

SETTLEMENTS APPROACH GUIDANCE NOTE

WHERE BOUNDARIES AND ACTION MERGE

DECEMBER 2020



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In response to the growing demand for more clarity, knowledge, and methodologies on the settlements approach, the Urban Settlements Working Group has prepared this Guidance Note with financial support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian assistance (BHA).

Methodology

This Guidance Note is the result of a consultation process during 2018–2020 that produced 30 case studies. That process was initially supported by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations (ECHO) and the Global Shelter Cluster. The drafting of the guidance has been facilitated by the Urban Settlement Working Group, co-chaired by IMPACT Initiatives, InterAction and CRS under the auspices of the Global Shelter Cluster. Subject experts wrote and peer-reviewed each chapter. This document has also benefited from editing support by Kate Murphy. The graphic design was undertaken by Aurélie Portier.

The Urban Settlements Working Group wishes to acknowledge the valuable contribution of all the working group members and those who participated in the consultation events.

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The Settlements Approach Guidance Note is a tool for changing humanitarian circumstances.

The humanitarian landscape is transforming quickly. Uncontrolled urbanisation, environmental pressure, and protracted armed conflicts present new challenges. They affect the built and natural environments, protection systems, essential services, governance capacities, markets, and livelihoods in unprecedented intersecting ways. Indeed, such stressing factors often occur simultaneously. That in itself increases the need for humanitarian response, especially in vulnerable territories. This growing complexity demands localised, multisectoral, collaborative and inclusive approaches to address multi-faceted vulnerabilities. It also demands aid organizations prioritise interventions in the most affected territories.

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In the face of these challenges, the humanitarian community has made some important commitments in recent years. Initiatives such as the Grand Bargain, the Localization Agenda, and the Nexus have prompted us all to reconsider how we deliver humanitarian assistance. They call for a more integrated approach to humanitarian response, more tangible links between emergency and development interventions, and to empower local stakeholders to play a more prominent role in crisis responses. Place-based,

community-based and multisector undertakings are hence quickly regaining traction in humanitarian action. Such efforts come with a pressing demand for dedicated technical guidance.

The settlements approach offers both principled and practical guidance to operationalise such commitments. It uses the human settlement as the primary unit to build meaningful and collective solutions. It aggregates sector and project-specific expertise at the local level. It addresses needs across multiple sectors and assists all population groups. It paves the way towards longer-term outcomes.

By providing a clear socio-spatial framework to work from, the settlements approach guides aid agencies to plan and deliver more efficient, targeted, and localised interventions.

The Settlements Approach Guidance Note consolidates current practices and experience, drawing on more than 30 case studies. It was collaboratively written and peer reviewed by subject-matter experts, under the auspices of the Global Shelter Cluster, with financial support from USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance, and in consultation with and contribution from other cluster partners, NGOs and donors. We hope it is a base for further discussion and operationalisation in appropriate contexts, including better collaboration between sectoral actors, national and international stakeholders, and humanitarian and development agencies.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDANCE NOTE

Drawing upon existing good programming practices and frameworks, the Guidance Note includes the following content:

Chapter 1, INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH, describes the settlements approach, reasons to use it, its key benefits, when it is appropriate, and how it complements existing approaches and principles. The chapter highlights how the approach benefits not only the affected population, but also local stakeholders, and humanitarian agencies. While the settlements approach might be more appropriate to use in some contexts than others, the chapter demonstrates its flexibility and emphasises that it is compatible with existing humanitarian architecture.

Chapter 2, CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH unpacks the four core characteristics of the settlements approach:

- ▶ It targets specific geographic areas of high needs
- ▶ It is multisectoral
- ▶ It recognises and engages with multiple stakeholders
- ▶ It considers the whole population.

The chapter explains the concepts behind the settlements approach by outlining 12 key principles. The guidance here explores why applying them in combination at a more localised level can achieve improved program outcomes. It also highlights a number of challenges that practitioners might need to overcome. The chapter provides a rational basis for putting the settlements approach into practice; by understanding the principles that underpin it, practitioners are more likely to make it work.

Chapter 3, OPERATIONALISING THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH gives practical suggestions for implementing the settlements approach. Key actions are suggested for the project management cycle. These actions show how to identify settlements of concern, undertake fit-for-purpose needs assessments, use the generated evidence to plan a strategic response that will guide a collaborative approach to implementation and monitoring.

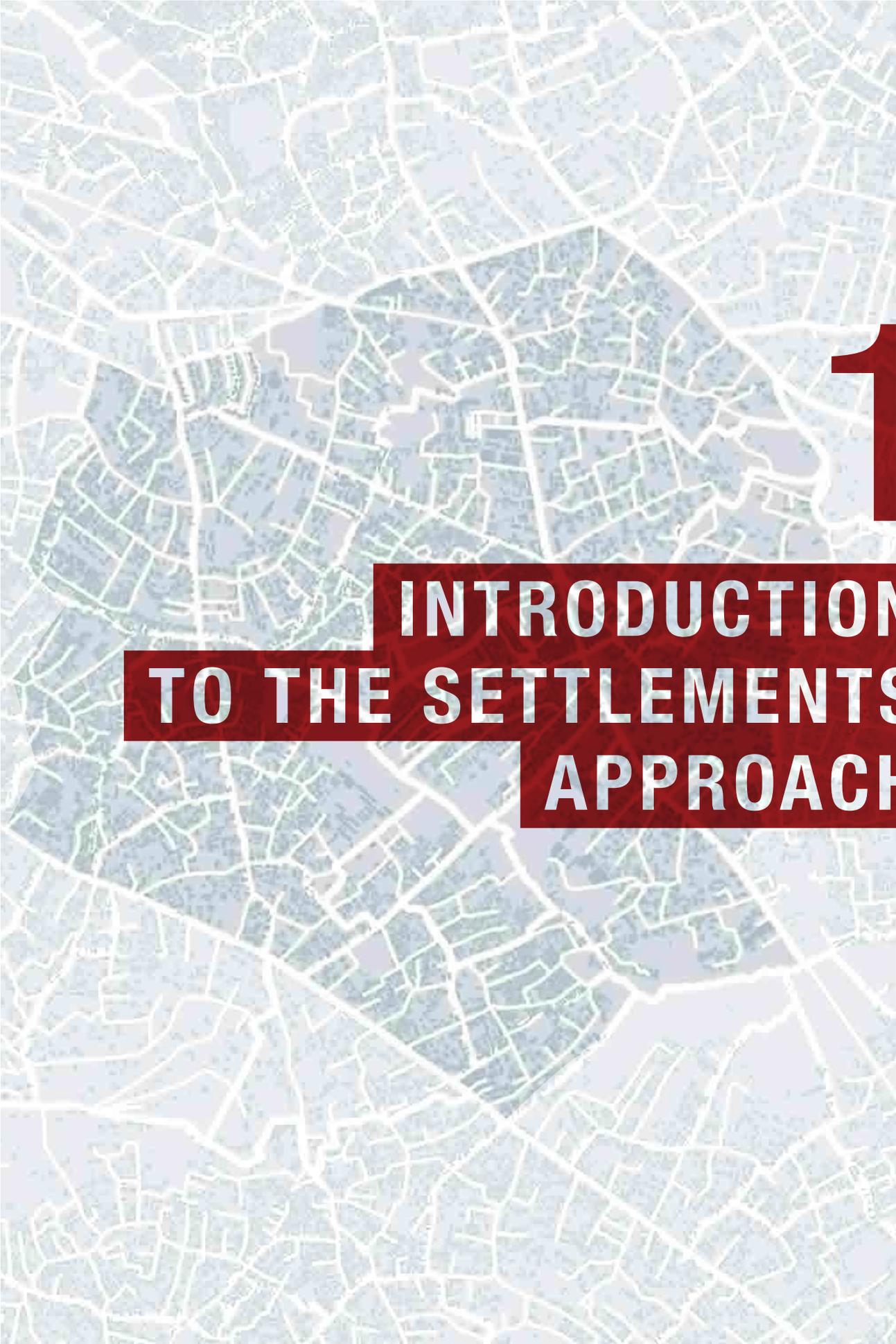
Case studies throughout Chapters 2 and 3 present examples of the settlements approach in practice. They show how a traditional focus on administrative boundaries can lead to missed opportunities and misunderstandings. They also highlight the importance of collaborating with local stakeholders and of engaging them in any humanitarian response. Several emphasise the value of involving the whole population, including marginalised groups, throughout the project management cycle.

The chapter includes notes and resources to support practitioners implementing the actions. Each section in Chapter 3 includes indicators that can be used to track the effectiveness of the settlements approach.



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1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH

In this section you will learn



1 What the settlements approach is and the benefits it offers

2 When and where the settlements approach is appropriate

3 How the settlements approach complements existing approaches

1.1

WHAT IS THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH?

The settlements approach promotes ways for humanitarian and recovery interventions to increase their impact at the local level. It is a framework for aid agencies and local stakeholders to plan and deliver more efficient, targeted, and localised interventions in human settlements affected by a crisis. The settlements approach uses the human settlement as the primary unit to build meaningful and collective solutions. It avoids focusing on specific sectors, population groups, or project-specific outcomes. Instead, it strives to create a humanitarian platform where the relationship between all those variables is captured and guides resource allocation.

The settlements approach offers a socio-spatial framework to guide humanitarian action in human settlements. It does this both within the existing humanitarian coordination architecture and in close collaboration with local stakeholders and development partners. It allows humanitarian agencies to aggregate their expertise to forge sustainable and equitable partnerships with local stakeholders. It allows them to better respond to localised crises and pave the way for recovery.

A settlement is defined in this Guidance Note as:

*The place where people live as a socially defined and spatially bound unit, which reflects the interaction of dynamic social, cultural, economic, political and environmental features in space and time.*¹

Although settlements differ in size and scale across contexts, the approach can apply for settlements of any size and characteristics.

The settlements approach works with multiple stakeholders to consider the whole population living in a specific settlement affected by a crisis and in need of multisectoral support. It engages all relevant stakeholders and the affected population in establishing a collaborative path to recovery and wellbeing. Building on the existing benefits of humanitarian good practices, programming expertise and coordination structures, it offers pragmatic ways to enhance impact at the local level.

In particular, area-based, community-based and multisector undertakings are quickly regaining traction in humanitarian action. Recent analyses have demonstrated that such approaches “have proved useful in making humanitarian program delivery more explicitly people-centered and comprehensive, most prominently in urban

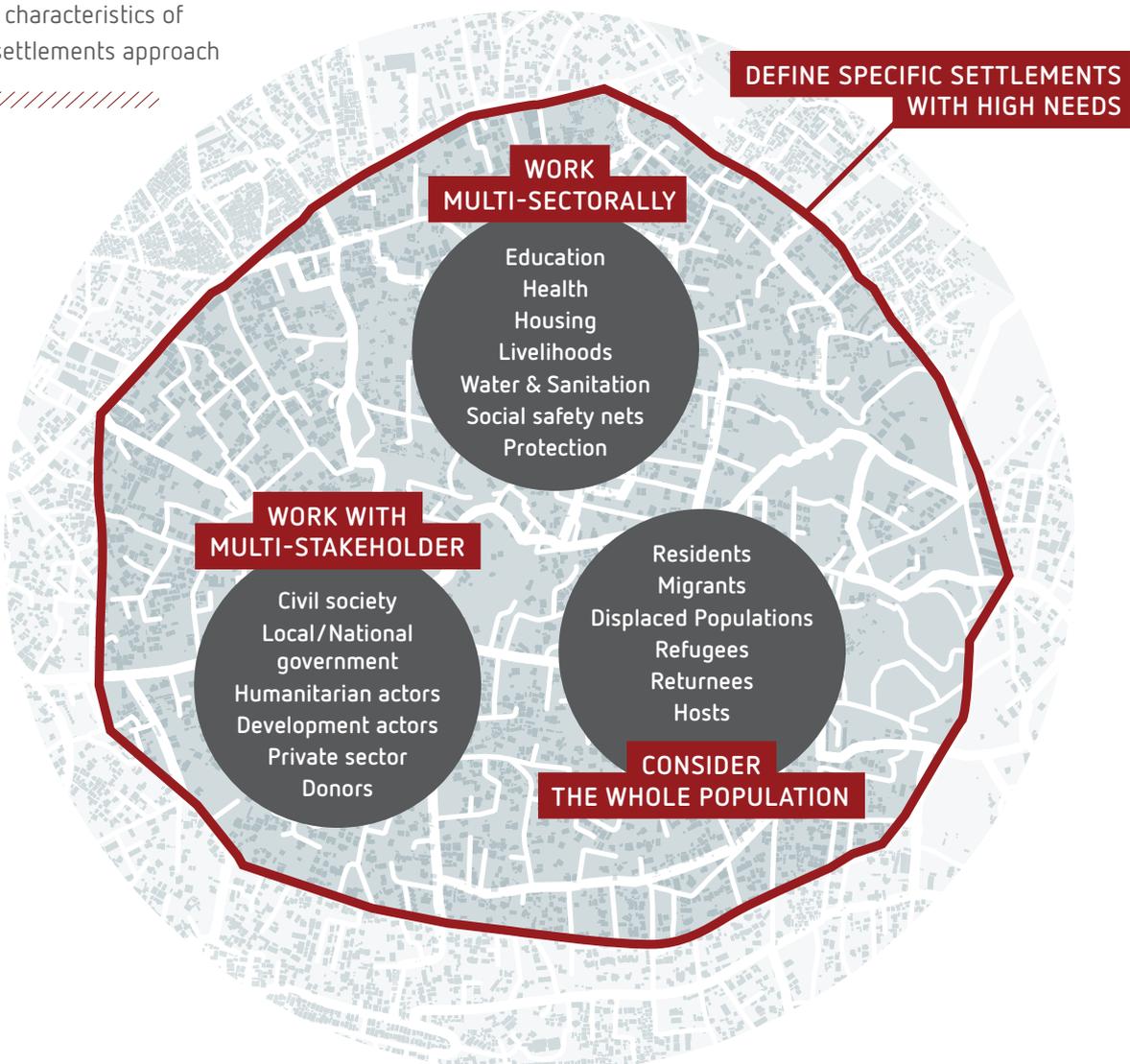
¹ From ‘The State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlement’ 2018 (Setchell, C). Chapter 13

settings,² and that “By better aligning how diverse interventions interact within a defined context, and by deepening the involvement of the affected population, area-based approaches enable a more demand-driven program logic”.³

This Guidance Note offers a clear conceptual framework for the settlements approach. It aggregates best practices and academic research into a practicable methodology for humanitarian practitioners. The Guidance Note adds to the body of knowledge and experience in place- and community-based programming, drawing on extensive experience and research in emergencies and development. It recognises four primary characteristics of the settlements approach, illustrated in **Figure 1.1**. Each of those characteristics is discussed in more detail in **Chapter 2**.

Figure 1.1.

Four characteristics of the settlements approach



² Jeremy Konyndyk, Patrick Saez, and Rose Worden, 2020. “Inclusive Coordination: Building an Area-Based Humanitarian Coordination Model.” CGD Policy Paper. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/inclusive-coordination-building-area-based-humanitarian-coordination-model>

³ Ibid

1.2

WHY USE THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH?

The humanitarian landscape is evolving quickly. Uncontrolled urbanisation, environmental pressure, and armed conflicts are creating overlapping stress to the built and natural environment, protection systems, access to essential services, governance capacities, social cohesion, supply chains, and livelihood. This growing complexity demands localised, multisectoral, collaborative, and inclusive approaches to address multifaced vulnerabilities. The settlements approach guides humanitarian action within a socio-spatial framework, which can be very impactful in complex environments.

Three major global changes drive the use of the settlements approach:

- 1 Calls for a more integrated approach to humanitarian response
- 2 Increasing complexity of humanitarian crises
- 3 Recognition of the importance of local leadership

1.2.1

Calls for a more integrated approach to humanitarian response

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit report by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated that humanitarians must “move beyond traditional silos, work across mandates, sectors and institutional boundaries”. The value of a multisectoral integrated approach has been particularly recognised in urban contexts. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has called for a “paradigm shift... based [on] area-based or community-based approaches”. In addition, for several years now USAID has advocated for integrated, multisector programming in socially defined spaces. ECHO’s 2017 thematic policy document on shelter and settlements states that “Shelter and the larger concept of settlement are inextricably linked and should be addressed as a whole rather than separately.” UNHCR, in its settlements and shelter strategy, also emphasizes the relevance of this approach in refugee and displacement contexts and argues that it contributes to positive protection and gender outcomes.

In addition, recent reforms in the United Nations System⁴ aim at improving joint planning and coherence between UN programmes to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These commitments from the development sphere of the UN are fully aligned with the New Way of Working that seeks to encourage humanitarian and development actors to work towards collective outcomes based on joint analysis and robust evidence.⁵

An integrated approach is particularly necessary when humanitarian and development needs and priorities overlap, in urban, peri-urban and rural contexts. In those contexts, humanitarian responses should complement and strengthen existing systems and development plans in an area. In situations of prolonged out-of-camp displacement for instance, population influxes put long-term strain on basic services and host communities.⁶

⁴ Following the General Assembly Resolution 72/279 from May 2018

⁵ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/2020-Report-of-the-Chair-of-UNSDG-on-DCO.pdf>

⁶ See for example [OCHA's explanation of the Humanitarian Nexus](#) or [Oxfam's report on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#)

Emergency humanitarian interventions can temporarily strengthen service delivery capacities, while longer-term investments from governments and development entities will sustainably restore living conditions. The use of the settlement approaches is a clear enabler of both humanitarian and development UN reforms. Crisis-affected populations can benefit from complementary humanitarian and development approaches with both sectors addressing different needs in different timelines but within the same area.

1.2.2

Increased complexity of humanitarian crises

Humanitarian crises are becoming more difficult to address as new and complex challenges emerge. These result from factors such as increased urbanisation, conflicts, intensity and frequency of disasters, and out-of-camp and urban displacement. Humanitarian agencies are witnessing how crises have a long-term impact on human settlements and how pre-existing territorial fragilities aggravate the consequences for vulnerable communities.

Crises increasingly occur in environments where immediate needs are aggravated by structural challenges, such as informal and hazardous land use and a lack of access to essential services. Multiple population groups with varying levels of need frequently coexist in the same settlements, adding further complexity. Humanitarian responses need to better target populations with the most pressing needs. They also need to address multiple expressions of vulnerability simultaneously, while contributing to longer-term recovery. This requires a targeted allocation of efforts, to which the settlements approach contributes.

The expression of needs and the possible response scenarios hinge on the specific local contexts where a crisis occurs. Responders must increasingly address interrelated systems, dynamics of diverse population groups and livelihoods, complex legal frameworks, and often informal land and property scenarios. This complexity calls for a holistic approach to multisectoral needs at a distinct level. It requires stronger multisectoral targeting, assessment, operational coordination, and programming at the scale of the most affected human settlement. That may be a neighbourhood, a village, a district, or a city or municipality.

1.2.3

Recognition of the importance of local leadership

Since the introduction of the humanitarian cluster system in 2005, the focus has been to improve coordination among humanitarian agencies. Active engagement with relevant local stakeholders remains sporadic. This fails to enable systematic structured partnerships between agencies and local stakeholders servicing the same affected communities in the same geographic areas. Nonetheless, local stakeholders remain the primary responders. They include institutional and informal decision makers such as local government authorities, civil society, and/or the private sector, as well as service providers, and community groups, informal traditional leaders such as community representatives, as well as faith and trade groups. Local stakeholders provide essential services and organise the day-to-day community life in crisis-affected settlements. Engaging more effectively with local stakeholders unlocks the untapped potential to generate more localised and sustainable impact.

Beyond the direct harm to affected populations, humanitarian crises also generate broader community- and system-wide vulnerabilities across entire settlements. They affect local livelihoods, put strain on existing basic services, weaken coping mechanisms in host communities, and disrupt social cohesion mechanisms.

Responding to such diverse impacts implies strong and diversified local partnerships. The settlements approach helps humanitarian agencies to partner with local stakeholders and move beyond the emergency phase of externally provided and sector-specific aid interventions. This helps to operationalise the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s call for a “paradigm shift in humanitarian assistance in urban areas, based on a community-based rather than an individual beneficiary approach”⁷ at a targeted local level.

In addition, the 2016 Grand Bargain promotes increased focus on and investments in national and local responders. It acknowledges that those local stakeholders operate in the communities they serve before, during, and after emergencies. Complementing this, the New Urban Agenda of the Habitat III summit, and strategy papers by NGOs, BHA (formerly OFDA), ECHO, IOM and UNHCR among others acknowledge and promote the settlements approach. The various commitments to local aid highlight the importance of engaging with local stakeholders and creating effective coordination mechanisms. Such an approach enhances transparency and increases participation by those affected by decision-making processes. International actors are working towards a shared and integrated humanitarian response that leverages local capacities and builds ownership among stakeholders. The settlements approach provides a valuable framework for doing that in contexts of humanitarian crisis.

1.3 KEY BENEFITS OF THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH

Research by the Urban Settlements Working Group⁸ shows that the settlements approach can benefit the affected population, local stakeholders, and the humanitarian agencies supporting them.

The settlements approach benefits the affected population:



- ▶ Reduces the creation or reinforcement of tensions and inequalities and contribute to improved social cohesion.
- ▶ Generates a collective response that addresses overarching needs.
- ▶ Ensures no key influencers or affected communities are left behind.
- ▶ Addresses the needs of affected groups across multiple sectors and population.

It also benefits local stakeholders:



- ▶ Works with existing governance systems.
- ▶ Accommodates the multisector and multiple stakeholder perspective that local administrations require.
- ▶ Strengthens the capacity of local actors to address the multiple needs associated with humanitarian crisis.
- ▶ Promotes neutrality, impartiality and balances competing issues inherent in a crisis response, thus improving trust between stakeholders.
- ▶ Improves relationships between communities and local governments.

⁷ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/meeting-humanitarian-challenges-urban-areas/documents-public/concept-note-meeting-humanitarian>

⁸ Urban Settlement Working Group, Area based approaches in urban settings, compendium of case studies, 2018

The settlements approach also provides benefits for humanitarian agencies:



- ▶ Allows resources to be better aggregated and allocated to the most affected settlements.
- ▶ Focuses resources on prioritised needs of the communities.
- ▶ Enhances clarity and understanding of how best to provide multisectoral assistance at the local level.
- ▶ Improves communication and complementarity between partners, including humanitarian and development actors and local stakeholders.
- ▶ Enables a quicker adaptation to evolving needs through the creation of an information base that supports evidence-based programming.
- ▶ Anticipates pathways to multisector recovery interventions.

1.4

WHEN IS THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH APPROPRIATE?

The settlements approach can be applied to any settlement intervention activity regardless of context, and in preparedness, response, and recovery phases. Experience shows that some crisis environments are more conducive than others for the settlements approach to bear full success. The compendium of case studies showed that it works best when:

- ▶ the population base is relatively physically stable and not too socially fragmented.
- ▶ the humanitarian coordination architecture does not penetrate to the settlement level.
- ▶ the population has complex and interdependent needs, as is often the case in urban and semi-urban contexts.
- ▶ local authorities are present, credible, willing to partner with international actors, and have a baseline capacity.
- ▶ a multisectoral coordination group or platform, often led or co-led by local authorities, exists, or can be legitimately created.
- ▶ humanitarian and development actors are aware of and committed to supporting resilience, self-sufficiency, localisation, and territorial approaches over the medium term.

1.5

HOW DOES THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH COMPLEMENT EXISTING APPROACHES?

The settlements approach provides a flexible framework for those who offer humanitarian assistance to target crisis-affected settlements. It allows them to assess needs and to collectively plan, synchronise delivery, and comprehensively monitor aid interventions. The settlements approach doesn't seek to replace existing ways to deliver humanitarian assistance. Instead, it assures proper prioritisation, phasing and participation. It provides a socio-spatial framework for applying all relevant approaches in a more geographically focused, and therefore more effective way.

The settlements approach in isolation is not sufficient to design and deliver impactful interventions. Agencies also need to continue to operate within existing humanitarian programming and coordination structures. They must provide strong sector-specific intervention capacity and partner with other actors and local stakeholder to fill the gaps. The settlements approach allows aid agencies to optimise their collective capacity. It strengthens and integrates the impact of selected programming approaches from various sectors at a jointly targeted scale.

The settlements approach calls for humanitarian organisations to:

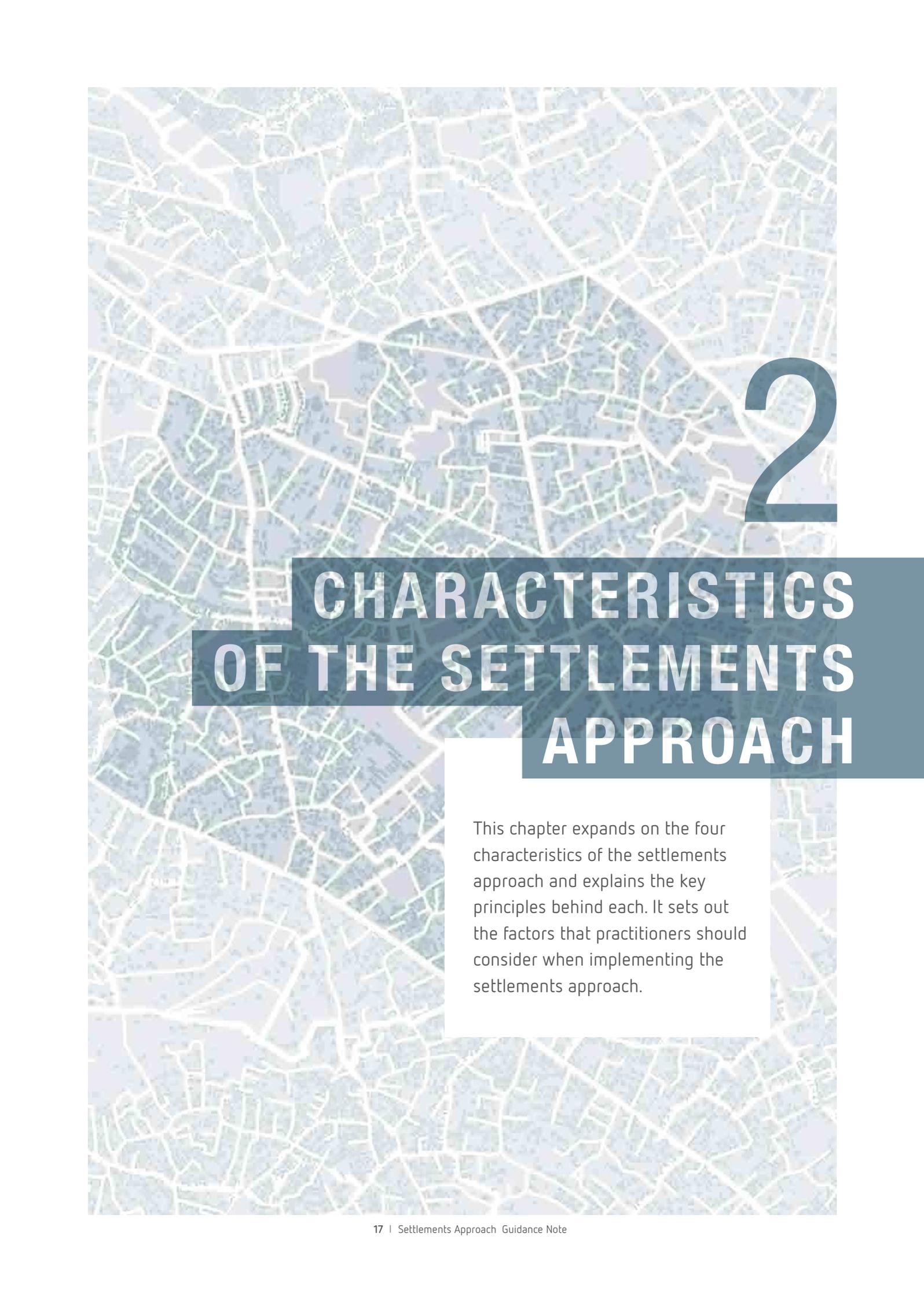
- ▶ apply and aggregate their sector-specific expertise at the local level
- ▶ engage in structured partnerships with stakeholders with complementary expertise at the settlement level
- ▶ continue those partnerships throughout the programme, from needs assessment to monitoring and evaluation

The reference point of the settlements approach is a human settlement in a defined space (rather than a sectoral point of reference). Generally, the geographical scale of target settlements is quite granular (neighbourhoods, districts, group of villages), depending on the setting and on the crisis. Therefore, at first glance the approach may seem to not fully align with the established humanitarian architecture. Under the settlements approach, multisector programmes are designed and coordinated at the settlement level, where the humanitarian coordination system usually does not penetrate, but where local authorities are legitimately in charge. One added value of the settlements approach is that it complements without interfering with the cluster system. It interacts with and informs the cluster system by feeding nuanced, socially and geographically targeted information up to multiple clusters.

Furthermore, the settlements approach can, in some contexts, closely align to local governments and administrative structures such as municipal or sub-municipal municipal authorities. As the internationally led cluster or sector systems remain time-bound and crisis-focused, ensuring a clear alignment to local authority processes and priorities can promote a transition to stabilisation, recovery, and development.







2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH

This chapter expands on the four characteristics of the settlements approach and explains the key principles behind each. It sets out the factors that practitioners should consider when implementing the settlements approach.

2.1

THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH RECOGNISES BOTH PHYSICAL AND SOCIO–CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

In this section you will learn



- 1 What factors you should consider when deciding the scale of a target settlement
- 2 Why it's important to consider different boundaries when defining a target settlement
- 3 Why community perceptions of boundaries may differ from administrative boundaries

RATIONALE

The formation and growth of human settlements are influenced by both physical and socio-cultural as well as economic factors. Physical factors include natural and human made features such as rivers, roads or valleys. Social factors include social ties, governance, networks, cultural identities, and economics. All of these factors can change over time or be perceived differently by various groups within a settlement. A properly designed settlements approach is designed to accommodate these changes and reconcile these differences.

Informed by these factors, identifying the boundaries of a specific settlement provides a way to:

- ▶ assess the scale of needs and existing capacity of local stakeholders in a consistent way
- ▶ understand the relationship between community networks, local government administration, and livelihoods as they contribute to the settlement's own recovery
- ▶ ensure that humanitarian assistance considers both pre-existing and newly emerging vulnerabilities across all sector

Different boundaries may already exist, or they may emerge as a result of the crisis. The first recognised boundary is often the local authority boundary, but communities themselves usually perceive additional boundaries. These may reflect physical or social boundaries, service areas, or other factors, such as expanded neighbourhood boundaries due to an influx of displaced populations, or uncontrolled urban sprawl.

Making sense of settlement boundaries' should reflect agreed and context-sensitive criteria. Settlement boundaries should express geographic, political, economic, and community factors. They should also demonstrate how the target settlement fits in a broader system of settlements, such as how municipalities fit in a district or neighbourhoods fit in a city. The interdependencies between these neighbouring settlements, such as markets, water and sanitation infrastructure, and electricity grids are also relevant. Lastly, consider the impact that focused assistance and support in the target settlement has on neighbouring settlements.

It is important to consult with other stakeholders early to ensure all are operating with a common understanding of scale. Since the approach encourages multiple aid agencies and local stakeholders to work together in the same settlement, the selected scale must be agreeable to all.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.1.1

The scale of the settlement-level intervention should consider local context, socio-cultural factors, and response capacity

The settlements approach should adopt a scale that is most appropriate to deliver multisectoral assistance to local communities. This provides the foundation for adequate assessment, planning, and collaboration within the settlement.

In principle, the settlements approach is applicable at different scales. It is most constructive at a scale that is quite granular (neighbourhood or community level), where legitimate local authorities are present. At such a scale, it is harder for broader coordination to reach, but humanitarian agencies have capacity to intervene. The chosen scale should reflect local communities' perception of their own territory (socio-cultural and physical). It should promote multisector and multiple stakeholder collaborations but allow interventions to be locally owned. For practical reasons, it should also correspond to the capacity of those organisations applying the approach in the target settlement, and within local authorities' boundaries. Areas of need are those most affected by the crisis, where the most vulnerable or marginalised communities live. Areas of high needs are those where stressing factors are having the most negative impact on local communities, and typically display concerns across multiple sectors. The areas of high needs may not follow individual community boundaries or administrative delimitations, and may overlap parts of different communities. When identifying areas of need as a way to identify target settlements, consider which boundaries best reflect where the highest needs are located. For example, in addition to the established administrative and physical boundaries, service areas and community areas are useful to the settlements approach due to their relevance for programming. These areas, while distinct, are interrelated and require specific attention.

Service areas are catchments for providing one or more services to a designated group of people across a specific location. Services include shelter, protection, health, education, food, and water. Often, but not necessarily, service areas correspond to administrative or geographical boundaries. Service areas may be defined differently by community residents living in the same area with unequal access to basic services (based on gender or displacement status, for example). Further, the affected population's needs for support from different humanitarian sectors are best provided in different service areas. Sufficiently precise information should be available from service providers and municipalities or confirmed through focus group discussions with service users. The entire population of a geographical service area may not be involved in a specific programme. However, it is important to designate the current extent of a service area and its relation to community areas, as this may interact with future developments. Nevertheless, delineating service areas should, in most cases, be straightforward.

Community areas are singular units comprised of similar resources, socio-economic characteristics, cultural values, and identities. Depending on its history and characteristics, a community area may include a sense of social cohesion that distinguishes it from neighbouring community areas. A community area may have its own identity, formed and defined more by local knowledge and perceptions than by factors such as international borders or internal administrative boundaries. Community areas are "typically defined by social, economic, and physical features, which often serve as the basis for administrative and political recognition within larger jurisdictions" (USAID/OFDA, 2011). Note that marginalised or vulnerable groups may be dispersed or concentrated within community areas. The areas which those groups define as their community and service areas will often be more limited than those that the broader population defines.

Figure 2.1 shows how overlaying multiple service areas and community areas can define a settlement. It highlights the importance of considering both formal and informal boundaries.

Figure 2.1

A settlement can reflect multiple boundaries

Based on a suggestion from James Kennedy

////////////////////

This is a valley, where recent floods have damaged houses on both sides of the river.

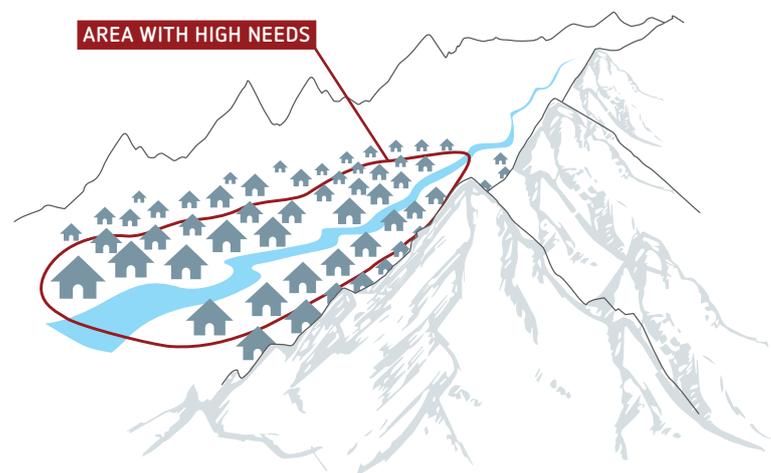
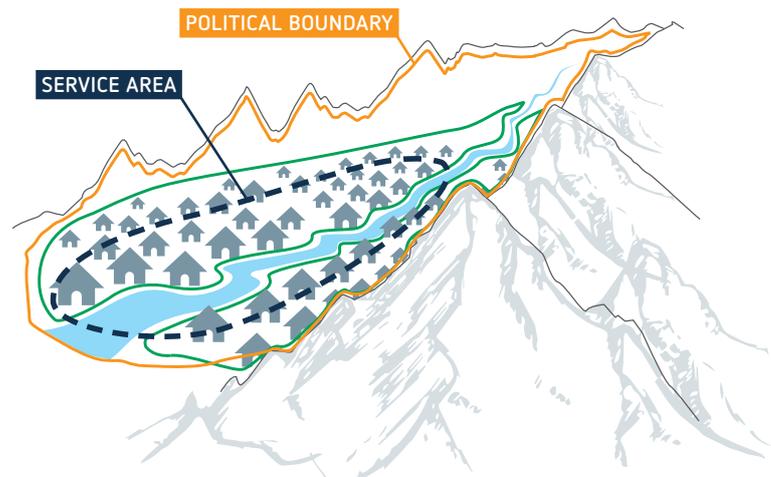
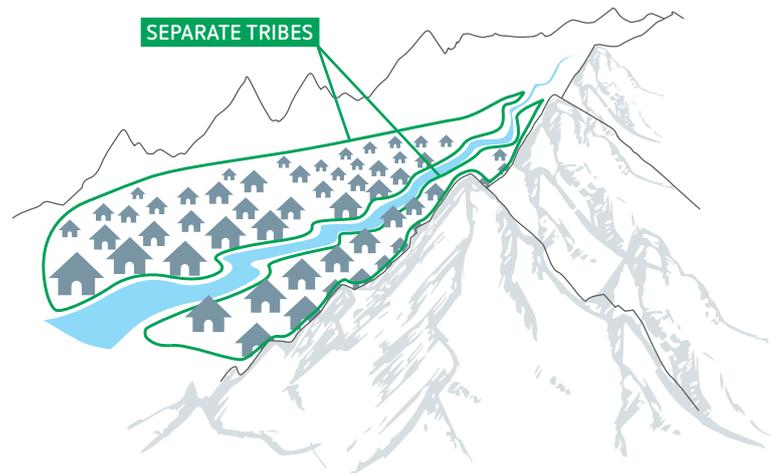
For the people living in the valley, the river in the middle is the traditional border between to community areas corresponding to the lands of two separate tribes.

The political boundary for the entire county follows the ridges of the mountains on both sides of the valley, as the national government defines the entire valley as a single administrative entity.

Most basic services accessible to the local populations are being provided within the most densely populated area of the valley. Their catchment area is illustrated by the service area.

The areas with the highest amount of flood damage were the low-lying lands nearest the river, on both sides of the banks.

Even though the area with high needs does not align with existing political, community or service areas, it overlaps with all types of boundaries. Although aid interventions will focus on the areas most damaged by the crisis, aid actors will need to account for administrative, basic services and community system function and engage with community representatives, service providers and political stakeholders beyond the geographical area where the flood have had the most impact to design meaningful and locally appropriate interventions.





KEY PRINCIPLE 2.1.2

Analysing the interconnection between the various needs in a given settlement is key to addressing those needs

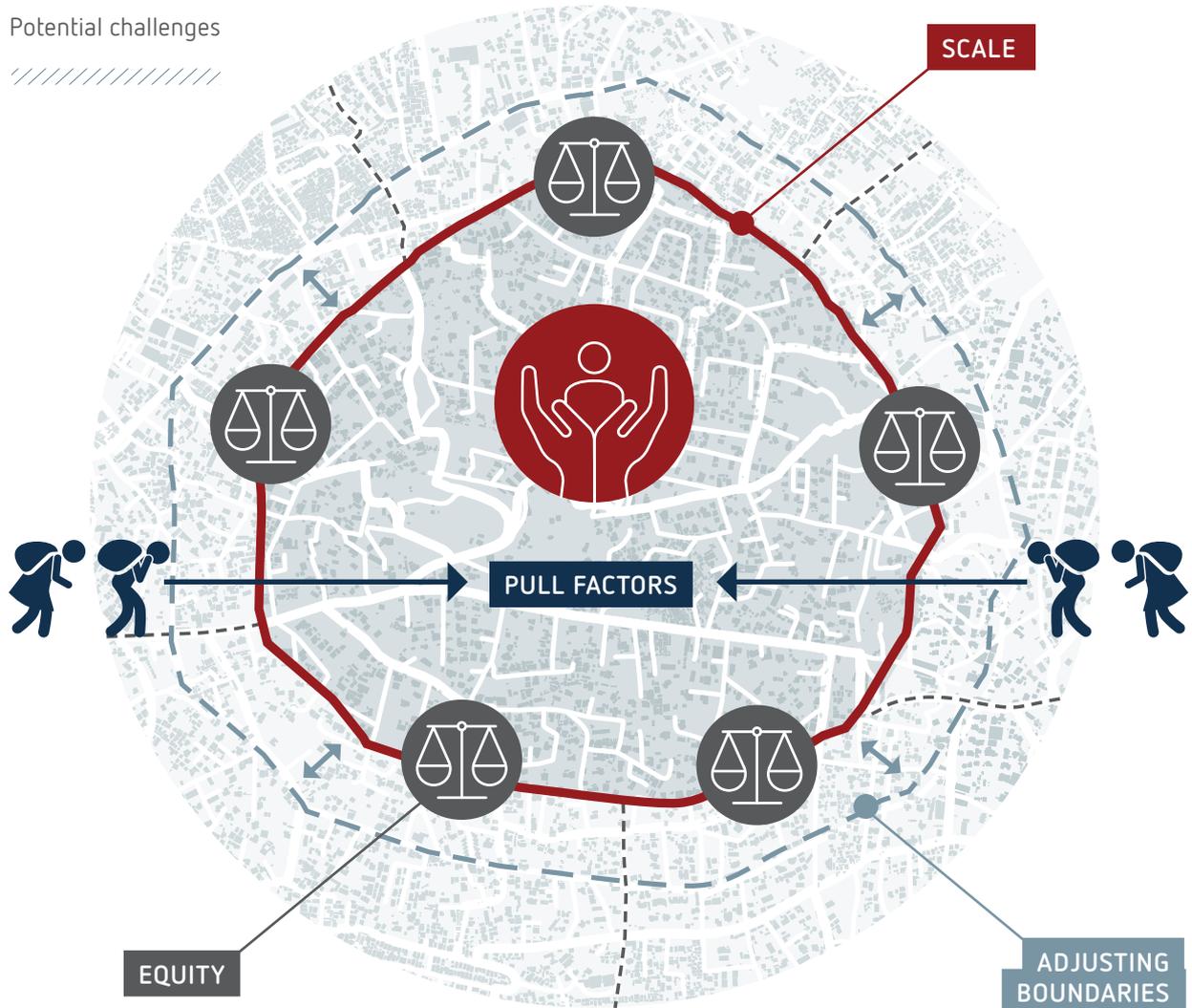
Selecting an area of high need is an important concept for humanitarian assistance. The definition of “high needs” as a way to target specific settlements should reflect the findings of a needs assessment. It should refer to both the severity and breadth of needs. It applies to all phases of any subsequent interventions. The definition should be appropriate to the context and agreed with local humanitarian actors and other local stakeholders (see **Chapter 3.1**). It is important to understand how broader factors, such as governance, services, or the wider impact of a crisis, influence the needs in a specific settlement. Recognising the links that exist between the settlement’s interventions and the city- and/or municipal-wide planning, service delivery, and coordination mechanisms is essential. These mechanisms can include security protocols, land laws, access to markets, supply chains, access to electricity or water and sanitation services, as well as formal and informal governance structures.

In a similar manner, assistance in one settlement impacts nearby areas. Impacts on neighbouring settlements will often be proportional to the scale of assistance given. For example, impacts could be an increased economic activity as the neighbourhood market booms. Considering multiple neighbouring settlements for programming might raise the need to account for additional parameters such as administrative regulations.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **SCALE.** The target geographical scale is an important variable for a response. If the target settlement is too large, a granular understanding of the settlement will be difficult and important factors may be missing. The capacities of the humanitarian actors may not be sufficient to respond to all the needs within the settlement. Conversely, if the boundaries are too narrow, some households in need may be excluded from support. The main livelihoods and self-reliance networks may extend beyond those boundaries and so programme design and implementation might not appropriately consider them.
- ▶ **EQUITY.** Equity issues can arise if the settlements approach creates islands of holistic support where aid agencies tend to conglomerate, with neighbouring or harder to reach areas receiving a much lower level of support.
- ▶ **PULL FACTORS.** Just because one area is defined as “high needs” does not mean that all other areas have no needs. Households from neighbouring settlements may migrate into the target settlement. This can create constant displacement and migration of affected people seeking assistance or protection.
- ▶ **ADJUSTING BOUNDARIES.** In protracted displacement contexts, continued population movement may lead to frequent new influxes. This may necessitate a review of the boundaries of the programme target areas. Areas of high needs can evolve, so the response must be agile and foresee such changes.

Potential challenges



THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE

*Defining settlement boundaries, Diffa, Niger
ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives, 2018*

An area delineation process in Diffa, Niger revealed an unusual and unexpected community unit called a lay – a small unit, often comprising only a couple of households. Each lay is named for the first family that settled there or from the name of the first shop or other enterprise to operate there.

The programme team concluded that this socio-spatial unit was too granular to serve as a basis for programme design. Nevertheless, it was important to identify the different territorial layers that communities use and refer to, especially as the lays do not align with local government administrative boundaries. It was useful to engage with groups of beneficiary households from the same lay and provided a trusted channel for community engagement.



2.2

THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH RELIES ON MULTI-SECTORAL ENGAGEMENT AND INPUT

In this section you will learn



- 1 What an inter-sectoral approach can do to increase the impact and effectiveness of a settlement-based response
- 2 Why it's important to identify overlapping interests and actions between different sectors
- 3 Why streamlining collaboration throughout the programme cycle can ensure a comprehensive, cohesive response

RATIONALE

People affected by crisis do not see their overall recovery in terms of aid sectors. Rather, they consider the overall negative impact of the crisis on their living conditions. They also consider functions such as housing, access to the job market, purchasing power, and social integration. Their needs span multiple services, socio-economic and cultural issues. Similarly, a settlement, whether a city or neighbourhood, does not operate in discrete sectors. Rather, it operates as an amalgamation. It relies on many interrelated elements performing as a unit, as illustrated in [Figure 2.3](#).⁹

In contrast, the humanitarian interventions are defined on a sector-by-sector basis, which does not always align with the complex interrelated needs that communities experience at the local level.¹⁰ The settlements approach provides techniques to bond sector-specific expertise into a cohesive whole at a targeted local level, to better meet the holistic needs of the affected communities. This aligns responses more readily with the political, economic, and social governance structures of a settlement, and reflects the multifaceted, interdependent needs of communities recovering from disaster.

Multisectoral engagement is not new to the humanitarian sector. The Joint Inter-sectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) and Humanitarian Programme Management Cycle (HPC) from OCHA provides guidance for sectors to work together in understanding and addressing humanitarian needs. In the settlements approach, relevant sectors agree joint efforts at the outset at a targeted socio-spatial scale, and agree on a comprehensive, shared vision for the local recovery process. This facilitates more effective coordination between implementing actors, the community, the government, and local stakeholders. Settlement-based initiatives enable prioritisation of resources and activities across sectors, creating a greater impact with least duplication of effort.

From the outset of any response, multisectoral needs assessments and shared information management systems ensure that the needs of all relevant stakeholders and population groups are considered in the programme design. This promotes participatory decision making and planning.¹¹

⁹ Campbell, L. (2016) Stepping back: understanding cities and their systems. ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI.

¹⁰ Urban Settlements Working Group (USWG), Area-Based Approaches in Urban Areas: Compendium of Case Studies, July 2018

¹¹ IASC (2012) Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises, UN, Geneva.

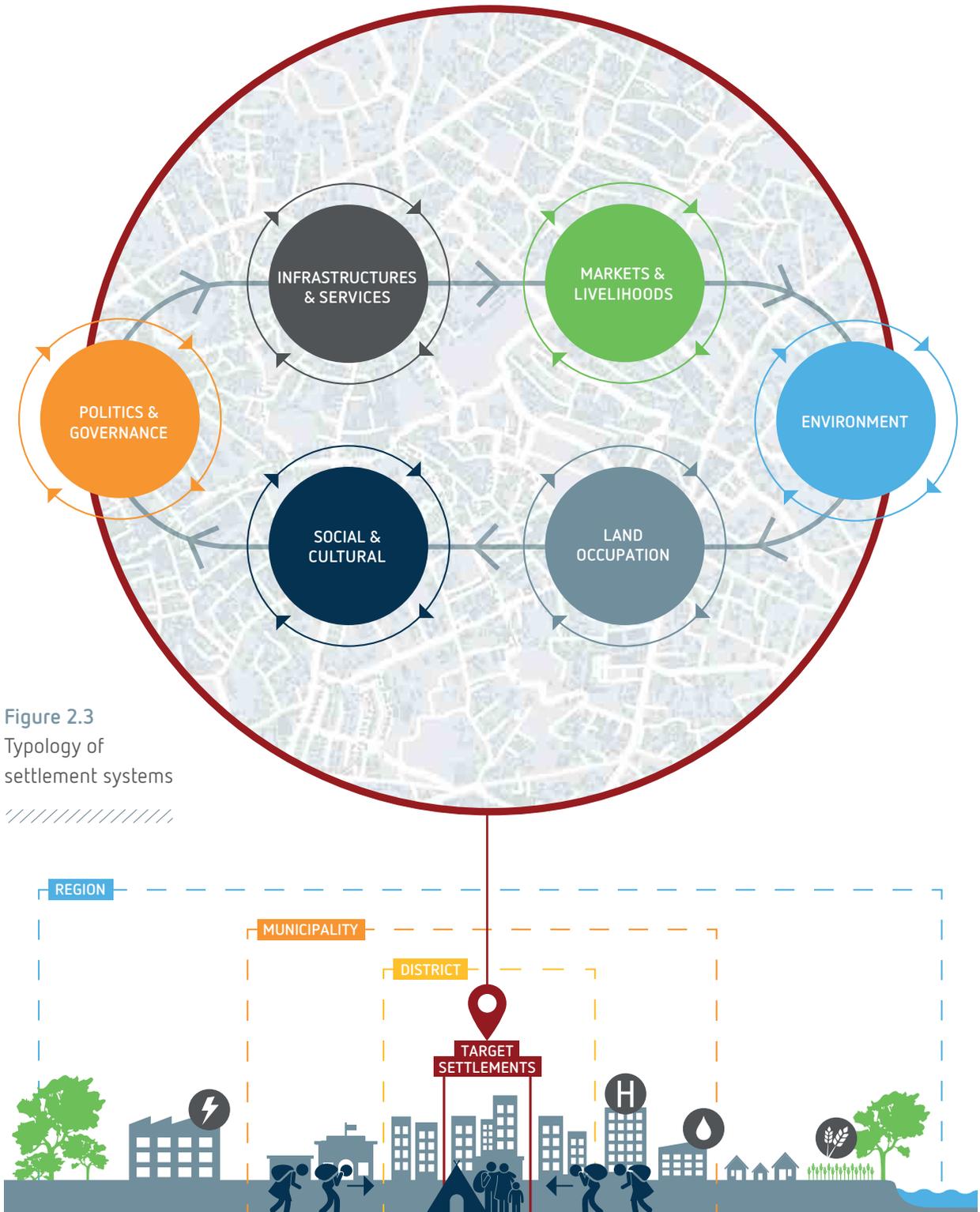


Figure 2.3
Typology of
settlement systems

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The settlements approach identifies key sectors and linkages between them. That provides a framework for data collection, analysis, planning, collaborative implementation and evaluation of the impact of the response (see Sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). This deliberate collaboration between sectors requires strong and effective partnerships and communication at all levels. In some contexts the response may prioritise different needs within the settlement. However, the shared attributes and interrelated systems of settlements allow the use of common frameworks for settlement response planning (see Section 3.3).



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.2.1

Multi-sectoral collaboration requires ongoing discussion and collaboration to meet the community's diverse needs

From the onset of a response, agencies implementing the settlements approach should engage with actors from multiple sectors. Sector-specific agencies should collaborate with agencies that complement their own expertise in achieving a shared overarching vision for the target settlement.¹²

IASC's multisectoral initial rapid assessment (MIRA) guidance provides some of the initial steps required for needs assessment. This helps in context analysis and needs assessment (**Section 3.2**). However, the collaboration among sectoral stakeholders must continue throughout the program cycle beyond needs assessment. Most post-crisis situations are very dynamic and communities' needs change over time. The responders must be ready to adapt throughout the program cycle. This may imply undertaking subsequent multisectoral assessments and sector-specific interventions sequentially to address priority needs such as shelter, water and sanitation before other interventions such as protection or education.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.2.2

Sectors' interests and actions overlap, providing opportunities for collaboration

Identifying and promoting institutional opportunities for multisectoral collaboration can improve long-term response outcomes. Multisectoral engagement at a local level provides a strong multiplier effect to the intervention, strengthening inclusion and cross-cutting issues. It can pave the way towards longer-term impacts of recovery and resilience.

Identifying and removing barriers to such collaboration is essential. Barriers commonly exist where humanitarian agencies have a limited understanding of priorities, capacities and targeting strategies in other sectors and on the side of public counterparts such as line ministries. Identifying and removing barriers can lead to humanitarian and local stakeholder buy-in. This can accelerate approvals processes and facilitate access to funding streams, specialist knowledge (such as gender and protection), operational areas, or existing supply chains. If it is not possible to address barriers to collaboration, then their impact on the planned response must at least be considered and mitigated.

Collaboration is particularly important for multisectoral interventions. This includes for example multi-purpose cash grants, youth empowerment activities, and upgrading of informal settlements. An overarching vision must drive and balance the need for wide consultation across sectors with the need for a timely response.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.2.3

Streamlining collaboration throughout the programme cycle ensures a comprehensive, cohesive response

In a complex context, sectoral needs vary in scale, influence and importance. Humanitarian responses impact the existing operations and plans of multiple sectors. These impacts can be positive and/or negative.

¹² ibid

A collaborative multisectoral approach enables these impacts to be considered properly. Agencies can then design the programme to maximise the positive aspects and limit the negative at various stages of the programme cycle.

Collaboration should occur throughout the programme cycle, from data collection through analysis to response planning. Building consensus and a shared, overarching vision for the response is only possible when all sectors continuously engage with each other. This includes gaps in sectoral coverage and concerns such as protection, vulnerability, disability, diversity, and inclusion. Such a collaborative response lends legitimacy to the programme.

Collaboration is generally time-consuming, so the depth and length of collaboration should reflect:

- the relevance and influence of each sector
- the time and resources they are able to commit
- the timeliness of the response.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **REPRESENTATION.** A multisectoral response requires strong representation and commitment by all sectors and clear overall leadership. Without that, a multisectoral response is likely to lack momentum and accountability.
- ▶ **EXPERTISE.** In a multisector response, agencies must identify and fill capacity gaps in all priority sectors. This is challenging when there's not enough partners involved in a target settlement.
- ▶ **COLLABORATION.** Insufficient initial collaboration between different sectors can make it difficult to identify barriers that might arise from different priorities, objectives, interests, funding, and operating mechanisms.

////// THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE ////////////////

*From Response to Resilience, Maiduguri, Nigeria
IRC, ACTED and IMPACT, 2020*

In order to address the multi-faced challenges facing the population in urban Maiduguri, the project "From Response to Resilience", implemented by a consortium of three partners (International Rescue Committee), ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives) was initiated. The objective of the project is system strengthening for multi-purpose response, including disaster risk reduction, durable solutions for displacement, livelihoods, wash, and urban resilience for communities. The project inception phase included an in-depth stakeholder mapping exercise at both bottom and top governance levels to identify and engage stakeholders from every sector of intervention. This developed constructive relationships with local stakeholders, institutional partners and sector experts from the outset.



2.3

THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH INVOLVES MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

In this section you will learn



1 What local systems, knowledge and relationships can bring to a response

2 Why empowering local stakeholders generates a more sustainable response

3 Why an understanding of stakeholders' expertise, mandates, and capacity is crucial

RATIONALE

The settlements approach emphasises coordination and collaboration across multiple and diverse stakeholders. Those stakeholders represent multiple sectors and both directly and indirectly affected communities. The settlements approach encourages humanitarian agencies to engage with local stakeholders who usually have little interaction with the humanitarian national coordination system. When local stakeholders collaborate based on principles of equality, transparency, responsibility, and complementarity, the response can be more comprehensive. Affected communities are also more likely to accept it. In parallel, strong collaboration with existing humanitarian actors remains key.

It is crucial to understand the existing characteristics and relationships in a community so that the needs can be adequately addressed. Local stakeholders representing marginalised groups can ensure that the local contexts are considered, and needs are addressed.

Institutional partners can include:

- city or municipal officials
- local or regional governments
- administrative bodies and technical public agencies
- sectoral ministries

Other local stakeholders can include:

- traditional leadership structures such as community leaders
- civil society organisations like community-based organisations
- local non-governmental organisations
- opinion leaders
- local faith-based groups
- service providers such as formal or community-run service management units
- public or private utilities
- economic groups and professional organisations
- diaspora organisations
- academics; and
- aid agencies intervening in the area

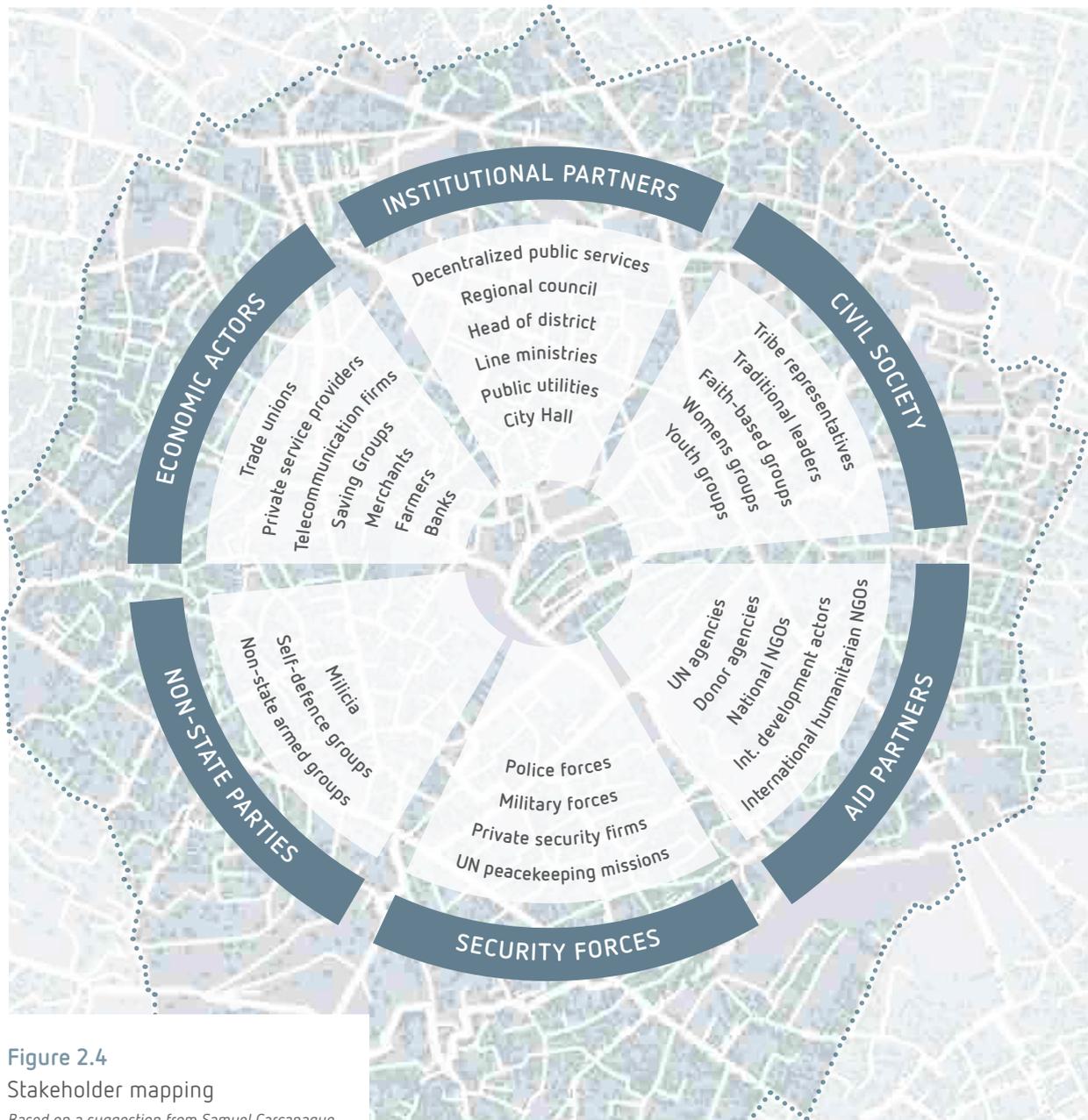


Figure 2.4
Stakeholder mapping

Based on a suggestion from Samuel Carcanague

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While a useful starting point, the above lists need to be tailored to the local context of the intervention, and translated into a more nuanced understanding of who are the stakeholders at play. **Figure 2.4** proposes overviews what a more granular understanding of local stakeholders might look like.

While the mission of each stakeholder may differ, each stakeholder has a particular specialty and capacity to inform, engage, respond, and contribute to the efforts of emergency and recovery efforts. Working in silos and in parallel risks misreading the needs of the population and not understanding the socio-economic context.

Collaboration through participatory processes requires time, planning, resources, commitment, and consensus. Building on existing local governance systems and participatory structures can simplify the collaboration process while also enhancing long-term resilience. Where new structures are required, they should complement rather than duplicate the existing ones. The role of stakeholders and the partnership structure can evolve over time, from provision of basic information to an advisory or implementation role (see **Section 3.3**).

**KEY PRINCIPLE 2.3.1****A range of stakeholders represents various segments of the community or specialised sectors**

At the local level, humanitarian agencies tend to engage predominantly with traditional leaders and representatives, such as tribal chiefs. This can lead to an overrepresentation of dominant social strata. Working through traditional structures can limit or bias understanding of the context in which most of the population lives. It may therefore reinforce structural inequalities. For example, in out-of-camp displacement contexts, displaced populations may not have direct access to local representation and leadership structures in the host community.

Stakeholder groups have their own specialty and capacity to contribute to the response. However it is vital to include stakeholders who represent marginalised groups to ensure that the humanitarian response achieves the desired impact.

Local stakeholder collaboration can reach large numbers of people from all parts of the community. Bringing multiple stakeholders from various backgrounds together promotes understanding and addresses existing inequalities. Importantly, it facilitates communal responses which go beyond individually targeted assistance. This amplifies the voices of communities that would otherwise be neglected.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 2.3.2****Different local stakeholders have different engagement needs**

Collaboration must be appropriate and accessible to all stakeholders, so it should reflect preferred means of engagement and communication. This contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the context and ensures that all local stakeholders are given a say. Stakeholders' characteristics vary, as well as their ability to connect to humanitarian, development interlocutors or institutions.

Collaboration methods should offer a safe space for unbiased discussion and consensus building. It is crucial to understand the relationships between stakeholders. This requires an understanding of dependencies, influence, power dynamics, economic interests, access to basic services, and social safety nets. It is also crucial to understand how engagement can benefit local stakeholders the most, depending on their sector of expertise, capacity-building needs and level of influence in decision-making processes. The engagement strategy with each of the local stakeholders should adapt accordingly.

Stakeholders might collaborate through established coordination mechanisms such as the clusters. However, mechanisms outside of formal structures, either existing or new, might be acceptable to some stakeholders. Examples include the local chamber of commerce, farmers association, or a gender advocacy group.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.3.3

Existing local stakeholder engagement structures are likely to be the most effective

Where there is history of collaboration between local stakeholders of different community groups, sectors and institutions, they share information and opinions more freely, make linkages, and reach consensus more quickly. They can use their collective resources, including their network. A crisis response can bring fresh direction and impetus to these existing collaborations to quickly address needs generated by a crisis.

Similarly, a stronger connection between humanitarian actors and local stakeholders can bring the mutual and long-term benefits of trust and improved capacity. However, engaging local stakeholders in a new direction – which is often the case when a crisis occurs – poses risks. For example, established groups can reject new ideas that do not conform to the groups' usual way of working. They can create bias towards a particular stakeholder group, such as newly arrived displaced communities, damage relationships due to controversial decisions, or damage reputations due to an inability to respond to new demands.

Building on existing local governance, informal representation, and other participatory structures can facilitate collaboration and representation. Existing structures may not have the character or capacity to contribute to a humanitarian response, so strengthening existing support structures might be necessary. Providing incentives to make them more inclusive and aware of the humanitarian principles is often necessary. Creating new structures from scratch should be the last-resort strategy. These should always complement existing structures rather than duplicate them.

Collaboration with local stakeholders and the community should continue throughout the programme cycle, including design, implementation, and evaluation stages. Collaboration is relevant to all activities, including data analysis, decision making and resource allocation. It offers opportunities for stakeholders to inform and influence the response and sets the foundations for new partnerships.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **LACK OF ENGAGEMENT.** Local stakeholder collaboration can face barriers such as weak participation, mistrust, imbalance of influence, or insufficient time or resources.
- ▶ **ENGAGING AT MULTIPLE LEVELS.** Collaborating with all stakeholders with a direct or indirect interest in the target settlement brings together multiple representatives at different levels. Such a diverse network of relationships may result in conflicting positions between stakeholders. Managing this can be challenging.
- ▶ **ACHIEVING GENUINE REPRESENTATION.** Many traditional community leaders, local authorities, and other groups may not represent the whole community, particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups. Contexts such as conflict zones or where human rights violations are common can be especially challenging because local authorities may object to engaging with certain stakeholders. In some contexts, civil society stakeholders may be unable to express their point of view, face security risks and/or prefer to remain invisible.

Potential challenges



THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE

Master plan, Haiti
WE-SPORA

In 2013 American Red Cross commissioned The Environment Working group (WE-SPORA) to produce a master plan to improve an earthquake-damaged low-income residential area in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. WE-SPORA was a partnership between an urban planning consultancy (WE Architecture) and a social research consultancy (SPORA). The area was home to 7,000 people. The process required significant participation by local stakeholders, particularly local institutions and the community. It was validated through a steering committee.

The process recognised the variety of local stakeholders and their capacity to represent community groups and sectors in the settlement. WE-SPORA ensured marginalised groups were represented in all discussions. They did that not only by ensuring a gender and age balance, but also by ensuring that community leaders did not dominate the discussion. This led to a high level of acceptance of the plan by the whole community.

To gather input from community groups, the process used collaboration tools such as thematic discussions, voting, and community mapping. Interviews were held with representatives of institutions. The input from all stakeholders was combined and discussed at a steering committee with representatives of all stakeholders. Local institutional stakeholders led the process so there was significant buy-in. The capacity they built enabled them to use the same methodology with other partners for several other masterplan processes.

2.4

THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH CONSIDERS THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE POPULATION

In this section you will learn



- 1 What the “whole population” means
- 2 Why settlement-level community engagement structures can promote a more comprehensive response
- 3 Why an inclusive, participatory approach strengthens protection

RATIONALE

Just because people live in the same geographical area does not mean that the population is homogenous or even cohesive. Thus, the settlements approach requires active and sustained engagement with the whole population from the outset. The “whole population” refers to all community members who live in or depend on resources in the target settlement. It includes people directly and indirectly affected by the crisis, regardless of factors including their sex, gender, socio-economic level, ethnic or cultural origin, or their migration or legal status. Accordingly, the settlements approach recognises that needs are complex and cross-cutting. Needs relate not only to a specific disaster or displacement, but also to other factors including level of social integration and access to services. Importantly, some groups might live or work in a crisis-affected area without being directly affected by the crisis. Those groups may have the capacity or resources to influence or participate in the response.

By engaging the whole population, the settlements approach ensures accountability and inclusive representation throughout the programme cycle to determine needs and solutions. This requires humanitarian agencies to have a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, socio-economic structures, religious or ethnic divisions, and different vulnerabilities. It’s important to recognise and consider the relationships and tensions, as these have implications for the engagement, implementation, and outcomes. Ideally, the population engagement should be consistent and coordinated amongst all stakeholders. This ensures a coherent and equitable response that goes beyond individual needs, such as food distribution, shelter, or latrines. Instead, it promotes communal solutions including sustainability considerations such as collective maintenance and local ownership of communal infrastructure.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.4.1

Understanding the diverse population and key components for community engagement is essential

It is likely that people in the same settlement belong to different spatial and social groups. It is essential to build a deep understanding of such diversity and the relationships within and between them and with external stakeholders.

Engaging effectively with each of these community groups requires an understanding of several factors:

- The different communities that exist in the population, especially the vulnerable or marginalised communities that might otherwise be overlooked, excluded, or both.
- The conditions that affect social dynamics, needs, access to services, protection, and influence. Such conditions can include gender, displacement status, place of origin, religion, ethnicity, vulnerability, and socio-economic status.
- Common practices for social communication, participation, problem solving and decision making used by different groups within the settlement.
- How people relate to or use the settlement's private and public physical spaces.

Understanding these factors is an iterative process and requires an effective comprehension of community representation structures and feedback. It requires time, resources, and specific soft skills relating to community facilitation, and communication. A deep knowledge of the population enables humanitarian actors to uphold the do-no-harm principle in planning and implementation, and to better define strategies for community representation and engagement.



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.4.2

A joint community engagement strategy promotes an inclusive and participatory approach

Humanitarian agencies intervening in the same settlement should coordinate and adopt a joint community engagement strategy. A joint community engagement strategy promotes a coordinated way to approach community engagement. It provides a common platform to bring together the whole population and address multiple needs. All stakeholders should collaborate, coordinate, and consolidate initiatives with settlement representatives and/or within community structures. This allows the population to guide and drive the actions of different partners, and it helps humanitarian agencies to take stock of achievements and shortcomings from previous interventions. It also streamlines communication, ownership and accountability.

All initiatives must be accessible to all stakeholders, regardless of their language, literacy level or cultural preferences. They should be able to provide feedback freely. The engagement strategy, and any tools or information associated with it may need to be adapted to enable feedback by the whole population.

Without a joint approach to community engagement, existing community structures may overlap with or duplicate each other. This could cause confusion and uncertainty. Different settlements may require different numbers and types of community representation structures.

The decision on whether to create new representation structures and/or to develop existing ones must involve community members themselves, as well as local stakeholders. An analysis of the power dynamics and settlement decision-making processes should inform this choice (see [Key Principle 2.4.1](#)).



KEY PRINCIPLE 2.4.3

Protection and do-no-harm principles are incorporated throughout the program cycle to ensure that no marginalised or vulnerable groups are left behind

Addressing the needs of the affected population and upholding the do-no-harm principle requires community structures that represent marginalised and vulnerable groups in coordination, planning, and decision-making. The structures must also be sensitive to the changes that occur in the settlement over time.

The representation or community structure should champion human rights and mainstream protection for all its participants. It should evaluate its initiatives and actions against the do-no-harm principle to make sure no group is left behind throughout the program cycle. Needs assessment and analysis should consider how the whole community is represented (or not) and any potential barriers they face in freely expressing their needs (see **Section 3.2**).

In the same way, during settlement identification (see **Section 3.1**), facilitate participation by as many communities as possible. For example, those communities with physical or cultural access restrictions in the settlements may recognise different boundaries to majority groups. The settlements approach promotes diversity and inclusion through participation. When a lead stakeholder is already in charge, that stakeholder should be validated by the broad community. This acceptance helps legitimise the approach and mobilise others in a context-sensitive manner. It can also help identify new stakeholders and facilitate participatory discussions.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **ENGAGEMENT TAKES TIME.** The more people are involved, the more time it will take to align availability and interests. Engagement can be difficult when there are existing tensions between different groups.
- ▶ **PROVIDING TIMELY ASSISTANCE WHEN CONSENSUS IS HARD TO REACH.** The urgency to deliver assistance does not always correspond to the time it takes to reach consensus. Thus, different stakeholders might need to identify different priorities and address them gradually.
- ▶ **UPHOLDING HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AMONG DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS.** Although stakeholders can agree on the humanitarian principles, individual interests may vary. Conflict zones or places where human rights violations are common can exacerbate these challenges.

////// THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE ////////////////

*Katye ('neighbourhood') programme, Ravine Pintade Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Global Communities*

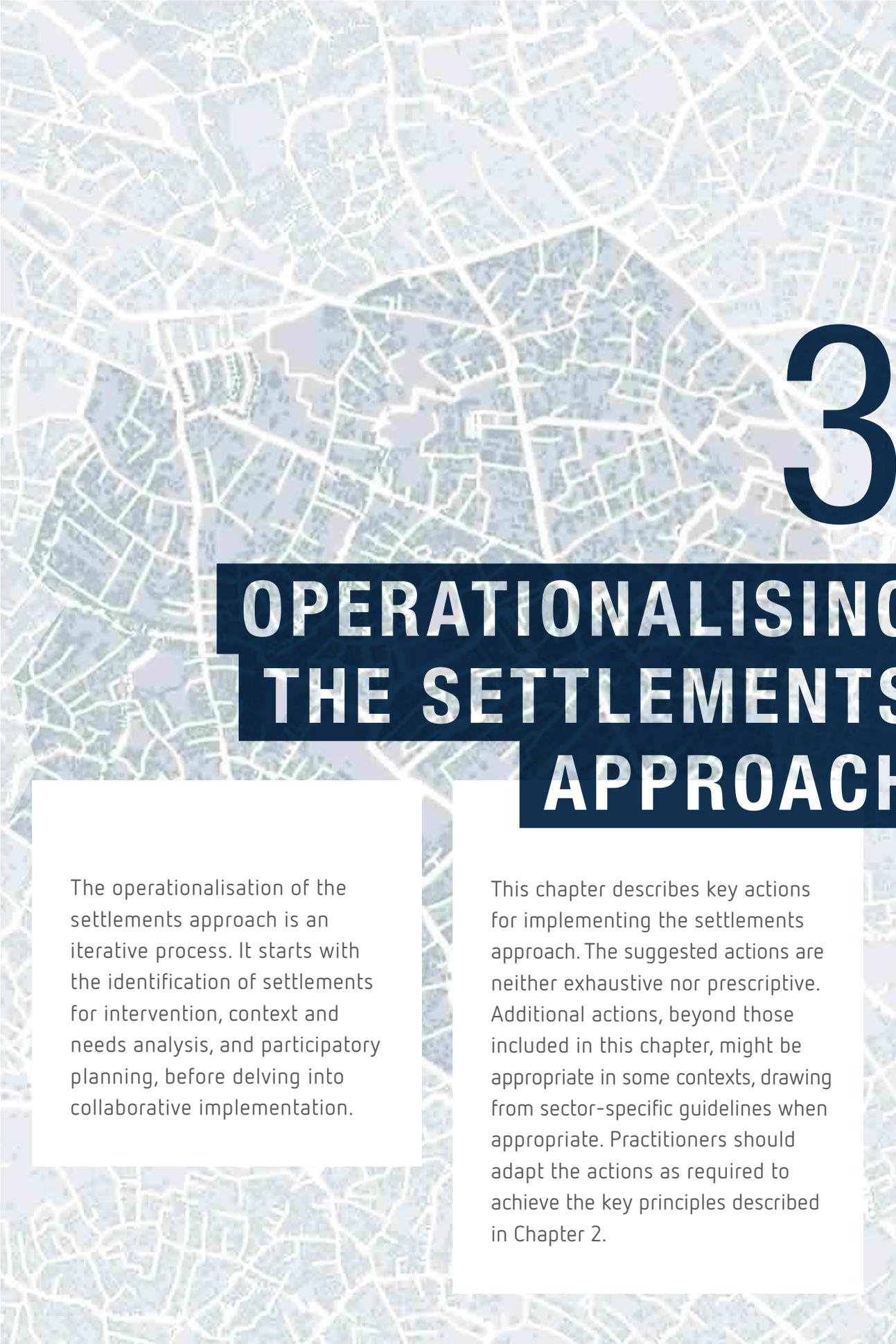
Despite having identified sub-neighbourhoods and leaders in advance, community members soon rejected the defined areas and claimed that leaders chosen did not represent them. So the programme approach was changed, decentralising and democratising its actions so all community members could be involved. To do this,

the programme office was relocated to the centre of the neighbourhood and worked with a large number of mobilisation staff who were easily accessible by the community. Rather than relying on a few community leaders, it established sub-committees in each sub-neighbourhood. The community was asked to identify needs and priorities at public events, and the mobilisation staff worked with each committee closely, informing residents about goals and methodology of the programme.

*Neighbourhood coordination, eastern Afghanistan
Norwegian Refugee Council*

Displaced and host communities were represented by neighbourhood committees, established through an 8-week participatory process. It included community assessments, stakeholder and neighbourhood mapping, and information campaign about the committees. Committees were trained in problem identification and solution, referrals, service mapping, and coordination. NRC facilitated the training at local levels with the involvement of neighbourhood committees and a range of local organisations, authorities, informal community leaders, and NGOs. This enabled the committees to address concerns prioritised by the community, including water supply, education, and health facilities.



An aerial photograph of a city street grid, showing a dense network of roads and buildings. The image is in a light blue and white color scheme, with the streets appearing as white lines on a blue background. A large, dark blue number '3' is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping the map and the title banner.

3

OPERATIONALISING THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH

The operationalisation of the settlements approach is an iterative process. It starts with the identification of settlements for intervention, context and needs analysis, and participatory planning, before delving into collaborative implementation.

This chapter describes key actions for implementing the settlements approach. The suggested actions are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. Additional actions, beyond those included in this chapter, might be appropriate in some contexts, drawing from sector-specific guidelines when appropriate. Practitioners should adapt the actions as required to achieve the key principles described in Chapter 2.

3.1

IDENTIFYING AND DELINEATING TARGET SETTLEMENTS

In this section you will learn



- 1 How to apply agreed vulnerability targeting criteria to locate settlements of concern
- 2 How to refine potential boundaries in partnership with local stakeholders and the population
- 3 How to monitor the ongoing appropriateness of the agreed boundary

RATIONALE

Not all human settlements within a geographic area like a city, municipality or district are equally affected by a crisis. Equally, not all local stakeholders have the capacity to intervene across a large area. Therefore, it is important to develop an agreed list of criteria for identifying target settlements. The criteria should be based on verifiable assumptions of where the highest needs and crisis-affected populations are likely to be located. Consulting with multiple sectors and local stakeholders (see [Section 2.3](#)) should ensure that the criteria are appropriate to the context and to the type and scale of the crisis. It will also ensure that the criteria reflect priority needs that align with both the perceptions of local communities and humanitarian response frameworks.

This section outlines how to identify which settlement(s) meet agreed criteria, and how to prioritise target settlements for programme implementation in later stages. Once criteria are established, partners can objectively identify settlements with high needs.

Once the target settlements are identified, the next step is to delineate and consolidate the possible boundaries shaping each settlement. The agreed settlement map that results from this will serve as an entry point for settlement-based interventions.

OVERALL GUIDANCE STATEMENT

- ▶ Work with multisectoral and local stakeholder representatives to determine and prioritise context-appropriate criteria for identifying crisis-affected settlements.
- ▶ Locate and select target settlements in agreement with relevant partners and local stakeholders.
- ▶ Delineate settlements using participatory mapping techniques with local communities. Consider geographic, political, economic, and community boundaries, noting that these boundaries may not coincide.
- ▶ Consider existing boundaries and how they may change as a result of the crisis.
- ▶ Ensure targeted assistance does not contribute to social tensions. Consider the impact of focused assistance and support not only within the target settlement, but also on neighbouring areas.
- ▶ Ensure continuous community and local stakeholder engagement when identifying, selecting, and delineating target settlements.



KEY ACTION 3.1.1

Work with partners to locate the settlements in which the crisis has the most impact on local populations

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Understand the localised impact of a crisis.** The settlements approach targets settlements where a humanitarian crisis has the most impact, and where the local communities have particularly high needs. High needs in specific settlements can be relevant across all humanitarian sectors, or within one or more specific sectors. All stakeholders should agree on the criteria for defining a target settlement. They should do this in the context of the type of crisis, humanitarian response, spatial scale, and local socio-cultural dimensions. It's important to consider factors other than the absolute number of households with high needs. For instance, low density settlements at the edge of a crisis-affected area may have higher needs than densely populated central settlements. That may be because they have limited access to centralised resources as a result of geographic distances or other barriers.
- ▶ **Use secondary data to locate crisis-affected settlements.** The process for identifying these target settlements will be iterative. During the first days of an emergency, rough data from initial field reports, emergency-team sit-reps, or aerial/satellite imagery, may be sufficient to create an initial list of locations to visit and do further verification work. This may be followed by further cycles of location exploration before a final selection can be made. Consult pre-crisis literature to identify settlements that have been suffering structural vulnerabilities that might exacerbate the impact of the crisis. Literature review and preliminary consultations with local stakeholders can explain how the community views their settlement in terms of scale and socio-economic units. This will help determine the most appropriate entry point to engage local communities in defining their settlement. That needs to reflect how they define settlements in the local context, including as a neighbourhood, district, borough, ward, locality, community, or village.
- ▶ **Develop criteria jointly with partners.** Defining criteria for settlement targeting with partners ensures buy-in and collective engagement from the outset. The selection criteria should consider already-known systemic vulnerabilities. For instance, in a displacement context, partners might agree to target those settlements most affected by displacement. City or district authorities must be included in the process. Then, locate the settlements across the larger area of concern which best meet these criteria.
- ▶ **Include secondary data review and field observation.** Use an observation grid and record interviews with traditional leaders. Use a matrix to transparently communicate the results of the secondary data review and field observation with partners involved in the selection.



KEY ACTION 3.1.2

Create combined mapping of relevant boundaries across highly affected settlements

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Review existing data.** A secondary data review can identify existing community and administrative boundaries. It can also provide information about available or utilised services,

infrastructure, and markets. A secondary data review will also help to identify stakeholders to participate in focus groups for participatory mapping. These might include service providers, community members, community-based organisations, and local government.

- ▶ **Undertake participatory mapping.** A participatory approach helps agencies understand how different communities are (or are not) aligned along geographical lines. It contributes to an intimate understanding of the settlement and can help to define the catchment areas for community representation structures (see [Section 2.4](#)) and for basic services. Participatory mapping can be done in different ways, with varying degrees of technological sophistication. For instance, a GPS-tracked walk for settlement delineation with community leaders can generate a geo-referenced boundary of target settlements. Community focus group discussions can facilitate mapping of significant settlement features. Seek the views of different population groups (representing different demographic groups, places of origin) in different sessions. That is a powerful way to triangulate the perception of community boundaries and access to basic services. It shows where and why these perceptions may vary across population groups. Include a diverse range of perspectives to understand what makes each target settlement a unique place. Participatory mapping should focus on the target settlement, and therefore needs to be facilitated in a way that avoids a focus on individual household-level issues and needs, even if they are mentioned as examples.
- ▶ **Produce different types of maps for each target settlement.** The maps generated through participatory exercises can give an overview of several interrelated features. They may show the way different population groups perceive different boundaries, such as administrative boundaries, natural boundaries, disaster prone areas, infrastructure networks, community areas, and service catchment areas.



KEY ACTION 3.1.3

Ensure that the identified boundaries consider vulnerable or marginalised populations

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Apply the do-no-harm principle.** Be aware of any protection risks in the target settlement. The settlement may include dispersed minority groups, such as ethnic or religious groups. The community and service areas which they themselves define may not correspond to the boundaries that the broader population recognises. In many cases, marginalised population groups represent a minority of the local community and are especially vulnerable.
- ▶ **Adjust boundaries to include new influxes and consider programmatic implications.** In fluid situations, population displacement may continue for a long time after the first days of the emergency. This can result in the arrival of newly displaced populations within the settlement, or in the spatial expansion of the settlement. These changes may necessitate a review of the boundaries of the programme target areas. The departure of initially displaced populations or arrival of new population groups can have specific implications for programming.
- ▶ **Monitor household relocation.** Some households may relocate from adjacent settlements to access more support. Establish a mechanism to monitor that and respond as necessary.



KEY ACTION 3.1.4

Prioritise the boundaries to work with and reconcile any inconsistencies between different types of boundaries

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Agree on the boundaries to use.** Use the outputs of the participatory mapping exercise to agree which boundaries to use for the settlement-based intervention. If the boundaries are defined inconsistently, facilitate a process to ensure a mutual understanding of the defined boundaries, at the very least, for the implementation of the programme.
- ▶ **Align programming with those boundaries.** The spatial coverage of a settlement-based program will align with these agreed boundaries. Delineating agreed boundaries for each settlement avoids artificially creating new socio-spatial units. It prevents humanitarian programmes establishing their own governing bodies, councils, committees and planning groups in the target settlements, not aligned with the local governance and social networks around them. Ensure that the target settlement is at a scale at which humanitarian organisations and local stakeholders have capacity to intervene.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **REINFORCING SOCIAL TENSION.** Defining boundaries and focusing assistance on specific settlements can create tensions with surrounding areas or between stakeholders who would not receive support.
- ▶ **PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS AND VULNERABILITIES.** Some marginalised groups may prefer to remain invisible, due to fears about the consequences of being included in mapping or registration exercises. Exercise extreme care to ensure that confidentiality and data security is always provided for everyone.
- ▶ **HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY, TENURE SECURITY, AND LAND–USE ZONING.** The risk of forced eviction, either of individual households or entire communities, has in the past sometimes paralysed settlements approach programming. It's been a particular issue in areas where lack of tenure security and land property rights are the norm. Where households occupy portions of land not zoned for housing or live in informal settlements, engaging local governments in participatory mapping exercises may highlight irregular land-use issues. This may put these populations at greater risk of eviction. However, it can also highlight opportunities to negotiate with local authorities for zoning waivers or secure tenure. This could support safe and dignified occupancy until more sustainable solutions are available. They may also be a basis to develop realistic, incremental support for security of tenure during and after the humanitarian programming.

INDICATORS

- ▶ The scale of the target settlement considers a range of socio-cultural factors, identified areas of need, and different types of settlement boundaries.
- ▶ The selection of target settlements is undertaken in an evidence-based and participatory manner, on the basis of clear vulnerability criteria.

- ▶ Target settlement boundaries reflect definitions by the communities inhabiting them, at a scale at which aid partners and service providers have capacity to intervene.
- ▶ Target settlement boundaries are informed and agreed by local stakeholders (local authorities, civil society) and international actors (humanitarian, development organisations).
- ▶ Target settlement reflects the acuteness of needs, and vulnerabilities, without exacerbating existing or foreseeable local tensions.

////// THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE //////////////

Integrated intervention, Tripoli, Lebanon Solidarité International

Over one million people fled to Lebanon from Syria when the crisis started, and its protracted condition forced them to remain longer than they expected. In Tripoli these refugees found cheap rental housing, however, the buildings and communities were sub-standard, thus increasing the people's needs. Solidarité International initiated a multisectoral project that also involved authorities and communities as partners.

The project generated a defined target settlement in four stages:

- *identify sub-neighbourhoods*
- *conduct initial community engagement and identify focal points*
- *profile the community*
- *select sites based on the available data and resources.*

One of the lessons highlights that identifying neighbourhood boundaries can easily create tensions. The agreed boundary should be delineated in consultation with local leaders, even if it does not match administrative boundaries.

The project was able to complete its outputs from housing to public spaces. The latter even attracted host community residents, refugees, and people from nearby neighbourhoods, supporting social cohesion, dignity and pride.

Flexible mapping, Garbek, South Sudan REACH

In a mapping exercise in South Sudan, none of the focus group discussion participants could read a map. Instead of presenting maps, enumerators therefore read off local place names from a prepared list to determine ethnic areas of origin. It is important to have a contingency plan which uses place names, street names, or landmarks as a means of completing the participatory mapping when participants have limited map literacy.



3.2

APPLYING THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH TO CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In this section you will learn



1

How to analyse the operational context

2

How to identify and prioritise diverse needs

3

How to analyse stakeholders' capacities to meet those needs

RATIONALE

A coordinated approach to assessing an emergency and prioritising the needs and capacities of affected people lays the foundation for coherent and efficient response planning. The targeting of specific crisis-affected settlements allows a more granular analysis of local communities than assessments conducted at a more dispersed scale. It also provides an in-depth understanding of the network of local stakeholders, to inform the settlement response plan.

OVERALL GUIDANCE STATEMENT

- ▶ Situation and response monitoring systems rely on numerous baseline components, including:
 - A nuanced understanding of the overall context of the communities in need in the target settlement.
 - Mapping of the various actors, the role they play and services they provide.
 - A multisector understanding of the needs and capacities of (often diverse) affected populations.
- ▶ To achieve these, the settlements approach recommends the following research methods:
 - A review of existing data held by local, national, or international actors. This reduces required time and resources by reducing duplicated data collection efforts and the likelihood of assessment fatigue. It can also identify gaps.
 - A variety of data collection methodologies for ground-level assessments to choose the most appropriate method(s) based on the data needs and the context.
 - An understanding of both demand and supply of services is important to ensure, when developing subsequent response plans, that existing services are strengthened, rather than solely creating new and often temporary support services which may run in parallel to existing service providers.
- ▶ A growing number of tools exist for humanitarian and development actors to understand the specific context of a target settlement. These are listed in the References and Resources section at the end of this Guidance Note.



KEY ACTION 3.2.1

Gain a thorough understanding of the context of the target settlement

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Analyse the context.** Understanding the context of a target settlement can improve humanitarian response and support the recovery of affected populations. A context analysis should build on existing information, such as secondary data and relevant literature. It should provide a holistic, shared understanding of what's happening and how things are interconnected. Core components of context analysis include:
 - economy and livelihoods
 - politics and governance
 - services and infrastructure, social and cultural
 - space and settlements
 - stakeholder dynamics.

- ▶ **Separate context analysis from needs assessment.** A context analysis provides a broader overview of the local situation than a needs assessment. Context analysis describes the target settlement within the larger geographic area where it is located. It can inform subsequent needs assessment exercises. For example, it can indicate how to frame survey questions and indicators in a context-sensitive manner. It can also contextualise research questions and response options better. However, especially given the nature of a sudden onset disasters, this may not always be possible.

- ▶ **Conduct a context analysis.** While methodologies and processes vary, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises has highlighted recommended practices to improve the effectiveness of context analysis. These practices are applicable to both rural and urban contexts:¹³
 - **Use existing data.** A profiling or context analysis exercise is heavily informed by a secondary data review. This will often include data from the municipality, essential service providers, universities or technical institutions and civil society. It's in addition to information from humanitarian sources gathered directly in response to the crisis. Secondary data should be validated in targeted key informant interviews, with experts from specific sectors, and triangulated with the findings from forthcoming settlement-based needs assessments. The date of existing data is important because changes may have occurred that the existing data has missed.
 - **Keep people at the centre.** A context analysis must consider how a community in a settlement is organised, taking into account differences within the identified settlement. This requires recognising that populations are diverse, as are their needs, challenges faced, and opportunities for specific groups of people.
 - **Consider change over time.** The severity of a crisis is better understood when compared with what was considered normal for that specific settlement before the crisis. Context analysis helps compare present vulnerabilities with past conditions, to explore what caused the changes over time. It is important to recognise that the context remains dynamic. It may change throughout the crisis cycle, including as a result of crisis response.

¹³ Global Alliance for Urban Crises, 2019

- ▶ **When operating in urban environments, analyse the city as a whole.** The different systems and sectors in an urban context are interlinked, as are the needs of the populations. It is therefore important to understand the differences and connections within a town or city. This generates tailored and prioritised interventions that are specific to each target settlement, while leveraging the linkages within urban systems (see **Section 3.3**). Addressing one need might require action in, or have implications for other sectors and at a higher geographical level. For example, fixing electricity supply infrastructure to ensure access to piped water.



KEY ACTION 3.2.2

Gain an understanding of stakeholder dynamics through stakeholder mapping

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Identify key stakeholders.** Stakeholder mapping is a key step to gain a nuanced understanding of key stakeholders and their respective interests within and outside of target settlements. Stakeholder mapping may be an inherent component of a larger, comprehensive context analysis or profiling exercise. However, in contexts with less resources, or in a sudden onset crisis, a stakeholder mapping exercise is an essential step. It allows responders to:
 - Identify key stakeholders to coordinate with, including prominent civil society organisations, community-based organisations, informal community leaders, influential groups and institutions, private sector businesses and influencers, and other aid organisations.
 - Understand complex and multiple levels of governance, including service provision, infrastructure and planning processes, and traditional decision-making mechanisms, which may impede or enable the settlement response.
 - Conduct a stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis needn't be complex, but it should be as thorough as time and resources allow. Although there are numerous variations, a stakeholder analysis may take the shape of examples illustrated in **Figure 3.1** and **Figure 3.2**.

Figure 3.1 Example of a simple stakeholder analysis template

| Name of actor | Sector | Basic role | Level of operation (national, regional, city, municipal) | Benefits of engagement | Risk of not coordinating |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Figure 3.2 Example of a detailed stakeholder analysis template

| Name of actor | Type of actor (e.g. NGO, UN, local ministry, CSO) | Basic role | Level of operation (national, regional, city, municipal) | Potential influence on affected population (brief : 10-15 words) | Type of influence (positive, negative or mixed) | Importance to future programmes (how critical is the actor to the success of future programmes) | How might the implementing organisation engage with the actor? (at what stage of the project and in what context, with what capacity) | Why might the actor engage with the implementing organisation? (what interest or incentive would they have/need) |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- ▶ **Map existing initiatives.** Use local contacts and knowledge to identify activities carried out by local community organisations or faith communities, professional or trade groups, academic institutions, or diaspora groups, who often have considerable capacities but remain under the radar of aid organisations. Also identify interventions carried out by the more obvious actors such as local aid organisations or municipal services. Support provided can range from ad hoc distributions of winter clothing collections to wide-scale distributions as implementing partners of international NGOs. The stakeholder analysis process will help look more holistically at who is doing what in the target settlement. Identifying who is already providing or could provide the solutions will inform both the response plan (see **Section 3.3**) and implementation strategy (see **Section 3.4**).
- ▶ **Link to other actors.** Stakeholder mapping and analysis should also link to the roles and responsibilities of actors intervening at a larger scale than the target settlement. Such actors include public or private health services servicing multiple settlements or an entire municipality, utility providers, and existing supply chains. That contributes to longer-term development goals and strengthens the capacity of local systems.



KEY ACTION 3.2.3

Tailor needs assessments methods to the local context

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Consider needs and capacities.** A comprehensive needs assessment is a key instrument for aid agencies to target beneficiaries. It also sets a baseline for measuring the impact of an intervention. In the settlements approach, a needs and capacities assessment does not only consider the affected populations in the target settlement. It also considers the capacities of the affected population, and the local service providers. It therefore covers both needs (demand) and services (supply). This differs from many needs assessment exercises which primarily consider needs from a beneficiary perspective and not also from a service providers' perspective. Such an assessment offers the ability to assess the coverage of a programme, an important element when considering programming and standards of response.
- ▶ **Include key elements.** Overall, a settlements-based needs assessment should:
 - apply to a defined settlement (see **Section 3.1**)
 - triangulate information to provide a multisectoral perspective (see **Section 2.2**)
 - consider the views of service providers and other stakeholders as well as these of the affected population
 - engage segments of the entire population (see **Section 2.4**).
- ▶ **Develop an appropriate scope.** The needs assessment should:
 - Be documented for reference, detailing research questions and data collection methods. It should be communicated to partners early enough to incorporate their feedback before data collection starts.
 - Avoid collecting data that already exists, or that does not have a direct relevance to the settlement-based response. It should take stock of the key findings of the context analysis and stakeholder mapping to prioritise research areas.

► **Design the needs assessment methodology.** The needs assessment should:

- Be time and resource-efficient, as well as locally appropriate. Consider that some population groups may be harder to reach – especially at certain times of day or in certain locations. Consult with the local authorities and leaders to cross-check that group discussions, in-person, telephone, or online surveys are relevant. Confirm if any of those applies to specific profiles of respondents more than others.
- Adopt the right sampling frame to capture the views of the target respondents at the appropriate geographical scale. Use the boundaries of the target settlement as the main sampling unit. Consider using geospatial sampling techniques to divide the settlement into sub-areas if it's a large area (comprising several villages or neighbourhoods for example). Cluster sampling techniques are useful to avoid mixing different population groups when investigating potential differences in living conditions between them. Other sampling techniques based on spatial regroupings are also relevant to plan the appropriate number of interviews to conduct in each geographical area, depending on population density for example.
- Capture the needs of specific population groups both on their own and in relation to the broader population. Put that in perspective with the capacities of service providers in the settlement. Plan to include a diversity of population members in the methodology to capture the views of all population groups as well as local stakeholders.
- Adapt interview questions and response options to the local context. Consult with local stakeholders and sector experts identified during the stakeholder mapping to formulate research questions which are tailored to the local context.

Figure 3.3 outlines key information that assessments should gather as part of the settlements approach. Whether through a broader settlement or multisectoral assessment or a specific exercise, it should build a picture of the community.

Figure 3.3 Key information to collect

| ASSESSMENT FOCUS | POTENTIAL METHODOLOGY | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| | SDR | KII | HH survey | Focus Group Discussions |
| Component I: Identifying the existing service coverage and capacity (supply) | | | | |
| Identify and map location of services and primary infrastructure (water, sewage, electrical/power, healthcare, education, main roads) and the stakeholders responsible within the target neighbourhoods | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Identify and map complementary assistance (humanitarian and development) by national and international organisations and civil society within target neighbourhoods, including previous, current and planned initiatives | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Identify and map current municipal and complementary assistance service catchment areas | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Identify coordination networks/relationships between stakeholders, within and across service, barriers to access | | ✓ | | ✓ |

| Component II: Needs assessment (demand) | SDR | KII | HH survey | Focus Group Discussions |
|--|-----|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| Identify primary needs of diverse population groups living in target locations | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify primary barriers faced by the population in terms of accessing services | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify which areas or infrastructure are considered safe/unsafe, in need of development, most popular | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify how people express needs and ideas regarding services and how they receive information about services available | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify how people make their voices heard and how problems are dealt with by the population | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify how information spreads within the area and how people know and interact with their neighbours | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

● SDR = Secondary Data Review; KII = Key Informants Interviews; HH surveys = Household surveys; FGD = Focus Group Discussions



KEY ACTION 3.2.4

Collect primary data on needs and capacities of populations in the target settlement

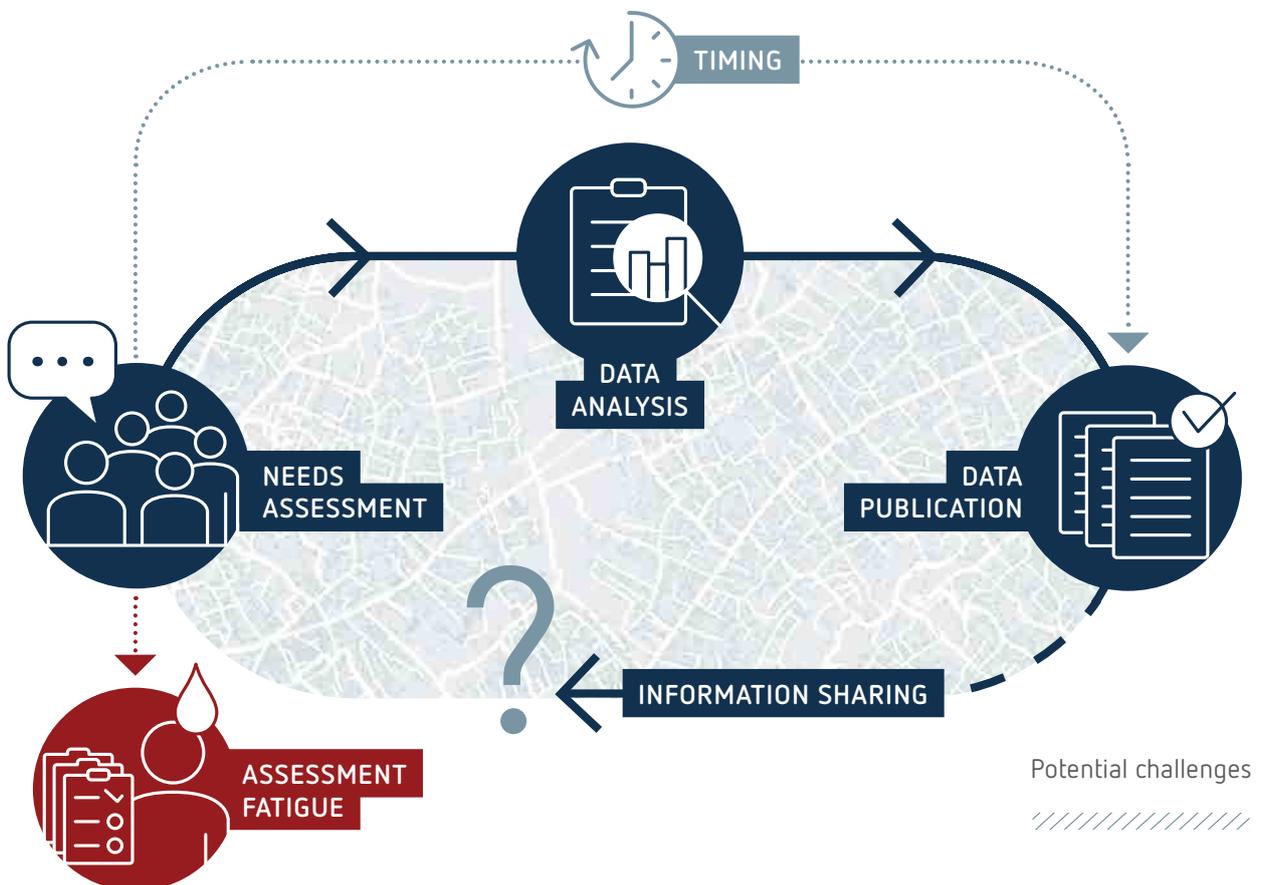
GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Rely on a well-trained field team for data collection.** Make sure your data collection team has ownership of the assessment method and tools. Field teams should be able to contact local authorities and other key stakeholders. Whenever possible, hire team members from the community. If interviews with specific population groups need to be conducted in a local language, provide appropriate translation services.
- ▶ **Raise awareness within the community.** Work with local leaders to mobilise respondents and schedule interviews at an appropriate time.
- ▶ **Be as engaging and interactive as possible for respondents.** Often, affected populations are overwhelmed with assessments and reproach aid organisation for getting little in return for giving out information. Consider adopting a Participatory Learning and Action approach in the assessment to learn about and engage the population.
- ▶ **Pre-identify marginalised populations.** Marginalised populations may be hidden, perhaps deliberately. This might be due to fear of ethnic, religious, or political discrimination, or lack of identification or registration status. Identify these groups through connections and networks in the area including community-based organisations and representation structures where they exist. Establish mechanisms such as drop-in centres, kiosk, or safe houses through which marginalised people can self-identify.

- ▶ **Follow a collaborative, locally owned process.** The process for collecting and analysing information is as important as the results. Bringing together as many stakeholders as possible is vital to strengthen validation, analysis and decision-making processes. Consider municipal governments and their technical departments, local-built environment professionals, civil society, affected communities, and specialised international expertise. Once data is collected, analyse it within a jointly developed analysis framework and analysis plan.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **TIMING.** The multisectoral, multi-method and context-specific nature of settlement-based needs assessment means that they often take longer to design and undertake than standardised sector-specific assessments. Dedicate sufficient time to consult with local stakeholders and sector experts to contextualise the data collection tools. This applies especially for groups or questions for which the lead organisation does not have prior expertise.
- ▶ **INFORMATION SHARING.** Foster local ownership of assessment data and make sure it is widely available. Broadcasting and information sharing channels usually used by humanitarian organisations are not always easily accessible to local institutional stakeholders and community groups who have participated in the assessment.
- ▶ **ASSESSMENT FATIGUE.** In both protracted and sudden onset crisis, assessment fatigue is a commonly reported challenge.



INDICATORS

- ▶ Context analysis, stakeholder mapping, and needs assessment are the result of a collaborative process.
- ▶ Context analysis has relied on existing data and engagement with partners to minimise time and resource investments and reduce the risk of assessment fatigue for affected populations.
- ▶ A stakeholder mapping exercise, informed by proactive analysis of community dynamics and structures, has been conducted.
- ▶ A multisector assessment methodology has been informed by preliminary context analysis and designed in consultation with experts and local actors to gain a thorough understanding of the settlement.
- ▶ Affected community members and vulnerable minority groups have been closely involved in data gathering and assessment processes.
- ▶ Ethical data protection standards have been followed at all stages of the assessment and research cycles.

////// THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE //////////////

Settlement-based assessments, Ar-Raqqa, northeast Syria REACH and Syria NES

The settlement-based assessments provided a comprehensive overview of the situation across the city, including more detailed assessments at the neighbourhood level. Due to a fluctuating security context, the methodology and tools utilised throughout the area-based assessment required flexibility. This resulted in different information being gathered, depending on the available access.

To provide both a city overview and more detailed analysis in target locations, the settlement-based assessment was undertaken in three phases:

- *Phase I: Returns, population and access mapping*
- *Phase II: Service and infrastructure mapping and damage assessment*
- *Phase III: Neighbourhood-level needs assessment and service access mapping*

Findings from the initial assessment identified a series of immediate priority needs in relation to shelter, WASH, education, non-food items, and access to markets. The findings provided an overview of the city context, and highlighted priority needs and key messages for actors outside northeast Syria.

NGOs used the assessment findings to assist with their individual planning, programming, and field operations. Neighbourhood profiles served as a guide for working in each area.

The clear identification of gaps within and between neighbourhoods enabled outputs to be used by NES Forum and NES ISWG to assist with NGO response coordination.



3.3

APPLYING THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT RESPONSE PLANNING

In this section you will learn



1 How to engage the community in the settlement response planning process

2 How to build on existing plans and planning mechanisms to promote a more efficient and timely response

3 How to use the settlement response plan as a communication, accountability and advocacy tool

RATIONALE

A settlement response plan articulates a shared vision of how to respond to the needs of affected people. In the settlements approach, a settlement response plan optimises response outcomes for the defined settlement, to meet the needs of all population groups and across all sectors. It is directly informed by findings from the settlement-based needs assessment (see **Section 3.2**), including a data-driven measure of needs, vulnerabilities and capacities. A settlement response plan translates identified response gaps into actionable intervention strategies, in a participatory and inclusive manner. It relies on technical input from experts for sector-specific strategies and links to and complements planning strategies formulated at a higher level. The settlement response plan must be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the situation and continuously reflect on emerging information and analysis. It should therefore include a schedule for future reviews, and clear targets to measure the effectiveness of the plan.

Under the settlements approach, a response plan should:

- Prioritise needs and service delivery gaps, by drawing upon context analysis and needs assessment (**3.2**).
- Priority ranking should consider social, physical, natural, human, financial, and political dimensions.
- Determine the subsequent priorities and plans, including specific recommendations of both immediate and mid-term recovery priorities, and how this relates to complementary sector, cluster and local government plans.
- Clarify how engaged stakeholders can explicitly contribute towards addressing priority issues identified by the community.

OVERALL GUIDANCE STATEMENT

- ▶ Confirm the scale at which the settlement response plan should be formulated, in consultation with the local institutional stakeholders and implementing partners. Give coverage figures to illustrate outreach.
- ▶ Identify an entity to lead the settlement response planning process and periodic collaborative reviews.
- ▶ Facilitate a participatory process to jointly reflect on the needs and identify response priorities. Include the most vulnerable populations and consider appropriate standards of support.

- ▶ Ensure the settlement response planning process and the plan itself reflects the four core characteristics of the settlements approach shown in **Figure 1.1**:
 - **Define a specific geographic area with high needs:** align with the defined settlement borders.
 - **Work multi-sectorally:** consider a range of identified priority themes in the target location, as exhaustively as possible, and address the inter-sectoral nature of these needs.
 - **Work with multiple stakeholders:** ensure all actors currently, or intending to be operational in the defined location participate in the settlement response planning process.
 - **Consider the whole population:** consider the needs and capacities of the numerous and often diverse population groups residing in the target location.



KEY ACTION 3.3.1

Identify an entity to lead the settlement response planning process and periodic collaborative reviews at the appropriate spatial scale

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Agree on the scale.** Together with local institutional actors and aid partners, agree on the scale at which the settlement response plan should be developed. Remember that the settlements approach localises the response at the settlement level. In most cases, this process will be straightforward, as settlement boundaries have already been mapped (see **Section 3.1**) and needs identified (see **Section 3.2**). If an intervention spans multiple settlements, it can be beneficial to undertake settlement response planning at a larger scale. As such, this geographical scope of a settlement – or even of multiple settlements - is often too granular to be conducted in the framework of the national humanitarian coordination or regional local planning. Nevertheless, try to avoid overlaps and formulate local response strategies that don't contradict sector or municipal-level recommendations.
- ▶ **Nominate a leader.** Identify an entity to lead the settlement response planning process and periodic collaborative reviews. The most suitable leader will depend on the scale of the target settlement, local governance structure, and the network of aid partners. The leader could be an NGO, a civil society partner, or a local authority. They should be supported by a humanitarian or development agency such as OCHA or UNDP. Where possible, municipal or local government officials should manage this process. They may require technical assistance to facilitate the technical discussions. Partnering with local institutional representatives in this process allows participants from technical public agencies and public service providers to input to the settlement response plan.
- ▶ **Formalise the group.** It can be beneficial to formalise the planning working group, especially if staff turnover may cause loss of institutional memory. It will help sustain the planning group for forthcoming periodic reviews and monitoring cycles. Formalisation instruments can include terms of reference, members list, lead and co-lead agency, and a functioning budget. Avoid a lengthy administrative process that focuses on protocol which may delay the process.
- ▶ **Include partners at a high level.** Ensure that the settlement response planning process is co-led by an established and recognised working group or coordination body, such as an area-based, regional, city or inter-cluster working group. This makes it easier for decision makers at a higher level to endorse the settlement response plan. It will also facilitate

its integration into the municipal, regional or national coordination planning system when appropriate. Higher level engagement should strengthen linkages between the settlement-based strategy and other planning instruments.



KEY ACTION 3.3.2

Collaboratively agree on priority needs and develop common priority actions to the identified gaps

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Hold a workshop.** A joint analysis and planning workshop is a useful platform to prioritise needs and interventions identified in the settlement-based needs assessment. This provides a good forum for discussion, consensus building, and ownership around data-driven evidence. Invite all relevant stakeholders to participate (see Sections 2.3 and 3.2), including affected community populations, traditional leaders, institutional representatives, and civil society actors. Ideally, participants should reflect various profiles, backgrounds and technical expertise. So they can prioritise needs across a wide array of sector or group-specific issues.
- ▶ **Present the findings from the settlement-based assessment.** Have the participants confirm that the data and its interpretation by the data analysis team are correct. By acknowledging the analysis, participants will prioritise the challenges the settlement is facing, and formulate response scenarios that reflect local capacities. Use this workshop to confirm any assumptions that influence the settlement response planning and intervention strategies. For example, consider whether to include affected populations that reside outside the selected area but commute to it daily, including for work. Enable thematic planning. Facilitate break-out room discussions by themes, in which participants define intervention priorities and precise context-appropriate implementation modalities. Select participants on the basis of their profile and technical expertise for each break-out room session. Provide a clear response plan template to work from. Depending on the expected level of detail, guiding questions for the thematic settlement planning could be for each priority need identified:
 - Which is / are the necessary intervention(s)?
 - How should this/these intervention(s) be implemented?
 - Who should be in charge of implementing this intervention?
 - When should this intervention be implemented?
 - What is the approximate cost of this intervention?



KEY ACTION 3.3.3

Understand any policies or programmes already in place that could help to address the identified needs

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Identify relevant programmes, policies and response.** Consult with clusters at national and sub-national level (if they exist) to check that priority interventions and associated indicators

align with minimum standards for each sector. Refer to existing plans, norms and relevant guidance from the public sector to identify relevant national or local plans or programmes. These may include for example, infrastructure plan, or national water and sanitation standards. Make sure that the plan formulated at settlement level is harmonised with or does not contradict higher level policies or strategies such as a regional or city master plan, Humanitarian Response Plan, or sector response strategy. In some cases, new challenges such as influx of displaced population generate needs unforeseen in existing public frameworks and strategies. Generating evidence and local planning strategies can help inform the subsequent revision of such high-level strategies.

- ▶ **Note existing programmes.** Identify programmes already implemented in the target settlement that may contribute to meeting identified needs, create synergies or provide a partnership opportunity. Where relevant, identify lessons learned or key challenges to consider in the settlement response planning process.
- ▶ **Identify key inter-sectoral linkages.** Examples include shared infrastructure and services. Ensure these are reflected or maximised in the settlement response plan. Outside of the humanitarian system, stakeholders are less likely to think in terms of humanitarian sectors and so are more likely to contribute to a holistic understanding of needs and possible responses.



KEY ACTION 3.3.4

Develop the settlement response plan informed by a reliable evidence base that provides sufficient granularity for the target settlement

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Create an outline.** Bring together the priority needs, gaps and actions in a document that lays out the response strategy for the target settlement. Depending on the expected level of detail, a settlement-based settlement response plan could include:
 - A summary of priority needs
 - Priority interventions for each priority need
 - Preferred implementation strategy for each intervention
 - An overview of current or potential future roles and responsibilities between partners
 - An implementation timeline
 - Intervention costing
 - Recommendations to address response gaps, exit strategy, and partnerships.
- ▶ **Include priority interventions for each priority need.** Use geospatial visualisation to inform how the different planned interventions work together. Identify where different sectoral interventions may benefit from pooling resources or to aid in identifying timelines for implementation.
- ▶ **Specify a preferred implementation strategy for each intervention.** The settlement response plan should consider relevant existing policies, programmes and technical minimum standards as identified in Key Action 3.3.3. These planning documents can be referenced in the settlement response plan. It may be necessary to liaise with experts from humanitarian agencies, public agencies, or ministries to gain more insight into implementation strategies.

- ▶ **Define roles and responsibilities.** The response plan lays out all necessary actions to address the priority needs in the settlement. These usually cannot be met by any single actor. The settlement response plan should assign clear responsibilities for implementing the priority actions. This will depend on their current and future capacity, mandate and technical expertise of different stakeholders. Individual actors may use the response plan to derive implementation plans that align with but are more detailed than the response plan. This should include assigning responsibility for the monitoring of activities and collation of data. This is particularly essential when remote monitoring is necessary such as in conflict areas or fragile states.
- ▶ **Address response gaps and create new partnerships.** Identify where key gaps remain and where additional capacity or partnerships may be required. Identify partnership opportunities between international aid agencies and local civil society organisations, private service providers and economic actors that could help to fill gaps or respond to specific needs. It may be more sustainable to engage with existing systems, strengthen or advocate for access, and support local governments or private sector partners to scale up or improve quality of services. This also results in less direct service delivery by humanitarian agencies. Consider the maintenance as well as training and development of any skills and services.
- ▶ **Include a handover or exit strategy.** This may necessitate capacity building, reinforcing and strengthening existing systems as part of the implementation process, as well as adequate resourcing. In the longer term, local government will coordinate and oversee response and recovery programming in their jurisdictions. Planning for the transition and handover of coordination responsibilities to local government should start early in the response. This will bridge the humanitarian-development divide. However, responding to a crisis requires a surge in local government capacity, while the capacity of local government units may in fact be reduced from pre-crisis level. That may happen for example if staff have been killed, displaced or are otherwise unable to return to work, or if local government offices or records have been damaged. Analyse local government support and capacity-building needs as part of the needs assessment (see **Section 3.2**) to inform how humanitarian agencies can best support local government within the framework of the response plan.
- ▶ **Create a timeline.** Actions are likely to be implemented by a range of stakeholders and encompass both immediate and longer-term activities. The proposed timeframe should also consider factors that might delay planned implementation. These factors include bad weather seasons, typical local repair, reconstruction and recovery practice timeframes, and any constraints for accessing materials and other resources, either nationally or internationally. It should also include changes in political leadership in the administrative area of intervention. Aligning the response planning review with these factors, can support any advocacy needed to establish efficient and achievable completion deadlines, while making best efforts to meet funding deadlines.
- ▶ **Estimate costs.** Cost the plan per action/sector to help with advocacy and fundraising. Include resources required for monitoring and information management, and capacity building in local actors.
- ▶ **Validate the response plan priorities.** Consult with affected persons focus groups to validate the suggested priorities and modalities.



KEY ACTION 3.3.5

Agree collectively on a timeframe for implementing and reviewing the settlement response plan

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Agree a timeline for review and implementation.** Partners should agree the settlement response plan review timeline while developing the settlement response plan. As a starting point for discussion, a settlement response plan may be reviewed every three or six months, depending on the nature of the crisis. The review timeframe should be appropriate for the crisis. Consider factors such as whether the onset of the crisis was sudden or slow, the intensity of population movements, seasonal impact of extreme weather events, and the timeline for informing the humanitarian planning cycle or local government strategies. The settlements approach requires a settlement response plan to consider needs beyond the immediate humanitarian phase. It should also address the medium- and long-term needs and priorities identified within the target settlements, hence the importance to include public and development partners in the planning process. This should be reflected in the revision timeline. All timelines need to consider that many households will start their own recovery spontaneously but at different paces. The most vulnerable households may be the least able to complete any recovery within foreseeable time frames.
- ▶ **Nominate local leaders.** The designated coordinator of the settlement response planning process may change, especially if it was initially led by an international actor. As the scale of international assistance subsides, increasing responsibility is handed to local actors. This stresses the need to be co-led with local partners, such as local authorities or local civil society.
- ▶ **Establish review mechanisms.** The monitoring and review should occur in the framework of a settlement-based collaboration mechanism which holds regular meetings, reviews incoming data and information, and formulates requests for partners as required (see **Section 3.4**). Ideally, the platform should report to the settlement planning group on a regular basis.



KEY ACTION 3.3.6

Share the plan with the community and decision makers beyond the target settlement

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Plan to communicate the settlement response plan to local and external stakeholders.** Based on the stakeholder mapping and engagement strategy (see Sections **3.2** and **3.4**), identify who would benefit from the settlement response plan and how they are expected to utilise it. Communicate the settlement response plan in a way that matches the capacities of those stakeholders. For example, provide printed copies to local institutional actors and other local stakeholders who have limited access to the internet.
- ▶ **Get the response plan known to local communities.** A participatory settlement response plan sets the basis for resource mobilisation and collaborative implementation, but also for accountability mechanisms. Communicate the settlement response plan to local communities, who are the first responders and primary beneficiaries of the approach and interventions.

This provides opportunities for local communities to engage in bottom-up discussions with their representatives, and to hold local authorities as well as aid partners to account. Adopt context-appropriate mechanisms for local communities to have access to the plan, such as town-hall meetings, sensitisation campaigns, and social media.

- ▶ **Engage donors and external aid partners.** Encourage their buy-in, interest and support for resource mobilisation associated with the settlement response plan. Consider presenting the settlement response plan in workshops and roundtables organised by the humanitarian coordination system, and set up bilateral advocacy meetings with a few targeted agencies at the national or regional level. When possible, meet these potential partners jointly with the local institutional actors in charge.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **ESTABLISHED EXPECTATIONS.** Humanitarian response planning led by international organisations is predominantly delineated by sector, rather than settlements. Aid partners may be confused about how settlement response planning in the settlements approach complements the sectoral approach. They may also not understand how such planning contributes to the broader catchment areas (such as regions within a country). The latter are often used in the cluster or sectoral approach, but the settlements approach is more localised.
- ▶ **MAINTAINING MOMENTUM.** A settlement response plan often extends beyond the humanitarian phase. It can therefore be difficult to maintain momentum with partners after the immediate response and recovery phase. That is especially true without dedicated resources to convene agencies over a longer timeframe.
- ▶ **LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES.** Settlement response planning remains an iterative process and takes time to complete. It relies on input from a wide array of actors who may not show the same level of commitment in the process. It must also verify that locally-designed response strategies align with plans formalised at the national or sector level. Local stakeholders may have low literacy levels, requiring adapted facilitation methodologies, or may not have limited access to existing planning documents.

INDICATORS

- ▶ Affected communities and other local actors had the opportunity to validate the proposed findings of all data collection exercises.
- ▶ A lead legitimate entity or agency has been identified to convey the strategic process. When this is undertaken by local actors, capacity support is made available if required.
- ▶ The relevant international, national and local partners have contributed to the development of the settlement response plan.
- ▶ The relevant existing plans and policy instruments have been consulted and referenced in the response plan.

Potential challenges



THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE

Multisector prioritisation exercise, Syria
UNHCR

During most of 2016, the eastern part of Aleppo (roughly half of the city), was completely besieged. In 2017, after the conflict, people were returning to their neighbourhoods, residing in their homes or staying with friends or relatives. The basic infrastructure, however, was massively damaged. The shelter sector launched a joint initiative to support a comprehensive and coordinated response at neighbourhood level.

This exercise identified needs as well as short and long-term priorities. A joint taskforce involving three main sectors was leading the process. Their initiatives included engaging in discussions with experts, a two-layer prioritisation process and government workshops. Rapid assessments were completed, and structural assessments launched covering nine neighbourhoods, with support by all stakeholders. This common approach allowed to shared prioritisation and planning of the response. All actors, including local authorities, coordinated their efforts with a same strategy in mind.



3.4

COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING IN THE SETTLEMENT APPROACH

In this section you will learn



- 1 How to engage the affected community in implementation, monitoring and scaling up
- 2 How to use collaboration and feedback forums to manage implementation and monitoring
- 3 How to align local collaboration structures with the settlement response plan

RATIONALE

The ways of implementing projects applying the settlements approach are almost as varied as the variety of different settlements. Because of its multisectoral nature and the wide range of stakeholders involved in implementation and monitoring, the settlements approach cannot rely on standard methodologies. Rather, it is an iterative and adaptive process where outputs and outcomes are fully weighted. The objective of such implementation and monitoring is to implement and capture the accomplishments of the settlement response plan.

Implementation design and methodologies must link or align clearly to the settlement response plans' objectives and be locally owned. Community structures are key to this process, ensuring the approach increases the relevance, impact and sustainability of interventions in a settlement.

However, beyond attaining the response plan objectives, the settlement approach also offers a space where meaningful linkages between stakeholders can take place.

OVERALL GUIDANCE STATEMENT

- ▶ The settlements approach goes beyond the project-specific outcomes and focuses on the improvement in the lives of settlement populations. Interventions must consider the different roles, perspectives and complex relationships between stakeholders in and around the target settlement. Supporting settlement governance structures such as community platforms puts local stakeholders in control of both implementation and monitoring.
- ▶ Consideration must be given to how settlement governance structures relate and are impacted by higher level coordination structures, such as clusters. It is important to nurture such linkages as they can also impact implementation and affect monitoring.
- ▶ Monitoring is an integral part of the settlement approach and should be done collaboratively. It measures progress and informs about appropriate adaptations, but also contributes to local ownership and capacity building as a path to sustainability and towards an eventual handover.



KEY ACTION 3.4.1

Strengthen or setup local community representation structures to act as a platform for community feedback, technical coordination, and monitoring

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Establish a settlement level collaboration mechanism.** Multiple actors and local stakeholders will contribute to the design and implementation of the settlement response plan. They will have complementary sector expertise, mandates and capacity. Therefore, their actions need to be led and coordinated at a settlement scale. A variety of models exist, but the appropriate option should be based on stakeholder and capacity analysis. Key questions to inform the establishment of a collaboration mechanism include:
 - Who is best placed to do this and who needs to be part of it?
 - How to ensure fair representation?
 - Who does the forum need recognition from?
 - What skills are required to carry out this role?
 - How does the membership change over time?
 - What relationship is there to local government structures?

- ▶ **Establish committees.** Depending on the physical size of the target settlement, it may be necessary to further divide the settlement into several smaller areas, such as sub-neighbourhoods or a collection of streets, to facilitate technical coordination and communication. Settlement-level structures could include separate committees to perform different functions. Some examples are:
 - **Community committees.** These are representative, and their roles, responsibilities, and code of conduct must be clear to all the members and the whole population. Roles could include: ongoing assessment of needs and identification of vulnerable populations; initial and ongoing response planning; liaising between community members, stakeholders and aid agencies; gathering qualitative and quantitative data and feedback; disseminating information; carrying out monitoring, and providing inputs into future programming needs; consulting and informing the settlement population about ongoing and planned activities; and mobilising the community to solve community problems.
 - **Technical committees.** These might be set up as permanent entities, or on a temporary basis to support technical coordination on specific interventions. For example, an independent monitoring committee could be established in addition to any monitoring conducted by individual actors.
 - **A steering committee** comprised of representatives of government institutions, donors and technical advisers may be formed and consulted about progress. This committee may operate at a higher level to facilitate wider scale coordination.

- ▶ **Provide training and capacity building.** Assign adequate time and human resources to train and coach committee members, and provide them with procedures and tools to do their job. Regular follow-up and coaching for their self-management should encourage the community to identify their own goals and achieve them using their own means and resources, while also contributing to the broader response plan for the settlement.

- ▶ **Assign resources.** Allocate program resources to allow community-led initiatives and problem solving at the settlement level.
- ▶ **Build consensus.** One entity should be responsible for leading the process of building consensus on community committees. This lead role could take multiple forms, such as a chair and co-chair, an inter-cluster coordination group or an assigned agency. Their goal is to have all stakeholders engaged and accountable, adhering to common standards or procedures that apply nationally/regionally.



KEY ACTION 3.4.2

Create a stakeholder engagement plan that identifies roles and responsibilities for implementing and monitoring the response

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Refer to stakeholder mapping results.** Consider who should be consulted, informed or engaged in making decisions regarding implementation or monitoring results (see Figure 3.4). Base this on stakeholder mapping and any previous consultation (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3). That should at least cover their mandate, expertise, representation, authority, or influence.

Figure 3.4 An example of stakeholder mapping

| ACTOR | BENEFIT (to actor) OF ENGAGEMENT | COMMUNICATION TYPE | COMMUNICATION METHOD |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Local mayor | Influence to obtain funding | Engage | Invite to join steering committee |
| Community representative | Influence type of projects | Engage | Invite to join settlement-level committees |
| Local contractors | Identify future business opportunities | Inform | Presentation of needs assessment and analysis, and settlement response planning |
| Project consultant | Successfully completed action or contract | Engage | N/A |

- ▶ **Share implementation and monitoring responsibilities.** Different aid actors and local stakeholders operating in the settlement should adopt appropriate roles.
- ▶ **Develop a monitoring framework.** All implementing partners should contribute towards the framework to keep focus and encourage engagement. Consolidate the separate results in a way that enables centralised reporting and feedback to communities (see **Key Action 3.4.4**).

- ▶ **Use agreed communication channels.** Implementing actors should engage with other stakeholders using the communication channels identified or established as part of the stakeholder mapping. This may be bilaterally or through any existing or new committees (see **Key Action 3.4.1**).
- ▶ **Prepare for scaling up.** If scaling up is foreseeable, create a clear process to meet the cumulative needs of as many of the affected population as possible, while permitting for piloting or testing of interventions and programming flexibility. Take into account potential delays in any eventual larger-scale procurement or local market recovery. Develop the scale-up plan through a series of 'hold points' and milestones, related to monitoring results. Plan for contingencies and adaptation, and refer to the stakeholders mapping to identify who may facilitate a process of scaling up and where.



KEY ACTION 3.4.3

Implement activities in collaboration with local stakeholders

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Implement the settlement response plan.** The various stakeholders should apply their expertise, mandate, and capacities, and the ability to identify and engage new partners or funding opportunities.
- ▶ **Localise where possible.** Consider opportunities for localising the interventions, leveraging on local capacities and investing in partnerships and capacity building when appropriate.
- ▶ **Identify constraints.** Implementation should consider any relevant constraints or deadlines. These may derive from season or climate, or lead times for procurement, delivery, and transfer of materials or other support. Such constraints may impact concurrent or subsequent activities in the settlement response plan.
- ▶ **Be flexible.** Consider the potential need for flexibility or adaptation as well as the potential for scaling up or expanding to a neighbouring settlement. Bear in mind that implementation should be iterative, based on monitoring data and community feedback, as well adapting to changing circumstances. Activities may depend on the availability of funding, presence (or absence) of suitable actors, establishment of new partnerships, or new waves of crisis and changing priority needs.
- ▶ **Maintain momentum.** Institute regular communication and collaboration, bringing people together to maintain focus on the response plan.



KEY ACTION 3.4.4

Use joint monitoring and analysis to support settlement-level implementation and coordination

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Develop and implement the monitoring plan.** The plan should be in line with the settlement response plan, taking into account the capacities of contributing stakeholders.

Ensure that the proposed monitoring is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound. However, it should consider that the settlements approach goes beyond project-specific activities and focuses on the overall improvement in the lives of settlement populations.

- ▶ **Modify and adapt.** Good monitoring facilitates identification of and decision making about required modifications and adaptations to implementation. This might be triggered by changing needs or priorities, implementing partners pulling out or new ones coming in, additional funding becoming available, or evolving relationships with neighbouring settlements.
- ▶ **Share information.** Joint monitoring requires openness to information sharing. This requires high levels of engagement from sufficiently trained monitoring and evaluation personnel and effective information management skills. Monitoring capacity is required that is separate from but works closely with implementers. Investment will be needed in both local capacity and technology for effective data collection and analysis. Aid agencies with monitoring and evaluation capacity can strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the settlement response plan and facilitate a phased handover. Consider using the established committees to independently monitor implementation, gather feedback, and share key messages with the settlement population. Consider using a common tool or a web-based platform that can be shared and supported by all stakeholders to collect monitoring data if this technology is accessible to local stakeholders. Build local capacities in the development and use of appropriate monitoring tools.



KEY ACTION 3.4.5

Link settlement-level collaboration to the wider coordination, technical support and decision-making mechanisms

GUIDANCE NOTES

- ▶ **Consider scaling up.** Pilot testing and collaborative monitoring, collation and analysis of results can reveal where scaling up is possible or required. Scaling up may be at the level of other settlements or at the entire town or city level.
- ▶ **Link to other scales.** Agencies working as part of a settlements approach need to be conscious of how the response implemented in the target settlement fits within the wider picture of the municipal, city or district scale. This is vital in order to coordinate coverage of affected areas and to avoid the stark equity issues that can arise between neighbouring communities when one becomes an “island of aid support”. Where city/municipal coordination is deficient, bilateral coordination may be needed to get to bigger scales, particularly when specific actions may have direct knock-on effects in or between settlements.
- ▶ **Linking to existing governance structures.** Coordination will be required above the settlement level, for example at municipal level or district level. When city, municipal or district scale coordination mechanisms are conveyed by administrative authorities, synergies should be sought to avoid overlaps and to support granular-level multisector coordination. Collaborating with local government may not always be possible, particularly in situations of conflict or immediately after a disaster, but international actors should never assume that local government is not functioning. Instead, they should make working with the city authorities the default, unless this proves impossible for reasons of government capacity or lack of neutrality. Where

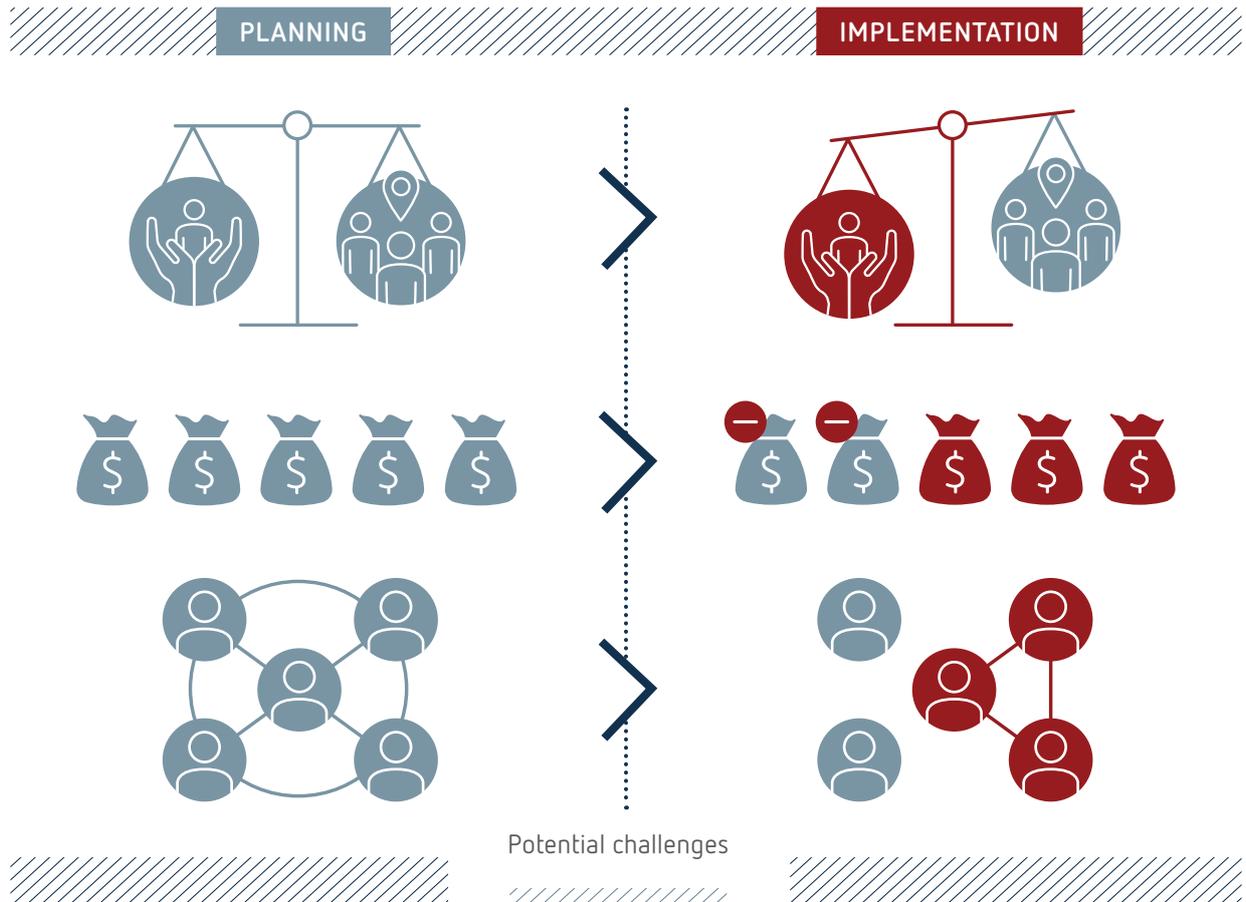
this is not possible, higher level coordination should consider government structures to the degree possible, to allow for government ownership or oversight at a later date.

- ▶ **Support capacity building.** Where a municipality would benefit from surge capacity support, particularly if there are a number of settlements targeted within their jurisdiction, agencies should consider the establishment of a Technical Officer role to sit within the municipality to assist with the coordination between the municipality and one or more settlements in the same municipality. Ideally this person will have a technical background in urban planning. The funding of this position should gradually be transferred to the municipality.
- ▶ **Establish technical support.** In order to assist coherent guidance and in the interests of efficiency or time and resources, it may make sense for some technical groups to be established at higher than settlement scale. Depending on the extent of the response, they would advise or consult on a number of different settlements.
- ▶ **Link to humanitarian coordination mechanisms.** While the settlements approach calls for locally targeted collaboration mechanisms, it can be beneficial to connect the settlement-level collaboration to higher level coordination structures, in particular for advocacy purposes. Consider how settlement-based implementation contributes and relates to existing mechanisms at higher scales, including but not limited to the development of Humanitarian Needs Overview, Humanitarian Response Plan, or sub-regional plans. Explore possibilities for the humanitarian coordination authorities at the higher levels to endorse the settlement response plan and support settlement-based collaboration structures. In particular, explore ways to support local stakeholders convening the settlement-level platforms to participate in humanitarian coordination meetings and/or invite municipal or administrative officials from higher levels of governance structures to participate in some settlement-level meetings.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ **ACHIEVING BALANCE BETWEEN ALL PARTICIPANTS.** Often there is an actual or perceived inequity between local and international actors, which can hinder the level of interaction and agreements.
- ▶ **INFORMATION SHARING IS DELAYED OR DOES NOT TAKE PLACE.** Monitoring and data sharing in the settlements approach demands that stakeholders contribute in the required quality and the expected schedule. Stakeholders could decline or delay, thus affecting the transparency and momentum of the actions.
- ▶ **COMPLEXITY TO MEASURE IMPACT OF MULTISECTOR INITIATIVES.** Addressing multisectoral needs makes it intricate to evaluate the effects on the individuals and the community as a whole. Each intervention can have different timelines. Their effects would have to be aggregated carefully to understand the overall impact.
- ▶ **LIMITATIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN COORDINATION.** Coordination in high-level forums can be overwhelming for local local governments, given their limited capacity. That is especially valid when there is an ongoing crisis and cluster systems are put in place.
- ▶ **ADDITIONAL REPORTING PROCEDURES ADD TO THE WORKLOAD.** Where cluster mechanisms exist, there may be extra burden on agencies for engaging, contributing and reporting into multiple structures.

- ▶ **SHORT-TERM AND INFLEXIBLE FUNDING.** Long-term and flexible financial support may be needed to properly address the needs in a settlement. Collective advocacy and consultations are required between agencies and donors operating in the same location on different time scales.
- ▶ **FEASIBILITY EXCEEDS CAPACITY.** The ambitions can easily exceed the existing capacity to implement. The response plan needs to fit the participants' commitment and the identified constraints.



INDICATORS

IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ The implementation of the settlement response plan, in all its actions and phases, makes maximum use of the capacities of all stakeholders, and should be incremental.
- ▶ The implementation of the settlement response plan makes efficient use of all resources, no matter what the source of contribution.
- ▶ The implementation of the settlement response plan achieves the targets set in the plan, in line with the timeline developed.
- ▶ Implementation is reviewed in a timely manner based upon monitoring results and adapted appropriately.
- ▶ Committees are established at different levels according to the settlement scale which includes relevant stakeholders.

MONITORING

- ▶ The purpose and monitoring objectives are clearly stated and understood by all stakeholders.
- ▶ Monitoring methods and tasks are multisectoral and designed in consultation with all stakeholders, so they go beyond a programme-focused approach.
- ▶ Monitoring methods and tasks are undertaken in ways which respect the rights and dignity, and acknowledge the contributions of the beneficiaries, implementers, and other stakeholders to represent their perspectives.
- ▶ Appropriate data collection methods or web-based platform is created to efficiently collect and manage information.
- ▶ Monitoring methods are reviewed in a timely and stakeholder-inclusive manner, and monitoring objectives and activities are adapted appropriately.
- ▶ Resources are allocated to build capacity for monitoring in relevant local stakeholders.

////// THE SETTLEMENTS APPROACH IN PRACTICE //////////////

Settlement-based coordination structure, Mosul, Iraq Shelter Cluster

The military offensive to retake Mosul city in October 2016 enabled the humanitarian sector to assist those residents who had remained during the city's occupation. To enable coordination, a settlement-based structure was formed, as part of the Shelter Cluster's operational response to Mosul. It divided the outer areas beyond the central city into 'wedges'. This immediately enabled humanitarian responders to focus on settlements within their 'wedge'. Coordination improved and clearer lines of communication were established between partners and the Coordination Team in Erbil and Dahouk. It allowed easier identification of settlements that were least served or not served at all and a faster response to evolving needs. The key cluster team was able to pull back and provide broader coordination support to the partners on the ground, who in turn had better understanding of the gaps and needs of the population in their area of responsibility.

Response to Typhoon Yolanda, the Philippines UN-Habitat

Following Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013, UN-Habitat launched the Post-Yolanda Support for Safer Homes and Settlements project in the affected provinces. The primary goal was to strengthen communities and local governments as they rebuilt their environment. The initiative was called the People's Process, backed by diverse trainings. Cohesive partnerships between neighbouring communities took place and they were able to work together and lower implementation costs. 54 community infrastructure projects were completed. Homeowners associations progressively gained confidence to manage the finance of their own communities; some of them added from their own communal savings to make the projects bigger. Clear monitoring procedures were put in place, including family journaling and community reports. Women were always at the front, and some of them became experts, able to identify materials, read plans and oversee construction projects in the future.





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