# **Introduction**

Assessment of the context is one of the most important steps that will help inform:

* Whether rental assistance is an appropriate response option to be considered
* The rental approach to be adopted
* Components of rental assistance to be included
* Other key programme design decisions such as duration of support, targeting etc.

The [IFRC (2020) Step-by-step guide for rental assistance to people affected by crisis](https://cash-hub.org/resource/step-by-step-guide-for-rental-assistance-to-people-affected-by-crisis/), step 1, sub-step 1, provides a list of questions to try to answer, which have been reproduced in the annex of this SoP for completeness.

This SoP and the entire toolkit focuses on processes specifically related to rental assistance programming. There may be an upstream broader context and needs assessment undertaken as part of a wider shelter or multi-sectorial assessment, this may feed into this assessment or information from this assessment can contribute to the wider assessment.

Tools and examples from the toolkit, that may be useful to assist include:

* 1.1 Tool\_HHI\_ContextAssessment\_RentalAssistance.docx
  + Example household interview questions for use with displaced people. Needs to be tailored to context.
* 1.1 Tool\_KII\_LettingAgent\_ContextAssessment\_RentalAssistance.docx
  + Example key informant interview questions for use with a letting agent or real estate agent. Needs to be tailored to context.
* 1.1 Tool\_KII\_LocalAuthority\_ContextAssessment\_RentalAssistance.docx
  + Example key informant interview questions for use with local authority staff who may be managing the delivery of services. Needs to be tailored to context.
* 1.1 Example\_HHIs\_DisplacedPeople\_Notes\_ContextAssessment\_RentalAssistance.docx
  + An example of the rough interview notes from a real context assessment

# **Sources of Information**

These will be various and can include:

* Secondary sources – such as government, academic and reports in journals and newspapers. Assessment reports generated for other purposes.
* Online sources such as:
  + Government webpages detailing support for displaced people, housing etc.
  + Rental housing platforms (e.g. in some countries there are go-to websites that many people know about where most rental property is advertised).
  + Local housing rights groups webpages
* Staff and volunteers familiar with the context, which may have changed considerably post crisis.
* Staff from other humanitarian agencies / coordination bodies (Shelter working group / Cluster).
* Some household interviews (HHI) with displaced people who are looking at accessing the rental market (e.g. those in collective centres trying to get out and access the rental housing market) or focus group discussions (e.g. with representatives of 3 or 4 households who are searching for rental accommodation and are currently in a collective centre).
* Key informant interviews with:
  + Representatives of displaced people (and consider the range of people who may have different problems accessing the rental market - especially consider representatives from marginalised groups).
  + Local authorities (especially those involved in services that displaced people may try to access such as schools, health, transport, housing, child and adult social services).
  + Real estate and Letting agents
  + Collective centre staff who may hear about difficulties that their residents are facing moving on to rental accommodation
  + National government department staff related to protection status of those displaced, and accommodation and services for those displaced.

In some cases, the practitioners may visit the household, letting agent, local authority representative and interview face-to-face, in some cases you can ask questions remotely by phone for example.

# **Annex A – Key Questions for Context Analysis**

Extracted from [IFRC (2020) Step-by-step guide for rental assistance to people affected by crisis](https://cash-hub.org/resource/step-by-step-guide-for-rental-assistance-to-people-affected-by-crisis/), step 1, sub-step 1 – General Understanding of the Context. Table 7: Key questions for general context analysis for rental housing assistance programming.

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| General context | * Undertake a situational analysis: what has happened to cause this crisis? What is happening now? How is the crisis expected to evolve? What is expected to happen in the short, medium and longer-term? * Are some geographic areas more affected than others? Which? Why? * Who is affected by this crisis? Are some groups of people affected more than others? Which? Why? * What are the immediate, medium and longer-term needs and capacity of the affected population? * What is the affected population’s intentions in terms of displacement? How long do they have to wait before they can return to their place of origin? Are they in transit, and for how long? What are their intentions in terms of settlement, resettlement or return? * Are there longer-term systemic issues which have caused and affected the current situation? * What are the relevant ethnic, language, religious and cultural backgrounds of the people affected? * Gather important pre-crisis baseline information for geographic areas of interest which can include demographic, social-economic information. |
| Government, institutions and coordination | * Undertake a stakeholder mapping: Understand the current crisis actors, including the response from the government, civil society, private sector, other humanitarian agencies and coordination mechanisms. * Are there coordination mechanisms relating to shelter programming or CVA that can be engaged with? More specifically, is the shelter coordination mechanism considering rental assistance as a response option, or can this be suggested? Is the cash coordination mechanism including rental costs in the minimum expenditure basket[[1]](#footnote-1) it is using to define multi-purpose cash grants (MPC)? Does any cash coordination mechanism have guidance that impacts on rental assistance? |
| Shelter needs | * Where are households currently living, where were they living before the crisis and in what type of accommodation? * What specific barriers do they face accessing adequate shelter, and what are their priority shelter needs? What are their medium and longer-term shelter needs and intentions? As well as their intentions to stay/move in the location and their needs in other areas (health, livelihoods, protection, education) that may impact the geographic areas they may seek to live in. * What is the capacity of the affected population to meet their own accommodation needs? * If applicable, do people’s migration status impact their rights and what shelter they can access? |
| Rental Market situation | * Who are the actors in the rental housing market? (e.g. Housing institutions, real estate companies, service providers, hotels and hostels, private property owners, and public housing associations). How have they been affected? * What are the rental housing practices in country? (e.g. Overall costs depending on market types and geographical locations, contractual arrangements and lease agreements). * How is the housing rental stock being affected in general terms by the crisis? Consider both formal housing and informal housing. * What is the condition of the housing rental market, in terms of accessibility, availability, quality, price, demand and supply?[[2]](#footnote-2) |
| Economic situation | * How is the economy and people’s livelihoods being affected? * What is the average monthly income, expenditure and debt levels of the target group, has the crisis changed this? How? * On average, what proportion of people’s income is spent on rent and how much of their debt is rent-related? * What are the existing and potential negative coping strategies, related to livelihoods, debt, access to credit, etc? * What are the main sources of livelihoods and income, and what were they before the crisis? * Can the affected population have access to livelihoods? Note that where there is cross-border movement, migration status can have an impact. * Does the affected population have access to financial services? If so, what types? |
| Protection | * What protection concerns and risks are there for the target population, and which of these are linked to, or could be exacerbated by living in rental accommodation? What is the attitude of the hosting community towards hosted households renting apartments/houses in their neighbourhood or receiving rental assistance? * What are the profiles of the different vulnerable groups and what protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) considerations are there that will impact shelter, rental and financial inclusion? * What are the housing, land and property practices in the context, particularly related to tenure security? * Is the target population located in the formal or informal part of the city? Are they likely to relocate to informal areas? What are the tenure implications in those areas? |

In addition to the above from the IFRC (2020) Step-by-step guide the Social Protection System should be investigated since this might impact the transfer value related to rental payments and exit strategy in particularly.

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| Social Protection System | * Does the affected population have access to Social Welfare support generally? * Do allowances include an amount for accommodation? How does the scheme work? What are the criteria and conditions? What are the amounts allowed? Are payments made directly to the * If working with a migrant population in the programme. Are there past in-country examples where it was acceptable to give payments that exceeded that given under social protection (for rent) to the domestic population. |

1. Even if a component of rent has been included in the minimum expenditure basket, it is unlikely to lead to access to rental accommodation outcomes and this should not in itself reduce the need to consider rental assistance programming. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Refer to Part II, Step 1, Section 6 – Rental Housing Market Assessment in [IFRC (2020) Step-by-step guide for rental assistance to people affected by crisis](https://cash-hub.org/resource/step-by-step-guide-for-rental-assistance-to-people-affected-by-crisis/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)