

List of Considerations when Choosing a CRS Facility

You may not have much choice between sites and you may not have a lot of time to look. But if you do have the luxuries of time and choice, these are some of the things you should consider. Don't delay a decision, however, as space is usually at it's most plentiful and cheapest in the early days of a response. **In multi-actor responses, acting fast is key to having enough decent space in the medim and long term. As days pass (just days, not weeks), options will disappear, quality will decline, and prices will rise.**

Security and Safety

See CRS security manual, Safe and Sound, is your primary resource for safety and security considerations. But, some quick thoughts here:

- 1 The office compound should be in a quiet, low-crime section of town and in the general vicinity of other NGOs (especially partner organizations).
- 2 It should not be near military installations, police headquarters, or other potential flashpoints for demonstrations.
- 3 It's best not to be on the main thoroughfare, but you should have easy access to two or more main roads.
- 4 The compound in general should be enclosed (or enclosable), with adequate parking space inside for CRS vehicles.
- 5 If the area is susceptible to natural disasters, the location should be chosen to minimize the exposure to these risks as much as possible
- 6 In earthquake-prone areas, it may be good to focus on one-story buildings and pay special attention to the stability of the structure itself (roof, walls, foundation). Look for quality/thickness of the walls/ceiling and check for cracks, weak points, etc.

Size

The office compound will have to house staff, vehicles, equipment (e.g. generator, well, or water tanks), and possibly some material storage and/or a guest house.

1 Building Size

- a. Use 3 sq meters per person to estimate the approximate total office space you'll need.
- b. Finance and HR, at a minimum, will need separate, lockable rooms for their departments.
- c. You will proabably want at least one meeting space. Also consider whether or not you'll be working with partners, having them to the office for trainings and large meetings.

2 Other Aspects of the Compound

a. Parking & Vehicle Maintenance

- i There should be adequate space for all CRS assigned to the office to park within the office compound, with an adequate space for turning the vehicles.
- ii If possible, there should also be a space for doing repairs/maintenance and additional parking space for visitors' vehicles. This is of greater importance in areas with high security concerns.

b. Equipment

- i There should be space for any equipment that you will install (e.g., generator, solar panels, well, water tanks, etc).

c. **Storage**

- i It is ideal to have space within the office compound for temporary storage of some project materials (e.g., NFI, etc). If there will be large amounts of these materials, or if food/agriculture commodities will be involved, you will probably need a separate warehouse as well.

d. **Guest House**

If you will have a guest house on the same compound as the office, make sure

- i There is a way to close the guest house area off from the office area, for security and privacy
- ii There is sufficient space in the guest house area for some outdoor recreational space.

Condition of Buildings and Utilities

- 1 Find out if the building has access to municipal power and water/sewage (if these are available in your location at all).
- 2 Assess whether you will be able to renovate the infrastructure as necessary to address CRS' needs. If you can, bring in a staff person with Facilities experience to make this assessment.
- 3 Check wiring (check wiring for fraying; check fuses and lights/fixtures to see if they turn on, see if wiring is easy to access to update or repair)
- 4 Check plumbing (see if toilets/faucets work, have good water pressure, and adequate drainage. Are pipes easy to access, are they insulated in cold climates)
- 5 Check roofing (check for leaks, water damage in ceiling)

Climate Considerations

- 1 In extremely cold or hot climates, adobe (mud brick) buildings are generally better than cement. They will moderate the extremes.
- 2 In hot climates buildings should have large windows for ventilation.
- 3 In cold climates, buildings should generally face towards the equator and have small windows, internal hallways between offices (or walkways that can be enclosed easily), and internal bathing/toilet facilities.

Rental Conditions

- 1 Price & payment terms
- 2 Contract duration and renewability
- 3 Permission to alter the property to address CRS' needs (there are a number of considerations here, see the leases section for more detail).