

Multi-sector prioritization exercise for the rehabilitation of conflict-affected neighbourhoods in Aleppo city, Syria

CONTEXT

In the first 6 year of the Syrian conflict, the city of Aleppo underwent numerous frontline shifts and changes in control areas. During most of 2016, the eastern part of Aleppo (roughly half of the city), was completely besieged. In November 2016, the Government of Syria launched an offensive against the opposition held areas of Eastern Aleppo. One month of heavy aerial bombing resulted in the government forces taking control of all 31 previously besieged neighbourhoods; internally displacing approx. 150'000 people and evacuating approx. 35'000 remaining rebel combatants to Idleb (OCHA SHF, January 2017). Since January 2017, people have been returning to their neighbourhoods, residing in their homes or with friends or families.



PROJECT APPROACH/OVERVIEW

In January 2017, the Shelter Sector in Syria launched a joint initiative with the WASH and Early Recovery (ER) Sectors, in partnership with local authorities, to support a comprehensive coordinated and planned neighbourhood level response. The objective was to facilitate and coordinate the rehabilitation of the newly accessible and damaged areas, by promoting a multi-sector approach, through a neighbourhood prioritization methodology.

The project aimed at defining shared priorities between partners and the government, to draft a common plan in line with humanitarian principles, advocating for need-based and capacity-based considerations, to ensure a more integrated and efficient response, and support sustainable returns.

This joint exercise identified short and long-term priorities enabling a phased response, thus anticipating the future transition between humanitarian and development responses. The follow-up and long-term objective of this pilot initiative was to draft an inclusive and convergent rehabilitation plan in pilot neighbourhoods, following a joint assessment and combining Shelter, WASH and ER specific priorities, while integrating area-based methodologies. This would then constitute a base to repeat the prioritization process in order to target the rehabilitation of the adjacent affected neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, proceeding a phased-approach.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

- **Engagement of all actors and coordination:** The participation of all concerned actors during all steps of the process is key to ensure an inclusive and endorsed shared prioritization, as well as a coordinated and efficient response. Coordination through dedicated coordinators, consultation and participatory workshops are crucial when dealing with many

actors in an urban context. A multi-sector taskforce or joint committee, including local authorities, is required to coordinate and follow-up on the response.

• **Use of multi-sector neighbourhood approach:**

Rehabilitation in urban areas requires a multi-sector comprehensive approach (including, as a minimum, the main three relevant sectors), through shared prioritization to inform decision-making and strategic response planning, using neighbourhoods as settlement units for assessment and planning. There is a need to advocate for area-based approach & neighbourhood level methodologies, combining prioritization methods, assessments tools and mapping

• **Phasing and adaptability to situation change:**

Prioritization, assessment and response planning methodologies should be replicable, enable phasing and flexibility in order to be responsive to change of situations, shift in priorities or new emergencies. Phasing enables short, medium and long-term concerns to be integrated in a longer-term planning perspective, adapting the response to the main needs and existing capacities, while initiating the transition toward development/stabilisation.

• **The role of humanitarian actors in urban neighbourhood rehabilitation?** Understanding the role of humanitarian actors in urban rehabilitation is key to appropriate and informed planning. Besides providing life-saving assistance, they can support local actors and authorities in defining priorities and informed decision making, while avoiding raising expectation on targets they might not be able to meet. Particularly in urban settings, humanitarian aid should not be a substitute for government provision of public services and infrastructures. Smart prioritization, targeting based on needs, feasibility and potential for returns within a comprehensive and long-term planning perspective, will later facilitate the transition to early recovery and then development phases.