Criteria for prioritization of collective sites for repairs and infrastructure upgrades

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© CCCM Cluster \ Collective site in Nizhyn, Chernihivska oblast, April 2024
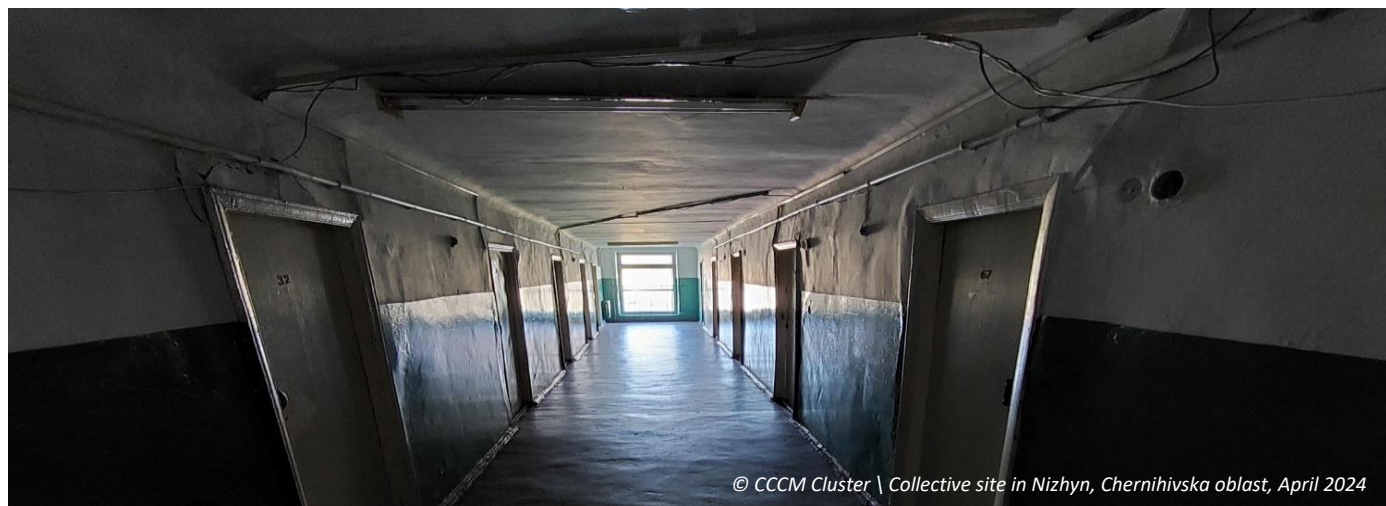
As of December 2024, more than 1,600 collective sites across the country continue to host about 75,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the third year of displacement, collective sites remain the only option for vulnerable groups of IDPs who cannot afford or access more appropriate housing solutions, and who cannot return to their places of origin due to security concerns or property damage. Collective sites are often located in buildings not intended for long-term residential use, and while work by humanitarian shelter actors has significantly improved living conditions in some of the sites, many others still have sub-standard living conditions below the minimum standards of Ukraine as per Resolution 930 'On collective site functioning'.

The results of Collective Site Monitoring conducted by the CCCM Cluster, in collaboration with REACH and partners, reveal ongoing gaps in minimum living standards, including shelter and WASH-related repairs, NFIs, and space arrangements. Specifically, 48% of sites reported needing floor and wall repairs, 36% WASH facility repairs, 35% door and window replacements, and 21% roof repairs. Additionally, only a limited number of sites provide barrier-free access for people with disabilities and limited mobility, resulting in significant gaps in appropriate collective site accommodation options for these groups. To effectively channel humanitarian funds, repairs, and refurbishments in collective sites should be prioritized where there are the most urgent needs for safety, hygiene, and accessibility.

This note outlines the key criteria for selecting collective sites for significant repair and refurbishments, as well as other costly investments and programming. The listed criteria should be considered a first step in the site selection process and be followed by on-site technical assessments to validate needs and ensure interventions address the most pressing needs and gaps of each site. This includes verifying the building's potential for upgrades and its potential for meeting the longer-term housing needs of displaced populations.

Note: Regular maintenance, including small repairs and minor upgrades conducted by CCCM partners in collective sites should be reported to the CCCM Cluster. All larger repairs and refurbishments of infrastructure

Prioritization criteria

1. **Legal status**
   Resolution 930, 'On collective sites functioning,' mandates that all collective sites operational as of 1 September 2023 be 'legalized' and included in the official government list of collective sites. This list is adopted Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories (renamed the Ministry for National Unity of Ukraine on 3 December 2024), based on submissions from oblast authorities, and updated bimonthly. The official list can be requested from the CCCM Cluster. As of October 2024, 922 out of 1,679 active sites have been legalized.

   Investing in 'legalized' sites is considered more secure, as these sites face a lower risk of closure. According to the Resolution, sites that have been sufficiently reconstructed or repaired can only be closed after six months following martial law's termination, unless otherwise specified in a memorandum between the owner of the collective site building and the partner. If site managers have initiated the inclusion process, and the site is expected to be legalized during the next round of the list update, these sites could also be considered for repairs, as legalization enhances their stability and longevity in providing shelter for displaced people.

2. **Number of residents and vulnerabilities**
   Collective sites housing at least 50 residents should be prioritized for major repair and refurbishment, as this addresses the needs of a larger number of IDPs and improves the cost-effectiveness of interventions. However, partners may also consider sites with fewer residents if they have the capacity to host newly displaced or evacuated people, or if they could receive people from other collective sites being closed as part of collective site consolidation efforts. Priority should also be given to sites that host large numbers of people in certain vulnerable groups, especially older people, people with disabilities and female-headed households.

3. **Ownership type**
   Collective sites established in communal and state-owned premises should be prioritized for repairs and upgrades, as these properties align with government and local self-governance oversight, ensuring accountability and complementarity to state efforts. Sites under communal or state ownership are considered to offer more security of tenure for IDPs because authorities are directly responsible for safeguarding the displaced populations residing there. While privately owned sites may be included in the official government list, investing in them carries additional risks, such as potential disputes with property owners and a lack of long-term guarantees. To mitigate these risks, partners should verify ownership documents, ensure proper legal agreements, and prioritize measures that secure tenure for site residents.

4. **Building type**
   Partners are advised to prioritize interventions in buildings classified as part of the housing stock, as these are specifically designed to provide conditions suitable for medium- to long-term living. This can be verified through ownership certificate and technical documentation on the premises. The housing

stock encompasses not only apartment buildings but also dormitories accommodating various social groups. Non-housing stock buildings include facilities such as hospitals, schools, kindergartens, gyms, and sanatoriums. If adequately justified, living areas within the non-housing stock may also be considered; however, it is important to note that such properties are often challenging to convert into housing stock suitable for more durable solutions and carry a higher possibility of returning to their original function.

Please note: Interventions in operational social institutions, including geriatric and psycho-neurological facilities where IDPs receive medical and assisted living services, fall outside the scope of CCCM and Shelter clusters activities as outlined in the Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.

5. **Building technical condition**
When selecting collective sites for refurbishment, its technical condition must be carefully assessed. Priority should be given to structurally sound buildings that do not require major renovations or reconstruction. The site must be connected to urban service networks (e.g., water, sanitation, energy, waste collection). If independent systems or local solutions are unavailable, the connection to urban water, wastewater, or gas networks should not be overly complex or time-consuming. Light to medium repairs, along with improvements to accessibility, heating systems, clean water supply, and sanitary installations, are considered justified. Additional work may be required to adapt the facilities to increased demand or to enhance service quality.

6. **Access to services, markets, livelihoods, and local integration**
Collective sites in urban and peri-urban areas, which provide better access to essential state services such as education, healthcare facilities, pension offices, administrative centers, transport networks, and proximity to markets and livelihood opportunities for displaced households, should be prioritized for interventions. For rural locations, prioritization should be based on a comprehensive analysis of service availability and the potential for local integration of the displaced population.

Partners are responsible for conducting thorough assessments of the accessibility and adequacy of public infrastructure and services in the sites being considered for targeted interventions. Particular attention must be given to minimizing the risk of ghettoization and stigmatization of site residents due to the isolated location of the collective sites and its potential consequences.

7. **Safety considerations**
Collective sites are intended as places of safety for displaced people, and repairs and refurbishments in sites very close to frontline areas, especially active conflict areas, are not recommended. This is in consideration for the safety of the site residents (who should be encouraged to relocate to safer areas, especially if an evacuation order is in effect), the safety of humanitarian workers and contractors, and the site's long-term viability. Sites selected for repair and refurbishment should be at a safer distance from frontline areas. As a general guideline and in line with Shelter Cluster Activity Handbook this should be minimum 20km from the border and minimum 30km from the frontline, although the actual distance could vary depending on the local context and organization policy. Partners should seek the guidance of local authorities as well as their organization's security advisors in determining what is appropriate for the specific location.

8. **Supporting evacuations**
Ensuring adequate spaces in collective sites to accommodate newly displaced or evacuated people – and especially older people and people with disabilities – is a high priority. Partners are advised to consult

with the authorities and the CCCM Cluster to determine which sites are identified for hosting evacuees and, if available, the number of places needed under evacuation planning. Remember government and operational timelines since work to create new spaces for evacuees may take several weeks or months, depending on the required improvements. Consult existing return intention surveys among IDPs to better assess projected demand.

Consultation and coordination

Partners should consult with the CCCM, Shelter and WASH Clusters to ensure that plans are well coordinated and identify whether other organizations are implementing or planning similar activities to avoid overlaps. Partners can also consult the Collective Sites Online Map and the Collective Site Monitoring Dashboard for details about the location, ownership, population, and living conditions in specific sites. In addition, it is important to consult with site managers, building owners, and local authorities during the planning process and receive their confirmation before finalizing plans. Local authorities are important knowledge holders who can provide valuable information about the collective site, including plans to allocate local budget funds for site needs, potential plans to accommodate additional residents or restore the building to its original function, legal issues, building parameters, and the profile and needs of the site residents. This approach fosters local partnerships, enhances the complementarity of the response, and ensures the effective impact of humanitarian interventions.

Guiding Questions

- ✓ Is the building included in the list of collective sites as per Resolution 930? (If not, has the owner of the site building committed to including it in the list?)
- ✓ Is the ownership of the building clearly identified?
- ✓ Is the owner aware of the planned interventions?
- ✓ Does the owner agree to sign a memorandum specifying how the building will be used and for how long?
- ✓ Does the building belong to the housing stock? (If not, does the planned intervention target living spaces in non-housing stock?)
- ✓ Is the building structurally sound (not requiring structural repairs)?
- ✓ Does the building currently host at least 50 individuals?
- ✓ Is there a possibility and need to expand the site's capacity?
- ✓ Is the building connected to urban services (e.g., water supply, district heating, electricity, gas)?
- ✓ Is the building connected to essential services, markets, and livelihoods, and has sufficient transport connections nearby?
- ✓ Is the area considered safe and located at a reasonable distance from the frontline?
- ✓ Have local authorities been consulted?
- ✓ Have relevant Clusters been consulted to avoid duplication of activities?