRC is a member of the strategic advisory group of the Global Shelter Cluster and the lead of the HLP Area of Responsibility under the Global Protection Cluster. In an increasing number of countries, we are directly involved either as co-chairs of shelter working groups/clusters or as the lead of HLP working groups. Over the next four years, our objective is to increase the level of participation in humanitarian coordination and ensure we are among the leaders.

This will be achieved by improved staff training and induction into the humanitarian coordination structures, seeking closer partnerships stakeholders in our sectors/clusters and where possible bringing our own resources to the table.

NRC will invest in its relationships with local partners to ensure a coordinated and appropriate response. These partnerships can enhance both local capacity and our own, and offer options for broader integrated responses and sustainable programme and protection approaches.

Good coordination implies good communication and networking and so we shall improve how NRC's shelter and settlements achievements, impacts and successes are shared collectively to enhance learning across the sector. We shall continue to actively participate in the global discourse on shelter and settlements and work with all stakeholders advocating for national, regional and global ways to strengthen policies and practice and the resources to create homes and build communities for the displaced.

Our outcome for this Foundation is: NRC prioritises intentional, active and positive engagement in the coordination systems and partnerships to maximise impact and efficiency.

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4 MODALITIES

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MODALITY 1

INTEGRATED, SETTLEMENT-BASED PROGRAMMING[6]

People do not perceive their recovery in sectoral terms but from a holistic perspective. While sectoral technical expertise is an important ingredient in the response, understanding the holistic needs of affected communities usually requires strong sectoral collaboration. Area or neighbourhood-based approaches in programming are geographically targeted, participatory, multi-sectoral and applicable throughout all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle.

The application of a settlement approach builds on experiences of urban and regional planners working on community renewal through geographically-based, multi-sectoral initiatives in vulnerable locations. In recent years, these approaches have gained traction among humanitarian aid agencies seeking to provide better responses to crises and conflicts. Settlement approaches can offer a practical means of facilitating the "humanitarian-development nexus", bridging relief and recovery.

The settlement approach means that planning, coordination, response and recovery should be centred around holistic human needs rather than sectoral operation. To achieve this, we must work in an integrated approach.

NRC defines integration in two parts:

An Integrated Approach aims to deliberately address the comprehensive needs of a population through direct programming, through complementary programming, through partnerships/consortia, advocacy and/or through referral mechanisms.

When directly implemented by NRC, Integrated Programming is the intentional combining of two or more sectoral interventions to improve the situation of the target population(s).

These two parts of the definition reflect NRC's ambitions to deliver an integrated response across our core competencies, and externally by ensuring that we work together with other stakeholders. This complementarity can be achieved through coordination, a settlement approach and by ensuring we take a people-centred approach.

To achieve an integrated approach, we must understand the broader shelter and settlements context and design activities that achieve sustainable positive shelter and settlements outcomes and contribute to higher-level common objectives. Ultimately, our activities must contribute to the wider objective of *creating a home and building a community*.

Our outcome for this Modality is: Shelter and settlement programming works in union and harmony both internally and externally to achieve agreed common objectives for greater impact and efficiency. NRC shelter and settlement programmes have a greater impact on communities by placing settlements approaches at the heart of its programming and mainstreaming it throughout project cycles.

[6] The definition of a settlement varies with context. Settlement is used here to represent both area-based and neighbourhood-based approaches to humanitarian responses.

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MODALITY 2

MARKET-BASED PROGRAMMING INCLUDING CASH

As well as losing a home and a community, displaced families lose choice. Affected families rarely have options where to settle, where to live and sleep, nor do they choose their neighbours and new communities. Instead, and too often, they are given what is available or what someone else decides for them. Within the limitations of each context, NRC aims to give this choice back. We want to make sure the people are part of the decision-making process and that their voices are heard, their needs are recognised and understood, to formulate jointly an appropriate and relevant response.

To ensure we provide choice we shall review how we deliver our services by adopting Market-Based Programming activities, ranging from actions that use markets to deliver immediate relief to those that proactively strengthen, change and develop local market systems.

Ongoing shelter and settlement programmes already use markets to deliver many of its services. For example, Cash (conditional or unconditional) and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to provide shelter, essential household items or related expenditure (rent, utilities, etc.) Or through interventions targeting the various housing, construction or labour market actors (landlords, suppliers, regulators, etc.)

NRC will continue to develop its Companion Programming where it provides technical support to recipients of multi-purpose cash distributions. This approach aims to improve the impact of cash distributions by leveraging NRC's high technical competence.

Following a robust and thorough analysis of a context, shelter and settlement staff will ensure that all response options are examined and that responses are market sensitive. Default positions, whether they are in-kind assistance or cash, without a robust response option analysis, will be challenged by well-trained staff who understand all the options and the context.

Our outcome for this Modality is: Shelter and settlement programmes undertake a comprehensive response option analysis to ensure that they choose the correct implementation modality and have an understanding of how the market functions and how it is influenced by our interventions.

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MODALITY 3

USING DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER BETTER PROGRAMMING

NRC shelter and settlement CC has always used data and digital technology in its programming, from data collection, team management, to remote monitoring and design software for shelters and settlements. Technology has helped NRC to maximise resources, reach more beneficiaries and provide accountability to the donors.

Over the next four years, NRC will dedicate more resources to identifying how it can scale-up its activities and improve its programmatic approach embracing data and digital technologies. Such tools may improve NRC's engagement with beneficiaries, provide more accurate and efficient data collection tools and support stronger data analysis. Investment in the development of internal tools to coordinate across CCs and across the organisation on beneficiary databases, grants and project management tools will be explored, whilst ensuring adequate protection of data. This will strengthen evidence-based decision and programme design the quality and efficiency of our interventions.

Innovation and digital technology may disrupt our current way of working. NRC will pursue innovative programming ideas to scale our reach and enhance the impact of shelter and settlements responses.

Our outcome for this Modality is: Shelter and settlement programmes utilise appropriate data and digital technology to improve efficiency, quality and scale our interventions.

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