

Migrant centres' life cycle

Migrant centres' location, design, and duration are context-specific, and the way these elements significantly impact the provision of protection and assistance to beneficiaries throughout program implementation. Migrant centres' life cycle can be divided into **three interconnected phases** that follow each other within an overlapping period:

Phase 1: Set-up

Good planning and design for the set-up of migrant centres is a precondition to meet the needs of beneficiaries at all stages of assistance. Effective planning ensures that a facility works efficiently, that is responsive to the full range of potential beneficiaries, and that it provides services that are sustainable in the long term. In the set-up phase, a **satisfactory site** and a **satisfactory structure** must be identified. The identification of the appropriate site and structure also depends on the services that will be provided in the centre. A needs assessment and a mapping of other stakeholders providing protection and assistance services in the area are recommended in order to avoid duplication of activities and to respond to beneficiaries' actual needs. Click [here](#) for an overview of possible services to be provided in migrant centres.

In the set-up phase, a satisfactory site and a satisfactory structure must be identified. The choice of the location has a critical impact on the accessibility by beneficiaries, on their well-being and safety while in the premises and on the ability to implement daily protection and assistance activities. Several elements shall be taken into account in the selection of a site, including the scope of the facility, the size and conditions needed, the safety and security that it offers as well as cultural and social considerations of access and the relation with the surrounding community. Positive factors include proximity to local communities that are not likely to resent the presence of the target group using the center in the area, proximity to responsible security forces and ample availability of resources. **Negative factors** include proximity to hostile communities and proximity to unstable areas or areas with strained resources. Isolated and remote locations are not recommended, as the facility must be easily accessible in all season in order to ensure movement of both beneficiaries and personnel, as well as the regular provision of supplies. Before a decision is taken regarding the establishment of a centre, an assessment shall be conducted by IOM security officers as soon as a potential location is identified. For further guidance on IOM security standards, please consult [this entry](#).

When IOM is in charge of setting up the center **a few options** can be taken into consideration and discussed with donor and government counterparts:

Option 1



The first option is for state authorities to assign an existing building

A publicly owned facility may ensure a higher engagement by national or local stakeholders and longer-term sustainability. Nevertheless, attention shall be paid to the state of conservation of the property, as well as its location and surrounding environment. As indicated above, the use of buildings located in a remote or a devalued site shall be avoided.

Option 2



The second option is to rent a facility from private owners

In this case, IOM shall mitigate the potential negative consequences for the local market, for example by verifying that local households are not evicted from their lodging by opportunist owners wanting to obtain higher rents from the humanitarian community. IOM shall also take into account the risk of eviction by the owners after having invested in rehabilitation and customisation works.

Option 3



A third option is to build a new structure, which allows the complete customisation of the facility and to set spaces according to IOM and partners' standards and needs

However, this solution requires a major initial investment in capital, as well as technical competences and time for planning and realising the structure. Furthermore, such a process entails a long-term engagement, narrowing flexibility in the response to possible changes in migratory flows and funding opportunities. For guidance on IOM's procurement of construction works please consult [this entry](#).

Provided that the space identified is apt to the purpose, **the most recommended solution is to adapt an existing structure**. In fact, this solution allows flexibility in relation to possible changes in migratory flows and funding opportunities. However, the conditions of the building (safety of the structure; proper roof/door/windows; water and sanitation solutions; state of electrical wiring; heating/cooling systems etc.) and its location shall be carefully assessed to ensure that the centre has the appropriate characteristics for its intended use is apt to the purpose.

Regardless the selected option, the design of spaces should facilitate the organisation of daily life and activities in the centre and their logistics, taking into account the frequent turnover of beneficiaries. If the centre is meant to offer accommodation, a separation between living spaces and communal areas must be foreseen in line with cultural, religious or traditional considerations regarding the appropriateness of spaces. For guidance on minimum requirements of migrant centres, please consult [this entry](#).

Phase 2: Centres' management

Effective centres' management creates the social, technical and logistical conditions for the provision of protection and assistance. Centres' management implies an holistic approach, as it includes not only care and maintenance of the premises and coordination of service provision but also the promotion of harmony within and outside of the premises.

Core centres' management tasks include, among others:

- **Managing human resources:** The composition and organisation of the human resources differs according to the context and the scope of the centre. Although the number and profile of the staff can vary, some key functions are essential for the correct functioning of the premises. For guidance on human resources management, including standard organigrams and terms of reference, please consult [this entry](#).
- **Ensuring the care and maintenance of the infrastructure:** Regular maintenance, cleaning and repair works are imperative to ensure beneficiaries' safety, health and quality of stay, as well as to prevent the degradation of the building fabric, including structural damage.
- **Ensuring proper reception, orientation and info sharing** throughout assistance is key to establish trust and to ensure a smooth functioning of migrant centres and its services. Accurate and up-to-date information will allow beneficiaries to make informed decisions about the assistance they wish to receive on the basis of the information presented. The trust, openness and respect showed by sharing information with beneficiaries will make them more involved, engaged and empowered. For further guidance, please consult [this entry](#).
- **Mainstreaming age, gender and diversity inclusivity:** An Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach shall be adopted to promote an accessible, inclusive and protective environment. Diversity in values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skills and other specific personal characteristics must be taken into account, and dedicated efforts shall be made by IOM to address and remove barriers that prevent inclusivity and equal access to assistance (see also [this entry](#)).
- **Coordinating the provision of services:** Needs assessments shall be conducted regularly to ensure that services identified during the set-up phase are still relevant and meet the needs of beneficiaries. Services provided in migrant centres greatly vary depending on the context and many include shelter and basic needs provisions such as food, NFIs and medical and mental health care, administrative and legal support as well as information about the risks of irregular migration and alternatives to it, referral services, pre-departure and post-arrival integration support as well as assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR). For further guidance on this topic, please consult [this category](#).
- **Guaranteeing safety and security:** Security in migrant centres premises has a twofold connotation, as it concerns not only safety of the beneficiaries but also staff, implementing partners and service providers'. The way facilities are designed and managed play a crucial role in ensuring safety and security and shall be thoroughly defined in coordination with IOM Security Officers. For further guidance on this topic, please consult [this entry](#).

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- **Promoting beneficiaries' participation:** Beneficiaries shall not be passive recipients of assistance, but rather be actively involved in the daily management of migrant centres and have the chance to share their skills, knowledge and capacities. Participation is important for beneficiaries' self-perception and self-esteem and it is key to maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the facilities. More guidance on accountability to affected populations (AAP) is available at [this entry](#), while guidance on how to ensure beneficiaries' participation and accountability can be found [here](#).
 - **Handling community relations:** Depending on the size and scope of the facility, tensions may arise with the local population, who may perceive that their environment, neighborhood, culture or resources are negatively impacted by the presence of the facility and its beneficiaries. They may also resent the assistance beneficiaries are receiving, especially if no initiatives targeting the host population are foreseen. Migrant centres management include the establishment of links with the host community, so that their petitions can be heard and action taken to mitigate any negative impact the presence of the facility may have inadvertently created (see also [this entry](#)).

Phase 3: Phasing out

Phasing out of migrant centres management by IOM may take place for a variety of reasons and in a diversity of ways, including progressive withdrawal and handover to government counterparts, changes in migration dynamics that no longer require IOM protection and assistance interventions, and closure due to security threats, changes in government policy, or lack of donor support.

Best practices from the field

In 2015, IOM Cambodia established a Migration Response Center (MRC) in Poi Pet to provide assistance to Cambodian migrants and victims of trafficking returning from Thailand. Managed in close coordination with the Cambodian Government, the MRC was handed over to state authorities in 2019, now fully in charge of its management. Initially funded by IOM, the MRC is now benefitting of technical support provided by the Organization thanks to the presence of IOM staff based in the MRC to conduct awareness raising activities.

Planning and coordination for the phase-out is an integral part of the set-up process, and handover plans shall be in place with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders since an early stage. The way how phasing out is handled will have a significant impact on the future of its beneficiaries. If not well planned, phasing out is a challenging phase as it occurs at a time when both staff and beneficiaries are anxious about the future and when budget and resources are usually low. If announced abruptly, the downturn in energy and focus may negatively impact the provision of protection and assistance in the final phase. If different partners provide services and assistance through the facility, close coordination among the partners is needed to ensure harmonised communication and prevent contradictory messages.

[The](#) following elements shall be taken into account to ensure that an **exit strategy** is successful:

- Ensuring that there is sufficient timing to transfer knowledge, build capacity and ensure a smooth transition
- Identification of sustainable solutions for the beneficiaries (please consult [this entry](#))
- Establishment of a clear handover plan endorsed by all the stakeholders involved in centres' management of materials and infrastructure, handover documents for each partner/activity, etc.

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- Provision of training and capacity building to national authorities or other partners taking over the centres'
 - Provision of technical support during an overlap period

References and Tools

- [IOM, NRC and UNHCR Camp Management Toolkit](#)
- [IOM and UNHCR Collective center Guidelines](#)
- [East Africa transit centers guidelines: Standard operating procedures, forms, new hotel SOPs \(Closing or moving a TC, p. 10\)](#)
- [IOM Niger MRRM Handbook \(draft version\) \(Chapter 2.1 Transit centers definition and planning, p. 11\)](#)
- [Running an Effective Migrant resource center: an Handbook for practitioners](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 2. Quarterly Report for TC Managers \(p. 51\)](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 12. Hygiene Check-list, \(p. 61\)](#)

Category

Management of migrant centres

