# **Introduction**

There is often a need to advocate for the consideration of rental assistance programming as a response option, both internally within the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) and with national governments and other key stakeholders (e.g. donors).

This can include giving information on:

* what rental assistance can involve (informing on all the components and different approaches that can be adopted)
* who benefits (such as those displaced as well as the host community economy through payments to landlords)

There is also a need to ensure the RCRC, government and other stakeholders have their concerns heard and addressed in advance. Internal and external resistance is frequent when suggesting a new programming approach.

For an appropriate rental assistance programme to be designed and implemented there is also a need to coordinate and engage with a range of partners (internally and externally). They could relate to other parts of the RCRC or external partners that can offer services around protection or livelihoods for example, but can also include RCRC support teams like finance and legal teams for example.

Engagement and coordination should start as early as possible (and ideally as part of preparedness) in relation to this type of programming.

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

* 0.1\_Tool\_Advocacy\_IntroApproachesComponents\_RentalAssistance.pptx
  + 15 minute PowerPoint which can be used to induct key stakeholders on what is involved in rental assistance and what approaches can be explored. It should be tailored to context before delivery.
* 0.1\_Tool\_What is Rental Assistance\_April2022.docx
  + 1-pager which can be shared as a hand-out or attached to emails to help raise awareness of rental assistance as a response option.
* 0.1\_Example\_Slovakia\_HostFamilySupport\_RentalAssistance\_workshop1.pptx
  + An example of a PowerPoint used when engaging with Slovak Red Cross at the start of discussions on rental assistance and host family support in the 2022-2023 Ukraine response.
* 0.1\_Example\_ExtCoordination\_Ukr\_recommendations\_TWG\_RentalAssistance.pdf
  + An example of standards produced in a Rental Assistance Technical Working group under the Ukraine Shelter Cluster in 2022 and further developed in 2023.

# **List of Stakeholders**

It is useful to make a list of stakeholders for advocacy and coordination early on in this process, and this is likely to include the following:

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| Internal stakeholders | * Senior National Society (NS) Leadership * Branch Managers * Operations Management / Disaster Management * Colleagues/teams from shelter, protection gender and inclusion (PGI), cash and voucher assistance (CVA), livelihoods, migration. * Finance, logistics, human resources. |
| External stakeholders | * Representatives / groups representing displaced people. * Representatives of marginalised groups (e.g. Roma advocacy groups in Europe) * National government departments involved in the management of displaced people, and housing. * National government departments involved in integration of refugees or internally displaced people. * Local authorities (particularly in areas where a high number of people are displaced into or expected to arrive in). * International Organisations / NGO / Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and their coordinating bodies |

# **Advocacy**

There may be hesitancy, from both internal and external stakeholders to explore a type of assistance/ programming that is new. A lot of this hesitancy (to consider rental assistance programming as a viable programming approach) can be dispelled by giving these stakeholders information on what is involved in rental assistance, different approaches, key benefits, and challenges. This can be undertaken using the tools and examples in this toolbox.

If you have the resources/capacity and time to go further, the following describes the sub-steps in a more formal advocacy process:

1. State the objectives of your advocacy (e.g. “Rental assistance programming to be considered as a viable response option to support displaced people”
2. Identify your targets for advocacy both internally and externally (e.g. RCRC senior leadership, national government decision makers in x Ministry). Note that different government ministries will have different mandates and concerns that different advocacy messages will need to be developed for.
3. For the targets for advocacy consider their mandates, priorities and interests, which will help you later when thinking about specific messaging and advocacy products (e.g. presentations or case studies) to share with them.
4. Identify your allies. This should be undertaken both internally such as the RCRC cash and voucher assistance team, community engagement and accountability (CEA) or migration teams, and externally such as other international organisations involved in rental assistance programming. You may want to begin coordination with them to enable you to develop common advocacy messaging e.g. around the right to rent for migrants.
5. Develop the messages and advocacy products. Consider evidence-based advocacy, i.e. sharing appropriate data or reports to support your advocacy messages. This could relate to perception studies or other studies highlighting the benefits of rental assistance for example on the host population.

# **Perceived Risks and Myth-Busting**

Perceived risks can be highlighted by both external and internal stakeholders. Typical ones include:

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| **Typical issue highlighted** | **Typical response / mitigation** |
| We should not do dedicated rental assistance programming we should just increase the multi-purpose cash (MPC) amount to include 100% of the average rent. | This may be acceptable in the first few months after a crisis, while we build a dedicated rental programme however:   1. Households have different shelter needs, and expenditure on housing costs can be large, especially for renters, and can vary significantly from household to household. Essentially not everyone requires rental support, rent can be a very large component of the overall basket of goods and services, and when we have limited funds, we may need to better target rental assistance at more vulnerable renters. 2. Accessing adequate housing does not only depend on the household’s financial resources. There may be other barriers that mean that vulnerable households could end up living in sub-standard and/ or dangerous housing. 3. We also want to support households with the definition of minimum housing standard, security of tenure, referrals, and other Protection related activities. As such it is recommended that a dedicated rental assistance programme is established as quickly as possible. 4. Without dedicated programming, we may not be able to properly consider the risk of doing harm to the rental market which the host community and the displaced may rely on. This could occur because we may not know if the supply of rental accommodation is very constrained and the increase in purchasing power afforded by MPC could lead to significant rent increases. In addition to this the quality of the accommodation entering the market to meet demand may also be poor. The risk of harm to the rental market is a significant argument for dedicated programming rather increasing the MPC transfer value to include rent. |
| If we give rent directly to the tenant rather than the landlord, how do we know they will use it for what we intend (paying the rent). | 1. Empowering the tenant is very important in the relationship between property owner and tenant, which is normally deeply imbalanced. Paying to the tenant makes the property owner dependent on the tenant for payment helping to address in some part this inherent power imbalance. 2. The RCRC experience has been that if the programme is properly designed and the tenant household properly selected, the tenant clearly knows what the money from the RCRC under this programme is for and they pay the property owner to allow them to stay in the accommodation. They also pay because of the risk of eviction if they do not pay. 3. It is important to establish strong monitoring system that will enable proper case management to evaluate the situation of the people supported along the program. This will enable us to intervene in case the provided funds are not used for the defined propose and take the required actions. As part of this, we will undertake occupancy monitoring throughout the programme, and not make further payments without this monitoring having been completed. |
| We can’t give rental assistance because we will be paying forever. | 1. We often give multi-purpose cash for a limited period while people find other ways to support themselves or return or move further along their path to recovery. The argument for giving limited duration rental assistance is similar. 2. We have a duty to always consider the exit strategy (how people will exit our support and still maintain their living conditions (including access to adequate shelter), as part of the programme design. We have a duty to discuss this with the households we are supporting, and we would then work to support their exit strategy during the supported rental period. This might include livelihoods programming or referrals to livelihoods programmes run by others for example, but it can also involve a wide range of other integration support. 3. Some people may only need support for a short time while their livelihoods recover or they establish new livelihoods, or they work out what to do next such as moving onwards or returning. Some people might just need support with rental assistance while they access housing support under the governments social protection programmes where they exist. There are many reasons why rental assistance of only a short duration can be helpful for those needing to access adequate housing. |

These are just some of the typical challenges given related to rental assistance. On some programmes it may be useful to generate a frequency asked questions (FAQs) list to assist staff and volunteers advocating for rental assistance both internally and externally.

# **Coordination**

As with advocacy there will be both internal and external coordination.

The objectives of internal coordination will be to ensure all teams that need to be involved in delivering rental assistance are involved in designing and implementing the programme. Early engagement with these teams to help them input into the programme design is crucial. For example:

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| **Internal Team / Function** | **Examples of why they need to be consulted** |
| Operations Management | For overall leadership on the priorities of the response and for support in looking accessing funding for the programme and for engagement with key internal RCRC stakeholders (NS, IFRC). |
| Shelter and Settlements | For coordination of the design of the programme, helping to set objectives, design minimum housing conditions, and generally leading on implementation of the programme. |
| Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) team and Finance | In relation to the rental payment components, including the rental market assessment, payments to the financial service provider for further disbursement, risk management, record keeping to support auditing etc. |
| Logistics | If any hotels or hostels are going to be contracted. Potentially contracting of financial service providers. |
| Migration & Displacement (M&D) | In the context of a Population Movement: to understand the legal framework in place for the different groups (including targeted populations) and the impact of the associated rights on renting and access to services.  To support links to complementary approaches/support, exit strategy and integration. May lead on inclusion aspects of the programme with Protection, Gender and Inclusion colleagues. |
| Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) | For help to determine targeting and selection criteria, referral pathways for protection, age and disability inclusion, strategies for inclusion of marginalised groups etc.  PGI colleagues can also support with a PGI analysis as part of a wider context analysis. |
| Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) | To ensure meaningful participation of the target population during the entire programme cycle. For support in the assessments and context analysis using social science tools. For developing communication channels with the target population and property owners and host community. CEA can also contribute to designing communication with stakeholders as part of the processes connected to the programme (e.g. orientation on the programme, what happens when payments are late etc.). To develop communication tools to address the target population. To establish feedback mechanisms to collect feedback from the target population, host communities and other stakeholders and ensure that the feedback collected is used to inform the programme decision making process. |
| Human Resources, Learning and Development, Volunteer Management | For hiring of staff, training and managing volunteers involved in the programme. |

The objectives of external coordination can include:

1. Agree common advocacy/lobbying strategy for promoting rental assistance.
2. Promote equity of assistance, so that households are receiving broadly similar rental assistance packages from the range of organisations (IOs, NGOs etc.) that are providing assistance. This can include harmonising transfer value (related to deposit, monthly rental payment, move-in grant, etc.), duration of assistance, and targeting amongst other programme design decisions. Sometimes a multi-agency rental TWG is established, with an output to harmonise standards and practices. See example in toolkit.
3. Coordinate on assessments related to rental assistance (e.g. rental housing market assessment).
4. Identify and agree meaningful referrals to other organisations which may be programming in areas that are of importance to the tenant (or property owner in some instances) household.
5. Tie-in with government social protection programmes (see separate Social Protection related SoP in toolkit also).
6. Community Engagement (especially around engaging with hosting and target population) in relation to rental assistance can also be harmonised.