

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT

OVERVIEW OF UNHCR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES 2025

 **57 COUNTRIES**
delivering UNHCR Shelter programs

 **2.09 MILLION PEOPLE**
received shelter and housing assistance



110

Communal facilities maintained or constructed



37%

Of HHs assisted with cash used it partially to cover shelter needs



250

Km of roads and drainage constructed or maintained



Emergency Shelter Provided
310,000

In Sudan, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine



Transitional Shelter Provided or Maintained
55,000

In Bangladesh, Yemen, Kenya, Jordan, Somalia



Durable Shelter Provided or Maintained
9,000

In Ethiopia, Burundi, Niger, Somalia



\$286 million of expenditure spent against a budget of **\$1.042 billion** for Shelter and Settlement



1.3 Million trees planted and over **150 hectares** of land rehabilitated.

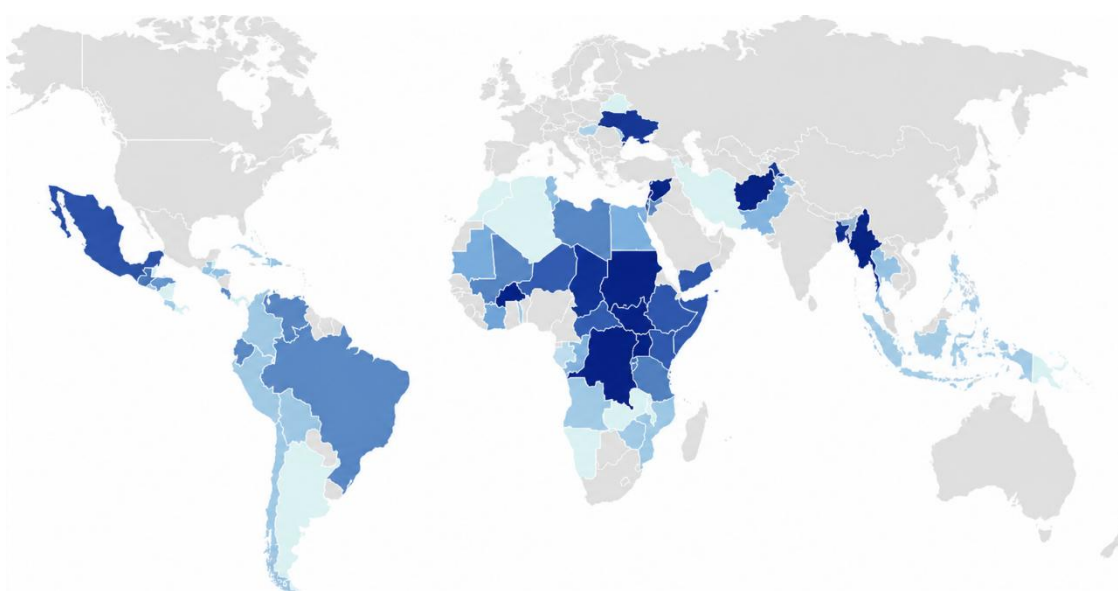


The largest UNHCR Shelter responses are in **Uganda, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ukraine and Lebanon**



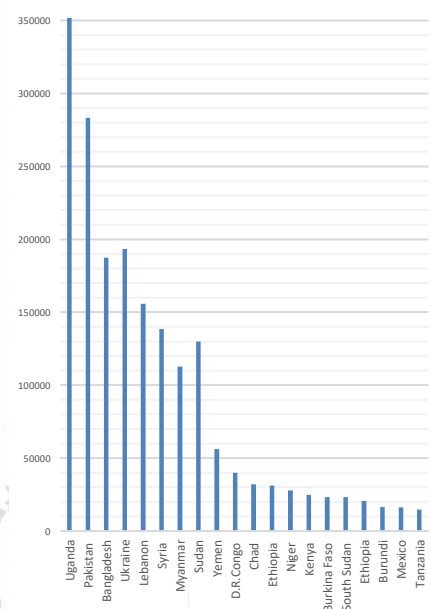
63% of those receiving assistance are **refugees**, while **22%** are **IDPs**, the rest are **Returnees, HC and others of concern**.

UNHCR Operations with a Shelter Programme



Number of People Assisted: ■ < 652 ■ 652–2021 ■ 2021–7229 ■ 7229–20788 ■ 20788–77051 ■ ≥ 77051

Top 20 Countries providing shelter assistance by number of people assisted



The report provides a global overview of Shelter and Settlement Programs in UNHCR operations. It highlights key achievements in UNHCR's global efforts to ensure refugees and other forcibly displaced people have adequate access to adequate shelter and housing.

Introduction: 2025 in Figures

In 2025, UNHCR's settlement and shelter programmes supported more than **2 million forcibly displaced people across 57 countries**. Interventions ranged from rapid emergency shelter responses following displacement and disasters to shelter upgrading, settlement planning and infrastructure investments in protracted displacement contexts.

The year was marked by a **reduction in available resources**, alongside rising construction and transport costs, recurrent climate shocks and increasing displacement. These constraints significantly shaped shelter responses, requiring operations to **prioritize emergency and lifesaving assistance** while limiting progress toward more durable and sustainable solutions.

Emergency Shelter Support

Emergency shelter remained the backbone of UNHCR's shelter response, reflecting the scale of new displacement. UNHCR provided emergency shelter kits, family tents and temporary structures to address immediate protection risks and restore minimum living conditions for displaced households. **In South Sudan**, emergency shelter assistance was combined with reception facilities and rapid site development for new arrivals fleeing conflict and flooding. **In Sudan**, the continuation of armed conflict and large-scale displacement saw hundreds of thousands of people supported through emergency shelter kits and tents, alongside the construction and rehabilitation of communal shelters in overcrowded sites. **In Ukraine**, UNHCR continued to provide emergency

shelter kits and building materials to conflict-affected populations, including for people whose property has been hit by missile strikes complementing government assistance.

Transitional & Durable Shelter Support

Transitional shelter interventions continued to provide pathways toward improved living conditions in protracted displacement contexts, although progress remained uneven due to funding, land and security constraints. **In Chad, Rwanda and Uganda**, long-standing investments in settlement-based shelter upgrading, maintenance and layout improvements sustained relatively high levels of shelter adequacy for refugees. **In Ethiopia**, a combination of transitional shelter construction, shelter upgrading and durable housing pilots supported incremental improvements, particularly in settlements linked to broader urbanization and development initiatives. Durable and semi-durable shelters **in Burundi and South Sudan** incorporated climate-adaptive features, such as raised floors, improved roofing and stronger structural systems, to reduce flood damage and maintenance needs. **In Somalia**, shelter design continued to respond to recurring flood risks, while community engagement and skills training supported ownership and durability.



In Ethiopia, Ura Refugee Site, families are provided with durable shelter materials through a mixed of in kind material package and cash for labour support.

Cash for Shelter Assistance

Cash-based interventions remained a critical component of UNHCR's shelter response. UNHCR's Post-Distribution Monitoring in 65 countries highlighted that 95% of interviewed households said that cash improved their living conditions, while 37% said they used parts of its cash assistance for rent and/or shelter repair. More than USD 16 million was delivered through conditionalized cash assistance for shelter enabling flexibility and choice while supporting local markets. **In Afghanistan**, cash-based shelter assistance enabled households to repair or construct shelters in line with agreed technical standards, strengthening ownership through the use of formal banking systems. **In Mauritania and Mozambique**, cash for shelter supported refugees and IDPs living outside formal settlements to improve or reinforce housing, providing basic protection from climatic hazards. **In Lebanon**, cash assistance for shelter continued to play a vital role in mitigating eviction risks and maintaining access to shelter in a context of severe economic crisis and recurrent emergencies. Similar modalities supported displaced and war-affected populations in **Ukraine, Jordan and other urban contexts**, often complemented by light repairs and utility support.

While cash-based approaches expanded in several operations, their scale and outcomes were impacted by inflation, rising construction costs, restrictions on shelter design and materials.

Sustainable Shelter Interventions

Sustainability remained an important, though increasingly constrained, objective of shelter programming in 2025. Where conditions allowed, UNHCR promoted climate-adapted designs, material efficiency and reduced environmental impact, particularly in longer-term settlements. **In Nigeria**, UNHCR, in partnership with the State Government through the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Resettlement, constructed 450 housing units to support refugee returnees and vulnerable populations. The project promotes sustainability and protection through a hybrid, owner-driven construction approach. **In Ethiopia and Rwanda**, phased and incremental shelter upgrading approaches linked humanitarian assistance with development-oriented housing and settlement strategies.



In Nigeria, UNHCR, in partnership with the State Government through the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Resettlement, delivered 450 housing units to refugee returnees and vulnerable Nigerian populations

At the global level, UNHCR advanced strategic guidance by finalizing the [Circular Economy Principles in Infrastructure Projects Guideline](#), developed jointly with UNICEF and WFP. The guideline provides practical recommendations for integrating circular design, resource efficiency and lifecycle thinking into humanitarian infrastructure projects. The guidelines that are complemented with an online training component, aim to support field operations in improving efficiency, reducing waste and strengthening the environmental sustainability of shelter, housing and infrastructure interventions across humanitarian settings.

Settlement Planning and Development

UNHCR continued to promote more integrated and inclusive settlement planning approaches in 2025, linking shelter, infrastructure, protection and service delivery. **In Ethiopia**, collaboration with government counterparts and UN-Habitat advanced spatial planning, urban profiling and prototype housing initiatives under the Sustainable Human Settlement model. **In Jordan, Rwanda and South Sudan**, settlement infrastructure investments, particularly roads, drainage and communal facilities, improved accessibility, safety and service delivery, supporting both displaced and host communities.

Amongst key results was the technical support provided by the [Geneva Technical Hub](#) to authorities and partners to address risks such as floods, landslides and fires, and to promote coordinated, resilient approaches.



The National Workshop on Integrated Settlement Planning held in Cox's Bazar, by GTH

This included the National Workshop on Integrated Settlement Planning held in **Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**, which brought together government authorities, inter-sector coordination entities and operational agencies. The workshop promoted a shared understanding of integrated settlement planning in one of the world's most densely populated and climate-fragile refugee settings.

Enhancing Climate Resilience

Climate Resilience and climate adaptation measures continued to underpin settlement and shelter interventions, particularly in flood- and climate-vulnerable locations. **In Bangladesh**, integrated settlement planning, drainage upgrades and fire-risk mitigation reduced exposure to hazards in highly congested camps. **In South Sudan**, extensive road, dykes and drainage works reduced flood risks across large settlements, protecting shelter infrastructure and improving access during the rainy season. **In Sudan, Yemen and parts of West and Central Africa**, recurrent flooding repeatedly damaged shelters and infrastructure, underscoring the limits of emergency-only responses and the need for more resilient shelter and settlement interventions.

At the global level, UNHCR strengthened technical support for flood adaptation and climate-resilient settlement planning through a partnership with Deltares to deliver a comparative economic assessment of flood adaptation and risk-reduction in Kule Refugee Camp, Ethiopia, and Renk Transit Centre, South Sudan. The study, titled [A tale of two sites: Flood risk and Adaptation](#), supports a shift from reactive flood response toward proactive risk management, combining hydrodynamic modelling, cost-benefit analysis and local knowledge. The standardized assessment approach provides a replicable framework to guide transparent, evidence-based investments in climate resilience across flood-prone settlements.



Circular shelter material reuse to support sustainable returns in Azraq and Zaatari Camps, Jordan

Case Study

Circular shelter material reuse to support sustainable returns, Jordan.

In Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps, UNHCR has introduced a **systematic reuse and recycling process** as part of shelter management following refugee returns to Syria. As shelters are vacated, components are carefully dismantled and assessed to maximize reuse, reduce waste and sustain shelter assistance for vulnerable households remaining in the camps.

Each shelter component follows a **three-stage quality assurance process**. Reusable items are cleaned, repaired and re-certified before being reinstalled in refurbished shelters. Materials that do not meet reuse standards are sorted by type and transferred to an accredited recycling subcontractor. Revenue generated through recycling is reinvested into shelter maintenance and upgrading, creating a closed-loop supply chain that lowers costs, accelerates response capacity and reduces reliance on new procurement.

This circular approach delivers **both environmental and protection benefits**. Reused and upgraded shelter elements, such as floors and windows, have significantly improved safety, thermal comfort, ventilation and privacy for refugee families, while reducing construction waste and extending the lifespan of existing shelter assets. At the same time, the initiative supports local recycling industries and helps sustain ongoing shelter upgrades in a context of limited resources.

Sustainable Human Settlements

UNHCR refers to Sustainable Human Settlements as urban and rural areas that are designed, developed, and governed in ways that create inclusive, safe, resilient communities for both forcibly displaced populations and their hosts. Sustainable Human Settlements are characterized by the capacity of forcibly displaced people to meet their protection, assistance and solution needs through freedom of movement and choice of residence, access to rights, inclusion in national systems and services, and opportunities for self-reliance and social cohesion with local communities.

Through a catalytic role, UNHCR works alongside international and local actors and partners to help translate this vision into practice, supporting the development of settlements that deliver essential services and infrastructure. This includes investments in shelter, water and sanitation, renewable energy, waste management, communal spaces, land for livelihoods, and improved access to markets, education, and healthcare.



Sustainable Human Settlements: From Commitment to Action

The Sustainable Human Settlements underpins UNHCR's efforts to shift from camps toward more inclusive, sustainable settlement models. Anchored in the [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\) Pledge on Sustainable Human Settlements](#), it brings together governments, development actors and humanitarian partners to advance settlement-based responses.

The Pledge supports a shift away from camp settings toward integrated human settlements, where displaced populations can access land, services and opportunities alongside host communities. Central to this approach is embedding inclusion from the start, through access to national systems, urban planning processes and local service delivery, enabling more sustainable, resilient and development-oriented responses.

In 2025, UNHCR and partners like UN-Habitat and the World Bank advanced operationalization of the Pledge through a series of engagements, supporting countries to translate commitments into practical approaches, policies and investments, reflected in key milestones including:

- In May, IGAD convened a regional review of the Human Settlements Pledges progress in Addis Ababa, reaffirming collaboration and implementation momentum.
- On World Habitat Day, October 6th, the High Commissioner underscored displacement as a settlement and housing challenge, calling for inclusive urban solutions.
- In November, UNHCR, UN-Habitat and the World Bank convened a [Deep Dive into Sustainable Human Settlements](#) in Nairobi with governments and experts across multiple countries to advance operationalization of the pledge.

- In December, the [GRF Progress Review side event on Human Settlements](#) highlighted concrete reforms toward inclusion in national systems, with emphasis on urban planning, land access, climate-responsive infrastructure and local governance.

Country Progress on Sustainable Human Settlements

In 2025, several countries are demonstrating how integrated approaches can transform displacement responses into inclusive, resilient and development-oriented settlements:

Cameroon is transforming Minawao camp by promoting self-reliance through agriculture and developing surrounding areas into “opportunity villages,” with plans to transform the wider area into an integrated agricultural hub.

Chad is integrating humanitarian and development efforts through its National Response Plan and National Development Plan, while working with UNHCR, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank to explore integrated settlements and out-of-camp solutions for remote camps, calling on partners for support to sustain these efforts.

Ethiopia is progressing the transition from camps to integrated urban settlements, with new sites designed from the outset for inclusion and plans

to transform long-standing camps into towns. In line with Makatet, Ethiopia’s national refugee inclusion roadmap, this approach underscores the importance of linking humanitarian response with urban planning, governance and sustainable infrastructure.

Kenya is advancing the transition from camps to settlements since joining the Human Settlements Pledge in 2023, through the launch of **Shirika Plan** in 2025, the municipalization of Dadaab and Kakuma, strengthened inclusive planning with refugee participation, and more resilient service delivery systems supported by land reforms and development financing.

Mauritania is urbanizing M’bera while hosting refugees in surrounding villages, extending development beyond the camp through integration into national systems and services - though financing and coordination remain key to scale.

Mozambique is promoting climate-resilient housing, tenure security and local construction value chains, supporting recovery and economic inclusion.

Rwanda is exploring a shift beyond camps toward integrated settlements, building on strong inclusion policies and advancing localized, self-reliant, and sustainable transition pathways.

Somalia is advancing land-based solutions and urban integration, including secure tenure and climate-adapted settlement layouts.



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