Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
Cox's Bazar
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No: 51.04.2200.005.00.032.24- **2321**   Date: **26** June 2025
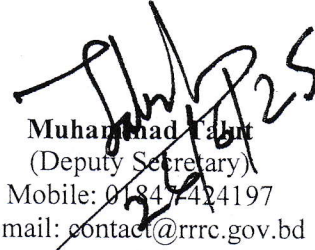
Sub: **Approval for guidance for the Management of Vacant Shelter**

Ref: ISCG's memo no.- ISCG/2025/35, date: 22 June 2025

In reference to the above-mentioned subject and letter, the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) acknowledges receipt of your request for endorsement of the SCCCM sector guidance for the management of vacant shelter. After careful consideration, RRRC is pleased to approve guidelines for the management of vacant shelters.

Thank you for your continuous support and cooperations.

Enclosure: approve guideline 04 (Four) pages

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Mr. David Bugden
Principal Coordinator
Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)
Cox's Bazar

Copy for kind information:

1. **Additional Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner**, this office.
2. **Camp-in-Charge (all)**, Ukhiya/Teknaf, Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar, Noakhali
3. **PS to RRRC** (For kind attention of RRRC).

SCCCM SECTOR GUIDANCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF VACANT SHELTER

BACKGROUND

With the increasing relocations within and between the camp, self-relocations, relocations to Bashan Char, and resettlement to third countries, the need for the management of vacant shelters in Cox's Bazar refugee camps has become more pressing than ever.

The planned relocation process involves extensive collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including Shelter-CCCM partners working alongside the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) through designated Camp-In-Charges (CiCs) under the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC). The CiCs are responsible for verifying and approving relocation requests and facilitating the identification of suitable areas or shelters for relocation.

However, operational challenges arise due to informal occupancies and transactions, such as the private sale or exchange of shelters, which impede the availability of vacant shelters and the subsequent equitable distribution of new shelters to families in need and disrupt coherent site planning efforts. Field verifications conducted by Shelter and Site Management teams indicate varying conditions of vacated shelters, ranging from good (habitable) condition to partially damaged to completely damaged which requires an assessment and possible repair and maintenance before occupancy. Furthermore, a significant number of vacated shelters are found to be already occupied by relatives who chose to remain in the camps or by new families.

To address these challenges, Site Management teams maintain a tracker of vacant shelters, updated monthly and upon the completion of any relocation process. While information and lists of individuals relocating within the camps are relatively accessible, the accurate capturing of relocation information for relocations to Bashan Char or third-country resettlements requires enhanced tracking mechanisms and coordination efforts to effectively manage vacant shelters across all relocation scenarios in all 33 camps.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDELINES

The SOP aims to:
1. **Further enhance camp coordination and camp management processes:** To streamline administrative procedures related to shelter management, leading to more efficient resource allocation, improved coordination among stakeholders, and reduced administrative burdens.
2. **Reduce informal shelter sales/exchanges:** To minimize informal transactions of shelters, while efficiently tracking and managing vacant shelters through timely assessments of shelter conditions and allocation of empty shelters for relocation purposes thereby helping to mitigate the risk of and negative impact of self-allocation and sale of the shelters.
3. **Manage the availability of habitable vacant shelters**: As the camp population continues to grow, there is a constant demand for new shelters. The tracking of vacant shelters allows CiCs, Site Management and Shelter teams to decide on repair and maintenance and manage and allocate the available vacant shelters.
4. **Enable timely interventions to optimise site planning:** Most of the camps are spontaneously developed settlements without proper site planning, resulting in disparities in accessing services and unsafe settlements in hazard-prone areas. In addition, the high level of congestion in the

camps limits the options for setting up proper service facilities. Timely identification of vacant shelters allows optimising the space and resources needed for site re-planning and site development works.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC)

The RRRC as the designate agency of the Government of Bangladesh has overall coordination and supervision of humanitarian response of the Rohingya Refugee Response in Cox's Bazar along with the ISCG and humanitarian partners.

The RRRC will ensure the coordination, harmonization of approaches and compliance of the CiC with this guidance note. The RRRC will ensure protection of national policies and sovereignty through all the processes of data sharing, relocation and shelter repurposing

The Vacant shelter management guidance note involves extensive collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including Shelter-CCCM partners working alongside and through the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) designated Camp-In-Charges (CiCs) under the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC).

Camp In Charge

As the Camp Manager and Administrator, the CiC is responsible for overall operational oversight. The CiCs are responsible for verifying and approving relocation requests, as well as and facilitating the identification of suitable areas, or shelters for relocation in collaboration with the Shelter-CCCM partners at the camp level.

SITE MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

The site management partners, including their implementation partners, are responsible for site management support along with the Camp in Charge, including service coordination, identification of vacant shelters, coordination with shelter partners, CiC, and reporting to the SCCCM sector.

SHELTER PARTNERS

The shelter partners, including their implementation partners, are responsible for site management support along with the Camp in Charge, including service coordination, identification of vacant shelters, suitability assessment of the shelter and repairs coordination with CCCM partners, CiC, and reporting to the SCCCM sector.

SCCCM SECTOR

The SCCCM sector is responsible for the broader coordination with RRRC, CCCM and Shelter/ NFI partners and ensuring, , harmonization of approaches and compliance with this guidance note. The sector works closely with RRRC and collaborates with CiCs through the CCCM and Shelter partners, specifically for this guidance note, in coordination with the Protection sector and partners.

PROTECTION PARTNERS

Protection partners in close coordination with the SM and Shelter partners are responsible for the identification and verification of vulnerable households, including emergency protection related priorities to be considered for priotised vacant shelter allocation.

GUIDELINES TO VACANT SHELTER MANAGEMENT

1. Identification and Joint Verification and tracking of Vacant Shelters:

   - Monthly coordination arrangements will be established between Site Management teams and resettlement agencies.
   - Site management teams will strengthen and maintain a vacant shelter tracker based on agreed-upon criteria, ensuring prompt updates biweekly and immediately following BC relocations. Ad hoc assessments will identify the self-vacated shelter.
   - The site management teams will share the Updated tracker biweekly with the A-RRRC, Shelter, Site Planning, and Site Development Teams.
   - Verification reports and tracking updates will be submitted to CiC before implementation in the field

2. For relocations to Bashan Char (BC), the BC team will provide timely updates to Site Management partners before departure to BC. This will enable the SM team and CiC to begin to monitor the shelter for relocation. On arrivals from Cox's Bazar by sharing the list within 1 week for verification by Cox's Bazar team.

3. For resettlement departures, Site Management Units in both the AoRs will receive the list of the shelters, blocks and camp numbers to monitor the shelters for relocation.

4. Assessment of shelters reported to be vacant.
   - CiC will lead all joint verification processes
   - Site management partners will confidentially share the initial identification of potentially vacant shelters with the respective Camp in Charge (CiC). CiC and SM agency will discreetly verify the status of the vacant shelters and assess sensitivity to guide further verification.
   - Once the CiC confirms that there are no security concerns, in coordination with Site Management, Protection, Shelter, and Site Development teams, the shelter will be immediately prioritized for allocation.
   - Vacant shelters would be confirmed after being vacant for 15 days – 1 month.
   - After initial verification takes place, Vacant Shelters would be locked up immediately with information so the owner could contact SMS teams for validation if they were temporarily vacated due to insecurity or temporary travel.
   - Vacant Shelters will be installed with relevant signage, notification of absence and contact point for revalidations

As part of the verification and consideration process, the reason for a family vacating a shelter needs to be confirmed, where possible—noting that identification of vacant shelter due to security-related incidents wherein relocation of a different family to the recently vacated shelter would not be possible/advisable.
The verification processes will be completed within 2 weeks (for 1 - 30 verifications. This is done by camp). For over 200 caseloads, timeframe for verification will be determined prior to the exercise. However every shelter identified by the SMS partner will be forwarded to the CiC for verification.

   - The SM, SD and Site Planning team, will assess vacant shelters within three working days after receiving the tracker and advise the joint verification team led by the CiC along with the Shelter, Site Management and Site Planning team supporting as members, on the actions to be considered by CiC vis-à-vis the identified vacant shelters, including demolishing,

repurposing, repair, or allocation to households based on site planning and site development requirements.

5. Reallocation of vacant shelters

    Criteria on eligibility for vacant shelter allocation
    a. Identify individuals/ families with Severe protection concerns and/or an imminent threat to safety including special needs.
    b. Family reunification or family changes (marriage, divorce).
    c. Family size more than 5 members
    d. Infrastructure developments which impact the current shelter
    e. Landslide or flooding risk (pre-emptive).
    f. Damage or destruction of the shelter and/or area due to landslide, flood, fire, or other natural hazards.
    g. Weather-related emergency relocations (cyclones, monsoons, with a separate procedure - temporary relocation).
    h. New arrivals.

The criteria listed above will be applied individually to each household, with the method of application determined by the specific circumstances: whether cascading, exclusive, cumulative, or in combination, as deemed appropriate for each situation. In case unauthorized shelter selling is identified during the assessment, such information will be confidentially shared with CiC for his information and intervention.

Actions
- Upon receiving the recommendation from the joint verification process, Site Management teams will coordinate with CiCs to assign habitable shelters to new households in need within five working days. The allocation of the vacant shelters will be done jointly by the respective CiC, SM, Shelter, and Protection partners, who will also prioritize, in close consultation with Protection partners to the allocation of the shelters to vulnerable households, including emergency related or protection-related priorities
- The Shelter team will manage the repair of the physical structure if needed after verification and in accordance with its technical recommendation for appropriate and principled action under the overall guidance of the CiC. The Shelter team will initiate the work within three working days of receiving the referral.
- Upon the completion of shelter repair, the shelters will be immediately handed over to the CiC, who will assign the shelter in coordination with Site Management teams according to the vacant shelter eligibility criteria described above.
- In case repurposing of shelter to a facility is recommended, the Site Management team will immediately seek approval from the CiC and hand over the site to the responsible entity who will undertake the rehabilitation work.
- Once allocation of shelters, repair, demolishing, repurposing or reassignment and space optimization are taken, the Site Management team will provide the information to update the shelter addressing database for each AoR.

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