

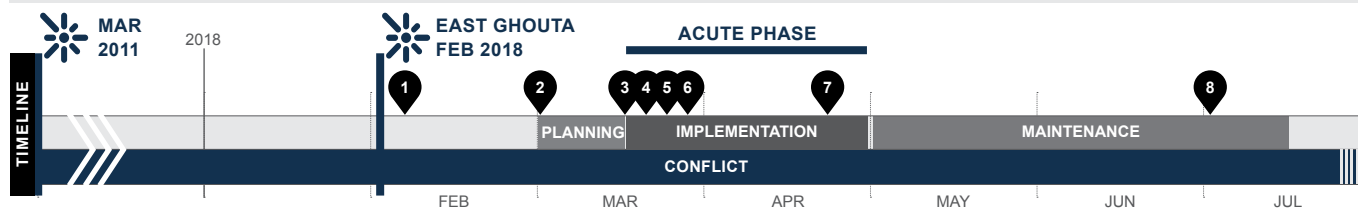
CASE STUDY

SYRIAN ARAB REP. 2018 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Collective centre rehabilitation, Integrated programming, Timeliness, Scale and coverage

CRISIS	Syrian conflict, 2011–onwards	
TOTAL PEOPLE IN NEED*	13.1 million (5.6 million in acute need)	
TOTAL PEOPLE DISPLACED	6.1 million internally displaced in total* Over 100,000 people displaced in East Ghouta after February 2018 hostilities	
TOTAL SHELTER NEEDS*	4.2 million individuals within the country	
PROJECT LOCATIONS	10 collective centres in East Ghouta, Rural Damascus governorate	
PROJECT BENEFICIARIES	11,500 households (65,000 individuals) received multisectoral assistance (Over 7,800 households or 44,492 individuals received shelter assistance)	
PROJECT OUTPUTS	10 collective centres rehabilitated (incl. shelter, water supply, sanitation, hygiene, health and maintenance activities) Shelter outputs: 1,500 shelter kits installed, 125 family tents erected, 5 rub halls erected as multi-family shelters, 550 doors, 700 windows, internal partitions	
SHELTER SIZE	13m² (using the shelter kits of 3.6x3.6m)	
SHELTER DENSITY	2.3m² per person on average (acute phase)	
		<p>MATERIALS COST USD 77 per household (USD 78,600 per centre on average)</p> <p>PROJECT COST USD 87 per household</p>

* Figures as of December 2017. Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018.



- 1 Early-Feb 2018: East Ghouta hostilities begin.
- 2 01 Mar 2018: Two collective centres are prepared upon request of the national partner before the start of the crisis.
- 3 16 Mar 2018: Start of the emergency interventions in four collective centres, after the sudden influx of 20,000 IDPs.
- 4 17 Mar 2018: Construction of three temporary clinics completed.
- 5 19 Mar 2018: Rehabilitation of two new collective centres.
- 6 23 Mar 2018: Rehabilitation of three new collective centres.
- 7 20 Apr 2018: Hygiene promotion campaign conducted. Additionally, maintenance activities, waste disposal and vector-control measures are carried out.
- 8 01 Jul 2018: Post-implementation monitoring survey conducted.

STRENGTHS

- + Gender and protection mainstreaming.
- + Collaboration across departments of the organization.
- + Social customs and minimum standards were met.
- + Targeting areas of origin supported early return and recovery.
- + Holistic approach through the integration of complementary sectors.
- + Speed and scale of the response.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Poor communication with the affected community.
- Delays due to access constraints.
- Limited planning and coordination.
- The post-implementation survey was not representative and needed fine-tuning.



Over 100,000 people were displaced in less than two months from East Ghouta.

CONTEXT

For more information on the crisis and regional response, see A.29 in *Shelter Projects 2015-2016*.

SITUATION IN EAST GHOUTA

East Ghouta was considered the largest besieged area in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), with an estimated population of 400,000 people. The area was under siege since April 2013. Hostilities escalated in late 2017 and first targeted rural areas, forcing people to flee to other locations within the besieged areas. To allow humanitarian convoys to access and evacuate medical cases, in January 2018 a ceasefire agreement was announced but failed to come into effect. Hostilities resumed in February, with air strikes and a ground offensive in densely populated areas, causing massive destruction of infrastructure and civilian deaths. To allow the evacuation of civilians, humanitarian corridors were established and, between March and April, over 100,000 people were displaced.

RESPONSE TO THE 2018 EMERGENCY

To respond to the massive displacement, the authorities started identifying evacuation sites. However, the movements were too rapid to keep the pace, especially since there were no preparedness plans in place. Thousands of people were moving on a daily basis, requiring additional sites to be identified and the response plans to be continuously adjusted.

A total of 12 collective centres were identified by the Ministry of Local Affairs. These included hangars, industrial buildings, schools and other public buildings. Most were partially damaged or had been looted and were not prepared to host high numbers of people, lacking basic water, sanitation and waste disposal systems. Although nearly half of the total caseload left these sites for other locations, the number of people remaining still outstripped the capacities by over 200 per cent.

At first, little coordination was in place and only a few humanitarian actors were active in the area. All activities within the sites had to be approved by the authorities.

PROJECT LOCATIONS

10 different collective centres were supported by this project. These were allocated by the authorities, often after IDPs had started moving in. As sites were not known in advance, little to no planning and preparation could be conducted. This meant that works had to be done as quickly as possible, often in already overcrowded conditions.



Collective centres included industrial buildings and schools and were often in very poor conditions. Locations were selected by the authorities.

All sites were owned by the government and structural safety was checked by accredited engineers upon request of the authorities.

Prior to the East Ghouta offensive, the organization had also supported preparation works to increase the capacity of two collective centres within the besieged area, which were already hosting 1,500 people from other locations. However, in the event, people fleeing from the offensive were not directed to these sites.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

The main objective was to rehabilitate and adapt collective centres to increase their hosting capacity and improve living conditions for the IDPs. The project included activities spanning shelter, non-food items, water supply, sanitation and hygiene, health and site maintenance. A collective kitchen was also rehabilitated.

SHELTER COMPONENT

The shelter interventions consisted in light upgrades of walls and floors, installation or repair of doors and windows, erection of emergency shelters outside the buildings, and indoor partitioning to provide privacy to families. A total of 125 family tents were also erected and five large multipurpose tents used as collective shelters. Most of the shelter activities were conducted using over 1,500 standard shelter kits prefabricated by the organization and designed to be flexible enough to be used either as stand-alone or as components of partitions or walls. The standard unit that could be erected with a kit was of approximately 13m². Site levelling and preparation around the buildings were essential prior to the installation of shelters or tents, as well as water tanks, latrines and showers. Lighting (e.g. installation of lights and floodlights) and electrical works (e.g. sockets and generators) were complementary activities.



Little to no preparation could be done in the buildings, which soon became overcrowded due to the massive influx.



Shelter kits were used to build indoor partitions to increase privacy.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project was implemented jointly by an international organization and a national partner who could count on hundreds of volunteers.

According to security procedures, access had to be requested one month in advance, so the international staff were not present during preparations and assessments, slightly slowing down the initial activities. Assessment and reporting were conducted using mobile technologies, which made the process more effective but were not always used adequately.

All works were implemented by contractors, partly due to the time available, partly as a decision not to engage families who had suffered years under siege and had recently fled a war zone. Because of the urgency, standard tendering and contracting procedures could not be followed. Contractors started work before signing agreements and worked around the clock to deliver the works as quickly as possible. Within each collective centre, activities took as little as 10 to 15 days. To speed up the delivery further, multiple contractors were employed at the same time. Some skilled IDPs were also hired during implementation.

In the span of 45 days, over 65,000 people were supported across all the targeted sites.

Continuous changes in context and requests from the authorities required constant adaptation of work plans after activities had already started. For example, one site was expanded three times due to the growing number of new arrivals.

As people started to return to their areas of origin soon after the acute phase of the offensive ended, the organization also targeted the water infrastructure in those areas, to support longer-term recovery.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Additional contractors were hired after the implementation phase to de-sludge latrines, maintain and clean the facilities and dispose of the waste, with the main aim of avoiding vector-borne disease outbreaks. Teams with shoulder sprayers were responsible of cleaning the latrines. There was no formal handover nor site management. The organization chose not to engage the IDPs for the operation and maintenance, either, due to their distressed conditions. Maintenance services and further assistance were provided throughout the existence of the centres, which by early 2019 were hosting only a few families. The plan was to phase out as soon as all the IDPs had voluntarily returned.



Buildings were upgraded through the set-up of rooms, installation of doors and windows, general repairs, rehabilitation or provision of water, as well as lighting.

POST-IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

A survey was conducted in July 2018 to measure the impact of the project and the level of community engagement and accountability. As this survey was a pilot for the organization, only few questionnaires were carried out. The survey included questions on accessibility, quality and quantity of water, sanitation and hygiene, pest-control, shelter conditions, ventilation and lighting. In terms of shelter, it was found that only 38 per cent of respondents considered their living space as both adequate and comfortable, while the rest either considered it insufficient (25%) or adequate but not comfortable (37%). Lighting and ventilation was not available for 11 per cent of respondents, and only partially available for 52 per cent. IDPs suggested to install fans to improve ventilation and to increase the use of pesticides and the distribution of mosquito nets for pest-control.

PREPAREDNESS PHASE AFTER THE PROJECT

Based on the lessons from this project – where the lack of preparedness meant that thousands of people arrived daily to unprepared facilities – a contingency plan was developed to host over 40,000 IDPs from another area. The organization improved its preparedness activities, putting in place procedures and pre-positioning items to allow for a quicker response in future unforeseen events of this scale.



Works were implemented by contractors, who then were also hired for the maintenance phase.



Shelters were also set up outdoors using the materials in the kits.



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED



To improve the overcrowded conditions, interventions were carried out very quickly.

The programme also included water, sanitation, NFI and health components.

STRENGTHS

- + **Gender and protection were mainstreamed in the intervention.** For example, protection cases were referred, lighting was installed in common WASH facilities, latrines were segregated by sex and designed to mitigate GBV risks.
- + **The collaboration across departments of the organization was effective** and allowed the post-implementation survey to be conducted for the first time in Syria.
- + **Social customs on shelter and bathroom design were respected and minimum standards were met** (e.g. distance between shelters and latrines).
- + **Links with recovery.** The project maintained the established collective centres but also targeted the areas of origin of IDPs with ad hoc interventions, to guarantee water supply and encourage safe return as soon as possible.
- + **The project integrated several complementary sectors** to enhance living conditions in the collective centres in a more holistic way.
- + **Speed and scale.** Over 65,000 people were assisted across multiple sites in a very short timeframe, covering almost the entire caseload in collective centres after the East Ghouta offensive.

WEAKNESSES

- **Lack of feedback and complaints mechanisms.** IDPs were often unable to convey their views to the implementing organizations. This meant that the organizations could not always address issues in a timely fashion.
- **Poor communication with the affected community.** Beyond awareness sessions, more efforts should have been made by the organizations to communicate with the IDPs, for instance on the issue of water consumption.
- **Delays were generated as the international partner was not able to access** the sites for the first few weeks due to security regulations.
- **Limited planning and coordination.** The organizations could not plan in advance of the influx, mainly due to not knowing where and when IDPs would arrive. This was caused, to a certain extent, by limited communication with the authorities. Coordination with other humanitarian actors should have also been improved.
- **The post-implementation survey was not representative** as it was conducted on a very small sample. Additionally, **many questions needed fine-tuning**, as it was not tested before implementation and this was the first time it was used.

SHELTER KIT ITEMS LIST			
Items	Qty	Items	Qty
Tarpaulin, 4x5m	1	Metal handle	4
Plastic sheeting, 4x5m	1	Hinge	8
Rope	30m	Latch	2
Round wire nails with washers	1/2kg	Padlock	1
Concrete nails	1/2kg	Silicone caulk + gun	1
Tie wire	10m	Heavy-duty duct tape	1
Hammer	1	Carpentry handsaw	1
Jerry can (10 litres)	2	Metre tape	1

Items	Qty	Items	Qty
Hose	25m	Safety work gloves	1
Clip (Clamp)	2	Woven bag	1
Water tap	2	Solar light	1
Teflon tape	2	Additional wood sub-kit	
Screwdriver (flat and cross head)	1 each	Plywood board (1,200x2,400mm)	2
Pipe wrench	1	Timber (3m long, section size 25x50mm)	4
Pliers	1	Timber (3m long, section size 25x100mm)	4
Chisel for wood	1		

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Affected populations should be better engaged** both in the implementation and in communication activities.
- **Contingency planning and preparedness procedures are essential.** Based on lessons learned from this project, the organizations developed a contingency plan that built in risk assessments, stocks pre-positioning and high flexibility to adapt to constantly changing scenarios.
- **Pre-agreed and simplified assessment forms** would help reducing delays and issues during site assessments.
- **The adoption of mobile technologies** (i.e. online spreadsheets) made the reporting easier. However, staff should have been trained on their use directly on their phones, as these are time effective, reduce the risk of mistakes and provide readily available data.