

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A HOST FAMILY APPROACH IN TRANSITIONAL SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

Under its Emergency Response signature program, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provides high quality, scalable Shelter & Settlements interventions for disaster-affected households through various transitional shelter options. By giving the chance to select what is best for them, CRS found that many

families choose to live together with relatives, friends, or neighbors, with one less vulnerable household hosting the other. This has been considered an opportunity to provide safer, scalable shelter solutions in countries like Haiti, the Philippines and Nepal.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

From experience CRS' has learned about opportunities and challenges that this type of programs encounters:

SHELTER FOR AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS:

- Opportunity to generate hosting conditions, with hosting family initially benefiting from a shelter reconstruction and then further upgrading to accommodate an IDP family.
- Possibility to assist families who may have transferred already to a relative's or friend's house after disaster but still facing shelter gaps.
- Shared household expenses (utility bills, food, water, etc.) are subject of occasional disputes.

IDP FAMILY PREFERENCE:

- IDP families prefer the comfort of living with relatives or close friends.
- IDP families habitually look for more spacious houses than their previous ones, thus already improving their conditions.
- IDP families often end up far from their children's schools and/or their livelihoods.
- IDP families do not necessarily like the idea of staying long-term in the host family house, but often feel they have limited options for a long-term shelter solution.

HOSTING FAMILY PREFERENCE:

- Host families acknowledge most IDP families take good care of the house.
- Host families often express interest in extending stay beyond timeframe in the contract.

TECHNICAL CRITERIAS TO ASSESS HOST-FAMILY HOUSING

Safety of location. The host dwelling should preferably be located in an area not prone to the same or other natural disasters.

Essential basic services. The host family dwelling should provide access to water, sanitation, electricity, school, health needs.

Spatial requirements. The dwelling should have the required space to host, or allow for the necessary extension (i.e. separate, lockable sleeping rooms per family; 3.5m² per person, complementary toilet, etc.)

Structural and disaster resilience. The host dwelling should be structurally sound, comply with the Build Back Safer principles, not pose risk of fire nor create new risks for neighbors.



Laila Linoy, Joshua, her husband, and their son, Jolay, moved from the coastal area and now live in a new room added to her father's house through a host-family shelter option after Typhoon Haiyan, in the Philippines.

Photos by Kate Nucciarone

INTEGRATED INITIATIVES

While families can often find suitable host family solutions, CRS has learned that challenges with host family interventions differ from the challenges of other types of shelter assistance. CRS recommends to integrate the following initiatives into host family interventions to achieve better results:

RECOVERY OF LOST DOCUMENTS

Linking households who lost important documents during the natural disaster to the institutions that give official documents –like birth, marriage and death certificates– renews access to services, such as primary education, health, and even relief assistance itself.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION REFERRAL SYSTEM

The host family shelter solution can generate possible protections situations for the most vulnerable household. Strengthening referral pathways where survivors could report cases of abuse or exploitation gives them voice, reducing their vulnerability.

PARALEGAL GUIDANCE

Either official or community-based, contracts can be hard to understand. Orienting the host family and the IDP family on their roles and responsibilities as detailed in the contract builds a more balanced relationship between the two and ensures that they can hold each other mutually accountable to the terms in the contract. Strengthening the conflict-management entity –at neighborhood or city level– is a complementary, yet useful support tool.

SPONSORED DIALOGUE ON SHARED EXPENSES

As part of the contract negotiations, the host family and IDP family should discuss how to share on-going household expenses and detail those in the contract. A joint validation between parties can reduce tensions and help set up a peer-to-peer resolution system.

COACHING FOR SOUND FAMILY FINANCE MANAGEMENT

Estimating the possible additional costs for the IDP family (such as increased transportation costs or utility bills) and planning how to best cover for them could be time consuming for the IDP family and CRS staff, but gives the IDP family the chance to plan for their future.

"Hosting by family and friends, or even by strangers, is socially defined, self-selected, culturally appropriate and typically provided before humanitarian actors arrive and –importantly – long after they leave."

Charles Setchell, Senior Shelter, Settlements and Hazard Mitigation Advisor
USAID/OFDA, in Monthly Developments, Jan/Feb 2012