

Type of Project:	Shelter Housing Durable Solution	Country:	Armenia
Approach:	Social Apartments	Realisation Year:	2001
Project name:	Nubarashen, previous high school building structure	Version:	1
		Date:	December 2003



Initial Situation, Context

The declared independence of Armenia from the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the collapse of the entire economy, leaving thousands of unfinished buildings in the country; from started till almost completed constructions. From 1988 till 1992, more than 400 000 refugees arrived in Armenia among them some 300 000 ethnic Armenians, who had left Azerbaijan, following the escalation of the interethnic conflict over the dispute territory of Ngorno-Karabakh.

The influx of the ethnic Armenian refugees coincided with a massive earthquake in northern Armenia in December 1988, claiming the lives of 25 000 people and rendering 500 000 homeless.

Goals, Beneficiaries

Completing the existing but not completed structure of a planned high school building (State owned) into an apartment bloc. The structure was offered by the Department for Migration and Refugee (DMR) to UNHCR. The aim was to build in as many different types of apartments for refugees as possible. An intended positive side effect was the improvement of the economical situation in a region in which since 1992 an urgent need for shelter apartments exists. Finally the completing of this structure could improve its previous non-esthetic obstructing of the landscape and would provide work to jobless citizens.

Approach

DMR in conjunction with UNHCR requested an inspection of the 1987 started and partly finished school structure. The object had to be inspected for its suitability to house different types of desperately needed apartments. At the same time the infrastructure installations located next to the site had to be checked as well. Due to the positive inspection results, possible approaches for the future floor layouts were formulated and a seismic check up for the existing engineering structure were ordered and executed.

Out of various sketch-plans the most economical solution got defined, approved and drawn up. Six firms participated in the open public tender. For the execution of the work, the most suited general builder received the contract. Within 6 months the approved scheme, including its needed infrastructure and surrounding was completed.

Prior to the start of construction, UNHCR and DMR defined the allocation of apartments for entitled refugees and vulnerable local families (selection of beneficiaries).

Partner(s)

The Project was implemented in cooperation with UNHCR, DMR and the Local Municipality. SDC, represented by its technical adviser (TA), seconded UNHCR in all technical matters and decisions and observed the planning, tendering and the execution of the work. SDC/TA also checked all costs and liberated at the end of the warranty period the 5% detained cash guarantee. The local NGO, YMCA handled all planning-, tender- and construction activities, as well as the building supervision works.

The Armenian Seismic Institute (ASI) approved and controlled the existing structures, ordered reinforcing measures, controlled all structural engineering plans, executed site inspections and performed the final approval of the building structure.

Implementations/Results

The local NGO, YMCA was designated by SDC/TA and UNHCR, to be the overall responsible shelter implementing partner (planning, all works and its contracts as well as the observation of guarantee works). The defined general builder announced all sub-contractors upon signing its contract.

SDC/TA wrote a general “Construction Specification” and a “Warranty Liability” document, being the base of the planning and execution of all works for the completion of the entire complex. Previous to the public tender and the execution of work, the plans and construction-details had to be approved. SDC/TA executed its overall supervision work in various steps for site/structure inspection and its qualification, check up of plans and documents, work execution controls, final building inspection, warranty check and liberation of the one-year, 5% cash guarantee detainment. All actions were executed during four 2-4 weeks missions during the year, from February until November 2001.

The entire complex was completed within 6 months, literally with no technical equipment, occupying 70 – 160 workers, of whom 40% jobless refugees. The contracted building completion costs weren't exceeded.

Completion of existing school house structure with shelter apartments

Year	Total Apartments	1 - Bedroom Unit 42m2	2 – Bedroom Unit 57m2
2001	87	75	12
Beneficiaries	Approx. 300 Persons	Approx. 225 Persons	Approx. 75 Persons

Cost, Financing

SDC/TA + UNHCR philosophy: To achieve the most favorable costs for shelter apartments in all regions of Armenia, the existing, during Soviet time started buildings are proposed by DMR for a structural inspection. Check-ups for a normal domestic use give the answer if the structure is suitable for the needed shelter or not. If yes, the Council is handing over the proposed unfinished building, free of charge, for shelter planning and -execution to UNHCR.

UNHCR and SDC, as main financier, plus various other minor donors paid for the entire completion works.

Name of Site	Contracted Price	Total Apartments	Total 1-Bedroom Unit Area	Total 2-Bedroom Unit area	Total Circulation Area	Overall Complex Area	Costs per m2	Price 1-Bedroom Unit	Price 2-Bedroom Unit
Nubarashen	US\$ 333 840	87	3150 m2	685 m2	1215 m2	5050 m2	US\$ 66	US\$ 3700	UB\$ 4695

Problems/Constraints

The main water supply pipe, serving a suburb of the capital Yerevan, had to be shifted on our contract cost to another side of the complex. The asphalt sealing of the accesses street to the complex didn't get executed despite the promises of the Local Council. The supply of the complex with water and electricity as well as the connection to the sewerage system proved to be difficult, as the existing infrastructure was generally in a bad condition and had to be repaired or rebuilt on our cost. According to the agreements, the Local Council should have executed these tasks.

Lessons learned what was useful in the approach?

To use an existing structure, free of cost and at disposition for a shelter construction, was a very economical solution. Additionally an ugly building-ruin disappeared. Due to this, the landscape was improved as well.

Lessons learned what should be done different next time?

Authorities should be forced by UNHCR to fulfill its obligations! This concerns in this project the access to a functioning public infrastructure network, free of charge for the project.

Preconditions and Limitations for this approach

The well functioning collaboration between UNHCR, DMR, SDC/TA and YMCA proved to be successful.

Evaluations: Joint SDC / UNHCR Evaluation, RLSSS 2001/18

For further information

Recommended Contacts:	Sergio Buzzolini, Technical Adviser, SDC/HA
Recommended Institutions:	SDC/HA, Desk Europe + CIS
Recommended books/reports:	Joint SDC / UNHCR Evaluation, RLSSS 2001/18 Geneva
Relevant other projects (links):	UNHCR shelter structures in Armenia

Annex: (technical drawings, schemata) see page: none