# **Introduction**

During the rental period it may be important to follow-up with the household for a number of reasons. This includes monitoring the occupancy of the rental property, and also monitoring for any threat of eviction and that the relationship between the property owner and tenant is functional.

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

* 2.2.2\_Example\_MonitoringFormLayoutKobo\_RentalAssistance.docx and 2.2.2\_Example\_MonitoringForm\_RentalAssistance.xlsx
  + This is an example of a form used to monitor the occupancy, and the relationship and any problems with both property owner and tenant. It can be completed through phone calls and also face-to-face visits. It was used on the 2022-2023 Ukraine response in Slovakia.

# **Occupancy monitoring & monitoring during tenancy**

This can be incorporated into other monitoring activities if, for example, the household is visited as part of integration support, however, on some programmes there may need to be stand-alone occupancy monitoring. This is often carried out prior to a further rental payment being made.

This can be undertaken in a number of ways:

* Calls to the tenant to ask them if they are still living in the property that was rented under the rental programme. Normally as part of this process it will have been pre-agreed as part of the orientation on the programme that the tenant will accept the call as a video call (note that a prior appointment may need to have been made during a window of time on a specific day) and that a live location will be shared during the call.
* Use of the postal service to issue a letter with a unique reference code/ QR code, that the tenant then uses to complete a survey.
* Calls to both the tenant and the property owner to cross-check occupation with the property owner. This can sometimes be incorporated as part of monitoring the relationship with the property owner.
* Face-to-face visits by staff and volunteers to the property, ideally incorporated into another activity such as integration support visits.

Integration of Safeguarding Considerations into Monitoring:

* In all actions a “Do No Harm” approach, which acknowledges the unequal power dynamics between the tenant and the owner, needs to be taken.
* Staff and volunteers need to be aware that it is not their role to investigate safeguarding concerns, but rather to report them and ensure a survivor-centred approach.
* Information on inappropriate behaviour, reporting mechanisms, and organisations offering tailored protection support (such as local anti-trafficking organisations) should be proactively shared with both owners and tenants.
* Ensure that all owners and tenants have information about and access to an anonymous reporting mechanism where they can make complaints and receive referrals, such as an Integrity Line. Ensure that information about this Integrity Line is shared widely and included in all communications.
* Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of referral pathways and procedures, for example how to safely refer a survivor of sexual and gender-based violence to an organisation that can provide specific support. Referral pathways should be shared widely and updated regularly.

# **Property owner and tenant relationship monitoring and eviction monitoring**

This can be important because:

* There may be concerns that property owners may abuse their power over tenants to evict them. This can occur for a range of reasons such as complaints by the tenant about repair needs (i.e. revenge eviction), or because the property owner finds that because of excess demand in the market they can charge more for the property during the agreed rental period.
* At the end of the rental programme we may hope that the tenant will continue to rent with the same property owner to avoid further displacement.
* There is a language barrier between property owner and tenant family, and the NS has translators who can assist in communication.

This monitoring often takes the form of phone calls with the property owner and tenant to understand the relationship and ask about any problems.

Note that there can also be broader eviction monitoring looking at trends in the rental market related to the number of evictions by property owners where this is tracked (often by courts for example) which may indicate other issues with the rental market.

# **Collaborative dispute resolutions**

Normally a mediator (such as a NS staff member) who is seen as a neutral party might be involved where the tenants and property owner are brought together to talk openly about problems and try to reach solutions. This can only work where both parties agree to undergo this form of dispute resolution.

# **Supporting tenants to avoid eviction**

In some instances, the relationship may have completely broken down, or the property owner may merely want the property back, potentially to move back into the property themselves, for sale, or to rent to another tenant (potentially at a higher rent). Sometimes however, it can relate to the tenant reporting disrepair and be categorised as a revenge eviction. The NS will have to decide what to do in relation to the reason for eviction and should ideally be led by the desires of the tenant. For example, the tenant may want to be supported to move elsewhere, or they may want to stay in the property.

The NS should learn from tenant rights organisations on the processes for fighting eviction. At first mediation with the property owner and tenant should be attempted. However, where it is determined that the eviction should be fought there may be specific processes normally undertaken in the context. This may involve examining the legislation regarding legal eviction and finding fault in the process used by the property owner. Have they issued the notice to evict in line with the required process under the legislation? Have they given the tenant adequate notice? Have they given the tenant the appropriate information at the start of the tenancy to allow them to evict under the procedure the property owner has chosen?

On some programmes the tenant may choose to not declare to the property owner that their rental payments are coming from the National Society because in some contexts this would decrease the competitiveness of the prospective tenant in the rental market. In this case it can often be helpful sending a letter on headed paper from the NS to the property owner highlighting that the tenant is being supported by an organisation. This can often be enough to get the property owner to back-down.

As appropriate, work with tenants’ rights organisations and citizen advice organisations to support tenants directly in fighting eviction.