

Resettlement Housing Design

A briefing note from SRA

Design Philosophy



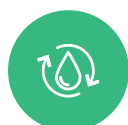
Diversity

Designs should reflect the diversity of affected housing as much as possible, including in terms of architectural style, floor / plot area, the number and types of rooms, the level of servicing, and – where appropriate – building materials.



Like-for-Like

Entitlement policies should provide “like-for-like” replacement, that is replace affected plots and housing as closely as possible (e.g., on a room-for-room and/or area-for-area basis), such that each individual resettlement plot and house resembles (if not improves upon) that lost to the project, in both form and function.



Context and Climate

Designs should be sensitive to the local context and a changing climate. Locally appropriate opportunities for (a) adaptation, such as passive heating / cooling and stormwater capture / management, and (b) mitigation, such as renewable energy and composting latrines, should be explored in full.



Flexibility

Designs should offer the possibility of expansion and modification over time, such as by adding new rooms and changing uses, as the needs of residents change.



Ease of Construction, Operation and Maintenance

The skills necessary for construction, operation and maintenance should be widely available, and related technologies and materials widely understood and readily supplied. Operational and maintenance requirements should be minimized.



Affordability

Designs should be affordable for the proponent to construct, as well as for resettlers to operate and maintain.



Livelihood Restoration

Designs of both plots and houses should facilitate the restoration of existing livelihoods as much as possible, such as – for example – through the provision of sufficient space for a kitchen garden, small livestock or food storage.



Handover

Designs should facilitate an efficient handover process through which resettlement plots, housing and related infrastructure are provided to their new owners. Sufficient training should be provided to help resettlers assume their new responsibilities, followed by an appropriate period of support.



Relevant Laws and Standards

Designs should adhere to national laws and regulations, as well as international and company standards. Doing so often has significant implications for building materials, room types / sizes, and levels of servicing.



Choice

Sufficient designs should be developed to be able to offer a choice to resettlers, taking into account their specific needs, any preferences, and cultural considerations. This is often accomplished through provision of a range of standard designs, sizes, colours, finishes, etc. (Note that at times custom-designed and built housing may be required / appropriate.)



Gender and Vulnerability

Designs should expressly consider the needs and preferences of girls, women, the elderly and other potentially vulnerable people.



Creativity

In some scenarios, a self-build option may be appropriate, in which resettling households take on responsibility for designing / building their own replacement housing. In others, an “all cash” option may be appropriate, in which resettling households are responsible for purchasing their own replacement housing with cash compensation provided by the proponent. In both cases, sufficient safeguards must be implemented to mitigate against the risk of homelessness and to ensure replacement housing meets agreed standards.

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Key Steps in Resettlement Housing Design

- **Undertake a detailed survey:** Undertake a detailed immoveable asset inventory as part of baseline data collection. This inventory should record plot dimensions, standards of construction, house size, room number and use, level of servicing, and other related information.
- **Perform complementary studies:** Complement the above with qualitative investigations, such as interviews and focus groups, to understand how residents use their existing housing, plots and communal facilities, related strengths and weaknesses, as well as needs and preferences. This will guide the range of housing designs, plots and facilities to be developed.
- **Analyse the local construction industry:** Undertake a detailed review of available contractors, workers, building materials and practices in the local area. Develop trade off studies regarding key building materials in order to inform decision-making, including consideration of cultural norms, availability, affordability, and ease of maintenance.
- **Benchmark against other resettlement projects:** Review other resettlement projects in the region with a particular focus on housing, including entitlement policies, designs and building materials, as well as permitting, construction and handover processes. Identify lessons learned.
- **Work with local authorities:** Engage with local authorities as early as possible in the design process to receive advice, inputs and buy-in, well in advance of formal approval processes.
- **Engage with those affected:** Engage extensively with those being displaced to come to a common understanding of baseline conditions, to build on the advice of local authorities, and – ultimately – to develop plot and housing designs in a participatory manner. Often, this participatory design process will be nested within a structured negotiations process that establishes the terms and conditions guiding the overall resettlement process (culminating in a Resettlement Action Plan), and then applies these agreed terms and conditions to individual households (culminating in a signed Resettlement Agreement).
- **Establish a final set of designs, work through permitting and tendering:** As negotiations progress, particularly at the household level, create a final set of design drawings regarding the plot, house types, and infrastructure to be constructed. Use these to work through the permitting process(es) and to tender the work for construction. Keep in mind that the permitting and tendering processes can themselves be very time-consuming.
- **Construct and handover the resettlement houses:** Oversee the establishment of the new plots, houses and infrastructure. Ensure sufficient quality assurance and quality control processes. Once satisfied, handover the newly build assets to resettlers, along with appropriate training and support, as well as security of tenure where applicable.

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If you have a question or comment on this briefing note, or anything related to land access and resettlement, please email us at info@steynreddy.com.

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About Us

SRA helps our clients acquire the land they need – on time and on budget. We work collaboratively with our clients' teams and affected communities to identify, assess and manage displacement impacts in a practical, responsible and sustainable manner.

SRA's experienced team:

- Has managed hundreds of land access and resettlement projects around the world
- Has a track record of realising win-win-win solutions for our clients, communities, and host governments
- Applies international standards and best practices in a pragmatic, innovative and locally appropriate manner
- Is results-oriented and hands on, working largely at project sites with clients and other stakeholders
- Are well recognised thought leaders in the field, co-authoring a well-known guide and publishing a popular Insight Series.