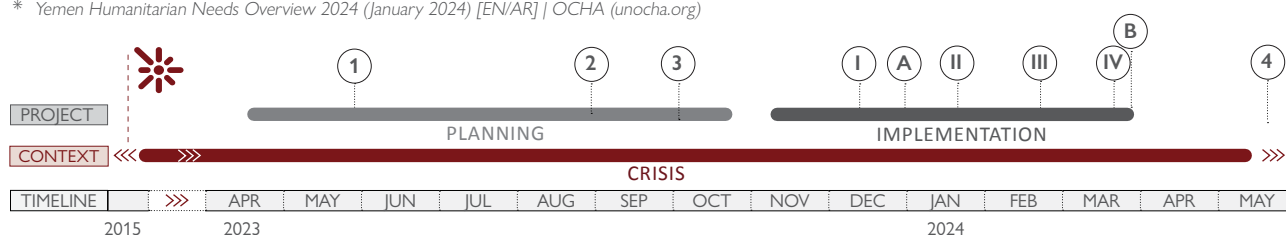


CASE STUDY

YEMEN 2023-2024 / COMPLEX CRISIS

CONTEXT / SETTLEMENT	SHELTER TYPE	SUPPORT METHODS
CRISIS Armed conflict and Seasonal flooding PEOPLE AFFECTED 18.2 million people affected* PEOPLE WITH SHELTER NEEDS 6.7 million (individuals)* PROJECT LOCATIONS Ma'rib, Ta'izz, and Al Hudaydah governorates PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY THE PROJECT 8,507 Households (48,499 Individuals, including 10,497 women, 13,760 girls, 9,563 men, and 14,679 boys) PROJECT OUTPUTS 3,370 HH supported with cash for shelter repair/upgrade 5,649 HH supported with cash for NFI As part of the upgrade efforts, 1,548 households used the cash assistance to construct separate kitchens outside or beside their shelters. SHELTER SIZE 17 m ² on average SHELTER DENSITY 3.5 m ² per person (based on the average HH size) DIRECT COST USD 300 per HH for Cash for Shelter repair/upgrade USD 200 per HH for Cash for NFI PROJECT COST USD 420 per HH		 PROJECT SUMMARY Conditional cash assistance enabled displaced and vulnerable households in Yemen to repair or upgrade their homes and purchase essential household items according to their specific needs. The project combined phased cash transfers with technical guidance and milestone verification to support safer, more durable shelter improvements while leveraging local markets and services. Household-led implementation, informed by community and women's consultations, improved living conditions, supported local economies, and helped address tenure sensitivities in displacement settings.

* Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024 (January 2024) [EN/AR] | OCHA (unocha.org)



2015: Saudi-led coalition launched a military intervention to restore the government after the Houthis took over the capital and forced the president to flee the country.

- 1 Apr-Jul 2023:** Planning and Coordination meetings.
- 2 Jul-Oct 2023:** Door-to-door Verification and Registration.
- 3 Nov 2023 - Mar 2024:** Implementation of Activities - Distribution of the cash instalments and follow up on the implementation.
I-IV: completion of four different batches of cash for NFI;
A, B: completion of two batches of cash for shelter.
- 4 May 2024:** Post-distribution monitoring exercises to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.



The project supported families across sites to repair or upgrade their shelters.



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Displaced families in Yemen lived in different types of makeshift shelters, built using locally available materials and based on cultural and contextual factors.

CONTEXT

Yemen's protracted conflict began in 2014 and escalated into civil war, prompting a broad humanitarian crisis with large numbers of people displaced and severe impacts on services, infrastructure and livelihoods. A UN brokered truce in 2022 reduced hostilities temporarily, but tensions, sporadic clashes and chronic economic deterioration persisted.

Against this backdrop, shelter needs remained acute: in 2024, an estimated 6.7 million people required shelter/NFI assistance, with 2.7 million living in catastrophic or extreme shelter conditions, particularly in Al Hodeidah, Ta'izz and Ma'rib, and a further 1.3 million in shelters below standards of habitability. Women and children constituted two thirds of people in need.

Beyond conflict, Yemen experienced recurrent seasonal floods and other hazards that intersected with the displacement patterns of the hostilities. This multi hazard environment, together with economic pressures, limited the availability of public services and raised the overall living costs, constraining families' ability to maintain safe, dignified shelter.

SITUATION BEFORE THE CRISIS

Prior to the current crisis, Yemen faced as well deep rooted social vulnerabilities: high poverty, limited access to safe water for significant portions of the population, and weak public systems. Housing conditions were diverse and often precarious, ranging from straw huts along the hot coastal belt to basic stone or brick structures in the highlands, leaving lower income households particularly exposed to shocks. Political fragmentation and longstanding regional divisions compounded these challenges.

SITUATION DURING THE CRISIS

As the conflict evolved, displacement became protracted, with many families unable to afford rent or secure adequate housing even temporarily. According to the 2024 humanitarian needs overview, two thirds of 4.5 million displaced people were in rentals or hosting arrangements, while the remainder resided in informal settlements exposed to floods, landslides, fire risks and explosive

hazards; 83% of displaced people surveyed reported shelter/NFI support as their priority need. These trends magnified pre existing vulnerabilities and placed additional strain on host communities.

After nearly a decade of conflict, many IDPs experienced multiple displacements and there is great diversity between different areas in the country due to cultural differences, resource availability, weather conditions, and accessibility. These factors have led to the development of various shelter types, including mud shelters, plywood shelters, plastic sheeting shelters, iron net shelters, and many others.

LAND TENURE ISSUES

IDPs in Yemen faced the constant threat of forced eviction due to precarious tenure arrangements, with many IDP sites situated on private land owned by the host community or tribal groups. The agreements between landowners and IDPs varied significantly from one location to another. For instance, some IDPs paid rent to the landowners, while others worked for the landowners in exchange for free accommodation. In some cases, landowners offered shelter to IDPs as an act of charity until the conflict would subside. However, a prevailing concern among many landowners was the fear that IDPs will not vacate the sites, hindering efforts by both IDPs and organizations to provide sustainable shelter support.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The Shelter/NFI Cluster set three strategic objectives for the 2022-2024 cycle:

- Provide life saving emergency shelter and NFI support to people newly displaced by conflict and disasters.
- Improve living conditions for people affected by protracted crises, returnees and vulnerable host communities through more sustainable shelter/NFI solutions and a greener response.
- Ensure protection from natural hazards and promote relative security of tenure.

These priorities informed project choices on modality, targeting and technical assistance, and aligned with the wider Humanitarian Response Plan's focus on principled, inclusive and integrated assistance.

PROJECT DESIGN

The project aimed to deliver shelter/NFI solutions to displaced households and vulnerable host community members across three governorates. Cash was adopted as the main modality due to market functionality, participant preference and the need to tailor assistance to diverse contexts (mountainous, coastal and desertic regions), cultural issues and household priorities. This choice was also due in part to the significant variations that exist in terms of shelter typologies, which meant that there could not be a single standardized shelter upgrade model that would work for all. Instead, conditional cash was complemented with technical guidance to improve quality, ensure that funds were used for intended purposes, and also allow the required flexibility for tailoring the intervention to the specific needs of each household and shelter.

Recognizing the tenure and social sensitivities of working on privately owned land, the team prioritized an approach that allowed households to implement improvements themselves. This reduced landlords' concerns over agency led construction, which could be perceived as semi permanent or may induce displaced families to stay longer on their land. In parallel, inclusive consultations, especially with women, surfaced priorities such as separate kitchens or safer cooking spaces. These were integrated into the cash for shelter scope where relevant.

Integration with other sectors (CCCM, WASH, health and protection) was a core principle, ensuring that shelter/NFI support prioritized protection referrals, and locations identified by site management teams, complementing basic services, and preventing duplication while addressing the most severe needs.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Market assessments confirmed local availability of materials and informed transfer values. The amounts were set based on a standardized list of materials commonly used for shelter repair and household items, and an assessment of their current market prices before each distribution. In addition, the amounts aligned with cluster guidelines. Technical teams then developed Bills of Quantities in coordination with the project participants and shared recommended lists for essential household items and shelter upgrading works.

Cash assistance was disbursed in three instalments through a financial service provider and mobile banking to maximize reach and accountability.

- The first tranche followed enrolment and agreement on the scope of works or NFI priorities;
- the second tranche was released upon confirmation of purchases and technical compliance; and
- the final tranche after verification that the repair or upgrade was completed to agreed standards.

Daily field visits with technical teams and milestone checks supported quality assurance.

Additionally, skilled workers were hired to support families during repair/upgrade works or procurement of household items. To further strengthen decision making and execution by households, the technical team provided guidance on structural damage types, repair or upgrade options, material selection, installation and basic safety and maintenance practices. For instance, they gave advice on foundations based on soil conditions, on mix ratios and application of mortar, on appropriate brick bonding and wall thicknesses, as well as on roofing connections using metal straps and bracing techniques against windloads. Where beneficiaries proceeded without consulting technical staff, suboptimal choices occasionally occurred; this highlighted the importance of continuous on site coaching and phased disbursements tied to verification.

TARGETING

Targeting combined comprehensive needs assessments, vulnerability criteria aligned with Shelter/NFI Cluster standards and technical assessments. Community engagement and coordination among authorities and partners was maintained through the project. Priority was given to displaced households with severe shelter needs in informal sites, and included vulnerable host households living within or near the sites, who received the same level of assistance as IDPs to support fairness and reduce tensions between communities. Specific attention was paid to single parent families, households with persons with disabilities, older persons and families affected by floods or other shocks, with door to door verification to confirm eligibility.



Shelters were upgraded using a cash modality, so that families could implement the works themselves, which built trust with landowners.



The project provided USD 200 cash grants to be used for the purchase of essential household items.



Based on findings from consultations, the organization also supported families with elderly people to acquire locally made beds.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement began at design stage with focus group discussions held with both displaced and host community members, to validate the cash modality and to identify context specific priorities. Under the shelter component, women raised the need for separate kitchens and safer cooking spaces, while under the NFI component, the organization guided households to procure locally made beds suitable for the elderly and special mattresses for people with disabilities.

During door to door assessments, staff explained BoQs, specifications of the items included, indicative costs and the available technical support during implementation. Awareness sessions throughout the project cycle strengthened understanding of the modality, proper use of cash assistance and the availability of channels for support.

A complaints and feedback mechanism via suggestion boxes, hotlines and help desks at each distribution site, ensured accountability and responsiveness. Project participants were informed of such feedback channels from the outset, during the door-to-door assessments.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLY

Because assistance was cash based, the project leveraged local markets for shelter materials and essential non food items. Recommended lists shared with households included frequently purchased items such as kitchen sets, cooking pots, gas stoves or cylinders, blankets, mattresses, solar panels and locally made primitive beds for older persons in hot areas. The market approach supported local vendors and services while allowing households to sequence purchases according to priority and availability.

MATERIALS LIST

Shelter materials		Shelter repair tools
Iron sheets	Insulation rolls	Hand saw
Mud bricks	Insulation sheets	Utility knife
Wooden poles	Plastic sheets	Hammer
Plywood sheets	Metal pegs	Pick axe
Wooden plates	Steel bar	
Iron nets	Ropes	
Cement / sand	Nail box	

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Risk of misuse or diversion of cash was mitigated by awareness sessions, phased instalments and field verification. A small percentage of beneficiaries still chose to prioritize food and medical expenses over shelter and NFI due to their critical conditions; in such cases, those who misused funds were not eligible for subsequent tranches.
- Liquidity constraints, inflation and exchange rate volatility occasionally delayed transfers and affected purchasing power; the organization reviewed market prices and adjusted as feasible.
- The dispersed caseload and some documentation issues increased the effort needed to complete verification and follow up. Post-distribution monitoring also faced challenges due to population mobility. A significant proportion of targeted households could not be reached during follow-up because they had relocated or returned to areas of origin, highlighting the operational difficulties of sustaining monitoring in highly mobile displacement contexts.
- Sensitive tenure dynamics and landlords' fears of permanent occupation required ongoing negotiation and close alignment with authorities and site stakeholders.



In some cases, the support was used to convert tents to metal sheet shelters.



In some locations, families built traditional structures using local materials such as thatch and stone masonry.



In other locations, households opted to rebuild or complete their unfinished structures using concrete blocks available in the local market.



The support was also used to protect plywood from heavy rain with metal sheets.



Windows and doors were installed thanks to the assistance received.



Some families used the cash to rebuild their roofs and complete their shelters.

OUTCOMES AND WIDER IMPACTS

Direct outcomes included improved living conditions and more appropriate NFI coverage for targeted households, with cash enabling tailored responses to immediate and diverse priorities. Programme evaluations found that respondents most frequently reported improved comfort, safety and privacy following repair or upgrade works. Technical guidance and milestone linked cash generally increased the quality and safety of works. For women and caregivers, separate kitchens and safer cooking spaces addressed practical and protection concerns identified through consultations. However, the evaluation findings also highlighted uneven access to technical guidance and variations in implementation quality.

By involving households in decision-making processes, the project promoted self-reliance, dignity and accountability among participants. Community participation throughout implementation contributed to a stronger sense of responsibility for project outcomes and encouraged more active engagement in improving household and community living conditions.

Lastly, the project served as a model for other humanitarian organizations to consider cash as a modality over the regular in-kind assistance. By demonstrating the effectiveness of cash-based interventions in meeting diverse needs efficiently, the project has influenced future humanitarian strategies and policy decisions in the country.

EXIT/HANDOVER

Handover was integrated into the cash cycle through final tranche verifications and completion checks by technical staff. Post distribution monitoring assessed effectiveness and areas for adjustment, feeding back into partner coordination fora. Because improvements were implemented by households themselves, ownership and maintenance responsibilities were already internalized by the time cash cycles concluded.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

- ✓ **The cash modality enabled tailored assistance to the specific requirements of each household/shelter.** Beneficiaries prioritized expenditures based on their own needs, improving relevance and satisfaction while preserving dignity and agency.
- ✓ **Inclusive consultations shaped practical case-by-case solutions.** Women's feedback as well as the needs of elderly and people with disabilities were integrated in project scopes where appropriate.
- ✓ **Cash purchases stimulated vendors and services** near displacement sites, creating small multipliers and easing supply constraints compared with in kind delivery.
- ✓ **The project was cost-effective,** as the chosen modality reduced logistical costs of procurement, storage, and transportation.
- ✓ **Beneficiary led works helped build trust and mitigate eviction risks.** Allowing households to implement improvements reduced landlords' concerns about semi permanent, agency installed structures.
- ✓ **Integrated programming strengthened impact.** Linkages with CCCM, WASH, health and protection ensured coherent support at site level and helped address diverse households' needs.

WEAKNESSES

- ✗ **Monitoring demands were high.** To prevent misuse and ensure quality, teams needed frequent field visits, stretching staff time across dispersed locations.
- ✗ Despite the organization's efforts, **inflation and liquidity shocks undermined predictability** and created budgetary challenges to some project participants.
- ✗ **Documentation gaps were not anticipated and slowed delivery.** Missing or incorrect ID documents required extra steps in verification and follow up, delaying assistance for some households. This risk could have been included in assessment and planning stages.
- ✗ **Technical guidance did not consistently reach all households.** Post-distribution findings indicated gaps in the delivery or retention of shelter construction guidance among over 40% of participants, which may have contributed to uneven implementation quality and suboptimal shelter outcomes. Where beneficiaries proceeded without consulting technicians, purchases or installations were sometimes suboptimal, affecting outcomes.



FURTHER READING ON SHELTER PROJECTS

On Yemen: [SP 9TH ED.](#) / [A.28](#); [SP 17-18](#) / [A.33](#); [SP 15-16](#) / [A.37](#)

On Cash in Shelter: [SP SHELTER AND CASH: 16 Case Studies](#)

Case studies in Arabic: [SP Translations](#) and [SP Essentials: Arabic](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Active involvement of beneficiaries in the decision-making process was vital.** It ensured that interventions aligned with the beneficiaries needs, preferences, and cultural considerations, leading to increased ownership.
- **Regular monitoring and follow-up** throughout the project implementation enabled the identification of challenges, gaps, and areas for improvement, allowing for timely adjustments and ensuring project targets were met.
- **The use of a beneficiary led approach enabled the project to navigate HLP sensitivities.** In contexts of informal tenure and landlord concerns, household executed works were more acceptable than contractor-led operations, which in some cases had led to eviction risks.
- While the project was conducted using a single financial service provider, the challenges encountered showed that **establishing Long-Term Agreements with multiple providers can enhance flexibility and ensure continuity** in the provision of financial services.

RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD

- **Develop simple, illustrated guidance materials** with step-by-step instructions for common shelter repairs and household upgrades to support safer, more consistent implementation by beneficiaries.
- **Prepare standardized Bills of Quantities and technical specifications** for frequently used shelter solutions to improve planning, support households requiring additional technical assistance, and strengthen quality control during implementation.
- **Expand vocational and on-the-job construction training** for both IDPs and host communities to strengthen local technical capacity, promote collaboration, and create longer-term livelihood opportunities linked to shelter repair and upgrading activities.
- **Plan for dispersed caseloads.** Staffing, routing and verification protocols should account for high travel time and the need for frequent, short visits to sustain quality and timeliness.