UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Through the Alternatives to Camps Series, UNHCR provides key guidance, useful approaches, tools and good practices to support the implementation of the key actions outlined in the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. The Series also includes a call for sharing your good practices.

Tanzania/ UNHCR/
Brendan Bannon/ 2009

Alternatives to Camps
Making It Work
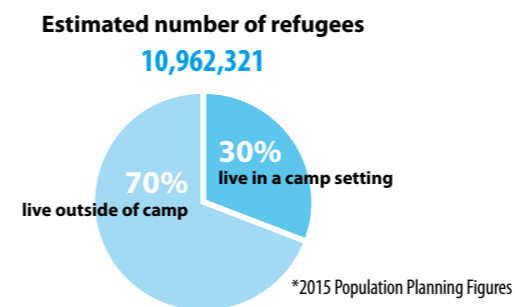
GOOD PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE SERIES

Key Action #1
Settlement and Shelter Response

THE POLICY SAYS

The implementation of UNHCR's *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* requires the pursuit of alternatives to camps, whenever possible. Where camps must be established or where they already exist, UNHCR will plan and implement the operational response in a way that enables camps to be phased out at the earliest possible stage. Where this is not possible or practical, UNHCR will pursue the progressive removal of restrictions on the ability of refugees to exercise their rights and seek to build linkages between the camp and host communities and anchor the camp within the local economy, infrastructure and national social protection and service delivery systems, in order to transform them into sustainable settlements.

The Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps

The 2015 *Global Results of the Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*[1] suggest that more than half of the operations with camps are pursuing alternatives to reduce the size of the camp population. A breakdown on how refugees are hosted in the 92 operations having completed the tool is presented below:

Estimated number of refugees
10,962,321

30%
live in a camp setting

70%
live outside of camp

2015 Population Planning Figures

1   http://www.unhcr.org/5548c33b6.html

Mugombwa settlement in Rwanda
Google Maps

Key Tips and Actions

Please find below some key tips that can help you to implement **Key Action #1 on Settlement and Shelter Responses** of the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*. This action should be implemented together with the other key actions of the *Policy* in order to address alternatives to camps in a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing way.

- **Embed settlement and shelter responses within the framework of national development plans and housing, land and property laws.**
- **Analyze and document the advantages and disadvantages of different settlement options and pursue alternatives to camps by advocating for refugee settlement within host communities, whenever possible.**
- **Encourage access to national service delivery systems and avoid the development of parallel services.**
- **Involve national and local governments as well as host and refugee communities in decisions on settlement options and location, and preserve traditional social arrangements and structures.**
- **Avoid establishment of large settlements. Planned camps should be contained to < 20,000 people.**
- **Aim for similar living standards for refugees and the host communities, while fully taking into account cultural and social factors and support to host families.**
- **Always prepare settlement and shelter phase-out plans and consider sustainable approaches from the start.**

> *Most refugee operations last longer than expected; Remember, the footprint of early planning assumptions may endure for decades.*

Highlights from the Field

ALTERNATIVE SETTLEMENTS IN NIGER

"We couldn't stay in the camps, we are nomads, we travel with our animals."
Senat Kabani, Tuareg village elder and Malian refugee.

The Intikane Hosting Area was set up in Niger in 2013 in order to cater for nomad Malian refugees to allow them to continue to practise a pastoral lifestyle while accessing UNHCR's humanitarian aid, such as education and agricultural support. A vast reception zone where refugees can move with their animals and find pastures was provided through partnerships with the government and local community members who agreed to share their land.

Around the same time, in mid-2013, the Nigeria crisis resulted in an outflow of displaced populations into Niger. The number of returning Niger nationals, Nigerian refugees, and IDPs increased from some 10,000 (May 2013) to 150,000 (August 2015). Despite such a challenging situation, only two camps exist in the area that host less than 10,000 refugees and IDPs. Making alternatives to camps a reality was possible by effectively advocating for allowing forcibly displaced to be hosted by local Nigerien families and access rentals and land property; providing protection and assistance on the basis of vulnerability and not status; and taking cultural and social factors fully into account.

For more information, please see a UNHCR film[1], a summary[2] and a blog[3] on these innovative settlement options.

HYBRID SETTLEMENT IN KENYA

In June 2015, the Government of Turkana County allocated land known as the "Kalobeyei site" to UNHCR and the Department of Refugees Affairs (DRA) in order to settle refugees from South Sudan and decongest the current Kakuma refugee camp.

The Kalobeyei site is planned to be a hybrid settlement with the capacity to accommodate 80,000 refugees and 23,600 members of the host community in Kalobeyei. The main goal is to empower refugee and host communities through livelihood opportunities as well as access to mainstreamed services.

With an aim to link the site to the surrounding area, the UNHCR team has collected and used data on the villages and service infrastructure along the periphery of the site extending to Lokichoggio, a nearby town. A recent UNHCR / World Bank study provides direction on how the settlement can draw on the County Development Plan, existing opportunities and natural resources with the overall purpose of strengthening harmonious conditions for complementarity and synergies between refugees and the local context.

UNHCR will ensure that refugees and community members in Kalobeyei and Kakuma produce and run as many of the goods, services and businesses in the area as possible. For example, activities will support crop production and prepare youth to benefit from the emerging industry in Turkana where large reserves of oil, gas and under-ground water has been discovered.

1   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgIQ6P0Tp_o

2   https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/policy-and-guidance/dpsm/unhcr-policy-on-alternatives-to-camps/settlement-and-shelter-resources.html

3   http://blogs.state.gov/stories/2015/07/29/different-kind-refugee-settlement

Tools and Guidance

The below documents can be found on the intranet page for Alternatives to Camps[1] and on www.urbangoodpractices.org.

- **Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter**: Sets direction of UNHCR's work in settlement and shelter from 2014 through 2018.

- **Digital Emergency Handbook**: Provides guidance and policy considerations for the development of settlement strategies and on shelter support in urban areas including to host families.

- **Master Plan Approach**: When planning a new site or seeking to convert an existing site, the Master Plan Approach can help to ensure a holistic approach to settlement planning by linking the settlement to the local context and thereby better considering the integration of refugees and the needs of the local population. The Shelter and Settlement Section is ready to support with technical experts and design.

- **Site Assessment Form:** Assists in considering an integration strategy to settlement responses through an understanding of proximity to existing services and possibilities to mainstream infrastructure within host populations during the emergency phase.

- **Physical Site Planning Toolkit (PSP) Tool Kit**: A collection of hardware, software and best practice tools to be utilized outside of camp. It will be available on the intranet shortly.

- **The Shelter Design Catalogue**: A catalogue of different types of shelter solutions with advice on considerations in diverse locations and contexts from emergency to durable stages. It will be available on the intranet shortly.

- **Shelter and Settlement e - Learning Module**: Provides basic learning and guidance on UNHCR's role in shelter and settlement responses and its protection implication for both refugees and IDP's. It will be available on Learn & Connect shortly.

1   https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/policy-and-guidance/dpsm/unhcr-policy-on-alternatives-to-camps/settlement-and-shelter-resources.html

Call for Good Practices

If your operation is engaging in successful settlement and shelter practices in light of alternatives to camps, we invite you to share it with us at hqatc@unhcr.org to help improve situations across the organization.

GLOBAL STRATEGY
FOR SETTLEMENT AND SHELTER
A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018

More Information

Please contact HQShelter@unhcr.org for more information on settlement and shelter options.