



UK Shelter Forum

11th January 2008

Hosted by CARE International UK at 10-13 Rushworth Street,
London, SE1 0RB

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The UK Shelter Forum is a community of practice for individuals and organisations involved in shelter and settlement reconstruction activities. In semi-annual meetings we discuss innovative approaches and practical solutions to shelter needs for poverty, conflict and/or disaster affected people.

**Geoffrey Dennis, CARE International UK
Welcome**

Geoffrey welcomed the group and spoke about the importance of shelter work within the NGO sector. Geoffrey expressed CARE's interest in furthering knowledge and understanding within the industry, and in consideration of this, explained that CARE International has chosen shelter as one of its three core emergency sectors.

Jim Kennedy, NRC Shelter Tools- Standing (unwittingly) on the shoulders of giants?

Jim described minimum **standards** as a tool which the shelter sector uses to talk about what it does and how the industry works.

Before the 1970's there were no standard guidelines or advice for the construction of emergency shelters. The only existing advice suggested finding a member of the military to ask them to coordinate the organisation of a refugee camp. Industry minimum standards were introduced in the 1970's by Fred Cuny while working for various humanitarian organisations. These minimum standards were designed to be used for construction of small scale emergency settlements. We are still using the same standards, even in large scale emergency settlements, today. The image below shows Coyotepe Camp, in Managua, 1973, one of the first camps that was designed using these standards.

Jim spoke about the necessity for settlements to be culturally sensitive, using the example of a U shaped settlement designed by Cuny for rural Bangladeshi communities which allowed for a hierarchy of private, semi-private and public spaces.

Numerical minimum standards originated from a public health stance, for example, as specified in Assar's 1971 'Guide to Sanitation in Natural Disasters'. Cuny insisted that minimum standards were also necessary for controlling the quality of constructions and settlements.



The final message Jim left with the forum was; when standing on the shoulders of giants, so to speak, such as Cuny and Assar, we should be aware of this heritage, and we should also be facing the right direction- are the standards of the 1970's still adequate today when the numbers of people involved are so very different?

In terms of immediate need, Jim suggests that they are adequate only until settlements become more permanent, at which point they may need to be reconsidered. He suggested that there should be more consideration about standards of performance and engagement of tools. Perhaps there is a need for an organised re-visiting and re-thinking of the materials.

Questions

John Adlam raised the question of whether there is a need to create more tools, or whether we should perhaps just be making better use of the tools we've got.

A discussion ensued in which it was suggested that tools such as Sphere processes can take some time to be picked up properly and there are often adaptations. Using and coming up with new tools has got to be a rolling, cumulative process, because of the nature of the work, there is not time to stop and create new tools.

Another question was put forward regarding performance management systems and how we work as agencies. This led to a discussion suggesting that more clarification was required. There should be more focus about what happens *after* camps have been set up; do transitional shelters continue to be transitional shelters or have they become permanent shelters? There is a need for feedback about what has or hasn't been successful in shelter work.

Rick introduced the subject of digitising the Fred Cuny archives. This information is currently in 145 cardboard boxes in Virginia. Jim Kennedy has received funding to make a bibliography of these archives, but following this, the information needs to be digitised. These are an incredibly valuable and much neglected resource and if anyone is interested they should contact Jim Kennedy for more information, jpk18269@hotmail.com.

Toby Gould, Red R Discussion on Training

Toby introduced RedR's work with a brief presentation.

RedR is a register of engineers for disaster relief, selecting, training and recruiting personnel for NGO support and advice. There are over 1,700 members of RedR which also provides a recruitment service for 300 humanitarian agencies.

Toby talked about the many training events that RedR carries out every year, including training in Sri Lanka and Pakistan as well as the work they do providing free advice to humanitarian aid workers in the field.

This presentation on RedR's work was followed by an open discussion about training.

Discussion

The first question considered the role of UK based shelter training and asked 'who are the key implementers in shelter work'?

John Adlam stated that NGO's had been the biggest implementers in shelter work. They bring plenty of enthusiasm to shelter, but not always enough competence. He asked whether it was better for NGO's to improve the training of their workers, or whether it is better to bring in technical experts.

There was a further discussion about who training should be targeted at. One of the dilemmas of UK aid agencies is that they want to work with local partners; local people should be working in the field. It was also suggested that a potential target group could be previous experts in project management. Although it is agreed that there is little point in having a large group of newly trained experts.



Rick Bauer mentioned at this point that the best training for shelter experts is not carried out by RedR, but by EWB. What kind of people are signing up to RedR shelter courses? It is suggested by Toby that training should be at a much higher level. EWB training is cheaper than RedR training and more basic; perhaps this could be adapted to a higher level.

Lizzie Babister suggests that training courses are often most useful when they are designed for a group of lots of different people (ie. students or experts), and then people learn from each other as well as from

the instructor. However, Jim Kennedy says that a narrow focus; a smaller target group for training may be better for those who are already at a high level.

It was commented that there is a difference between courses which appeal to people who want to get into the sector and courses that 'teach you how to get the job done'. There is a gap between the two. It would perhaps be helpful to have training that could be given in standard modules about emergency situations in the field. Perhaps organisations need to think more about capacity building rather than using consultants.

There was a discussion about how independent consultants can ensure that their training is up to date, and how they fund this training. One of the problems associated with independent consultancy is that they rarely receive feedback from work in the field and this means that consultants don't have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

How could RedR help independent consultants or shelter specialists within organisations in their careers?

Learning and knowledge needs to be applicable to a range of different situations. Alternatively organisations could recruit in-country specialists. But if non-technical organisations are hiring technical specialists how can they gauge their competency? A response to this question raised the possibility of increasing knowledge and understanding of the complexity of shelter work by having modules or sections on shelter within other training courses.

Another proposal was that a short book be written clarifying which kind of professionals would be needed in different situations.

Raising the ability of managers in these situations would also be very beneficial. In the field training was suggested as a way of improving skills; however, this can be difficult as it needs a fairly high funding commitment. UK based training could therefore be more focused and at a higher level. Geoffrey Dennis also mentioned that there is a real desire for non-technical people within NGO's to understand more about shelter work.

Tom Corsellis, Shelter Centre Collaborative Tools

Tom began the presentation by introducing Shelter Centre. Shelter Centre is a service sector NGO which supports agencies involved in shelter work. The Shelter Centre organises a Shelter meeting twice a year, usually in Geneva, to identify projects and priorities and to develop, review and disseminate information.

Training

Shelter Centre also runs training for the shelter sector. Through the Shelter meetings, two major training needs were identified:

1. Standard, modular training offered on a regular basis.
2. Training in the field

In 2007 Shelter Centre ran specialist training for the first time which has since been used as the basis for other training. From this they are hoping to facilitate the organisation of a specialist training course which would be run regularly.

Shelter Centre is also developing technical training for the IFRC Field Assessment Coordination Team, the materials from which will be available online.

Camp Planning Guidance

Until recently there was little guidance available on planning and managing camps. Currently three sets of guidelines are being developed for the different stages in a camps lifecycle:

Camp planning guidelines (Shelter Centre and MSF)

1. Camp management toolkit (a consortium, led by NRC)
3. Camp closure guidelines (CARE and ProAct)

A camp guidance meeting in December 2007 concluded that:

- i) each set of guidelines should contain the same introduction
- ii) they would be complimentary and there would be consistency and cross referencing between the three
- iii) as each set of guidelines are developed they should fill the gaps of the others



The Camp Planning Guidelines are being developed for both specialists and non specialists, local governmental bodies and both conflict and natural disaster responses. These guidelines consider both self-settled and planned camps.

An incomplete draft of these guidelines is available for comment. If you would like a copy of the draft for comment please email guidelines@sheltercentre.org

Shelter after Disaster

'Shelter after Disaster- Guidelines for Assistance' is currently being revised by Shelter Centre and this is being reviewed by a panel of agencies involved in shelter work.

Non- Food Items Standard Setting

Shelter Centre and a number of other partners were asked by the Emergency Shelter Cluster to support standard setting for non-food items (NFIs); partners for this include CARE International, IFRC, NRC, UNHCR and UN/OCHA.

This is a three step programme, with all three steps working concurrently.

The standards set for NFIs will cover both internationally and locally procured NFIs.

1. NRC will compile a series of standards for shelter based NFIs from existing agency specifications.
2. CARE will derive a series of shelter NFI kits and research how these would be collected and distributed.
3. The Shelter Centre will combine the two above as well as guidelines for distribution in different climate zones.

Questions

Following the presentation Rick Bauer asked how long guidelines are tested in the field for. Tom responded that guidelines are usually tested for approximately six months

Jo da Silva, Arup Habitability Matrix

In this presentation, we looked at how we understand quality in terms of shelter, and how we specify and evaluate the quality of shelter.

Jo da Silva supervised research considering the quality of shelters in post tsunami Sri Lanka, "Habitability and Durability of Post-tsunami shelter, Ampara, Sri Lanka", (CUED 2006) , by C. Crook. The aim of this research was to better understand quality from beneficiary viewpoint and consider how this related to the shelter design. This involved interviewing beneficiaries and field visits to shelters.

Key findings from the research

The two main concerns of beneficiaries are:

1. 'Is my house habitable?'

Habitability

- Weatherproof
- Comfortable
- Dignity
- Household Duties
- Health & Safety

2. 'How long will it last?'



Durability

- Structurally Sound
- Materials
- Maintenance
- Adaptability

Specifying and Measuring Quality

The Sphere standards go a significant way towards specifying quality but pressures in a post-disaster context often mean that NGOs inexperienced in shelter construction, allow cost and speed to become more important than quality. Funds will be wasted if shelters are not fit for purpose over the life-span for which they are needed, therefore quality MUST be at the top of the agenda.

Jo proposed 12 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that could be used to specify and evaluate quality. But how measurable are these KPIs and how do we make them measurable?

Constructing shelters to a performance specification is better than just having one standardised design, as it allows for both shortages of materials and cultural differences. Can these 12 KPIs be used as the basis to develop a performance specification appropriate to a particular context? This research can be developed by evaluating shelters against these KPIs.

Beneficiary Acceptability Questionnaire

The Beneficiary Acceptability questionnaire is a way of measuring the quality of a shelter and its acceptability to beneficiaries.

This would be carried out as a semi structured interview, 10% of households randomly selected at each location would be used to provide a representative sample.

A key feature of this questionnaire is that it can be used in many different situations, for example; permanent shelters in Aceh, transitional shelters in refugee camps or even tents.

The interview questions are simple and direct. Questions can be added or amended to make the survey relevant. The questions do not need to be asked in any particular order and any additional comments are welcomed, as they are often important and very telling.

It is essential to involve beneficiaries in the design and implementation of their homes.

Jo then spoke about the outcomes of the recent DEC survey on Aceh. One of the major issues that came up in this survey was the lack of space, especially cooking space, which was frequently inadequate. The quality of toilets varied, and often access to water was based only on temporary sources.

Jo concluded that the most important thing for the beneficiary is that they feel totally safe.

Questions

Q. Graham Saunders explained that IFRC had carried out a similar survey, focussing on the views of the beneficiary. This survey has a number of parallels with the questionnaire Jo describes above. The largest problem that IFRC faced with their survey was that it seemed it either had to be quite simple and short to more easily engage with the beneficiaries, or longer and more technical to better identify how to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. It was difficult to find a balance: with the shorter surveys not being sufficiently informative, and with many being 'put off' by the longer, more complex versions.

A. On the other hand, Jo described simplicity as being key to the survey. Based on her experiences with the government in Sri Lanka, if the information provided was not simplistic, then the government were not able to carry out the surveys, and it was their responsibility to monitor quality. This may reduce intellectual learning, but it is more important to get responses.

Q. Rick Bauer mentioned that Oxfam also carried out similar surveys in Aceh. The wording and dialogue used in the survey is also very important and care needs to be taken in translation. Gender is also a very important consideration in terms of who answers the questions of the survey. Shelter is the main place where livelihoods are carried out, and yet there is no mention of this in the survey. In some cases people have been willing to sacrifice indoor space for more veranda space for their livelihoods.

A. Jo answers that she is aware that this is a gap in the questionnaire, but it was outside the scope of the research to date.

Note. The question on the size of the household may be ambiguous because of the cultural differences regarding the age a male child becomes a man. Another issue which may be important but is not focused on in the survey is the plot size for a shelter.

The difference between shelter professionals and building professionals was emphasised. The potential to replicate this questionnaire in different contexts offers a number of opportunities. Social survey tools have not really been applied to this area before. Perhaps it would be helpful to explore how replicable this tool is.

Habitability Requirements	Objectives					
	Environmental Protection	Comfort	Dignity	Household	Health	Safety
Weatherproof	*	*				
Temperature	*	*				
Ventilation		*				
Light		*				
Privacy			*			
Space			*	*		
Cooking				*	*	
Water and Sanitation				*	*	
Vector Control					*	*
Safety (fire, toxicity)						*
Security						*
Structurally Sound	*					*

Graham Saunders, IFRC Moving Ahead on Shelter: opportunities for interagency collaboration

Funding for shelter is lacking outside of major emergencies. It is difficult to get people's attention outside a disaster. There is a shortage of institutional commitment and not enough understanding about the work of the shelter sector. How can we bring others in?

IFRC can enable some level of forward movement within the sector. IFRC supports the shelter sector through:

- Fundraising- key donor support
- Institutional commitment- IFRC's "leadership role"
- Creative partnerships- IFRC as global and local organisation

Collaboration is necessary to move forward. How do we find a way to work with all those who are developing shelters?

- Opportunities and benefits which may come from collaboration include:
- Improving understanding/approach to shelter through case studies, use of cash, mapping and strategy development

- Training and capacity building- interagency training supported by IFRC; workshop hosting and support; global regional and national training; mentoring and knowledge sharing
- Preparedness- stock pre-positioning, resource mobilisation agreements, collaborative initiative during response operations
- Research and development- products, prototype development, field testing, linkages with the commercial sector etc.
- Tools and guidelines- 'no logo' common guidelines, translation and printing, dissemination, regional and national initiatives
- Coordination mechanisms- access to funding, advocacy. Establishment of interagency fora.
- Support for key sector initiatives
- Support for global, regional and management networks

The Shelter Centre is going to build on cluster training with some training in May. Travel and accommodation not included. If anyone is interested in this or collaboration in general please contact Graham at graham.saunders@ifrc.org.

In conclusion Graham suggested that decisions should not just be left to policy people. This is the shelter sector beginning to get its act together and moving forwards.



Participants

Architects for Aid	Victoria Harris Sam Woodbridge Stefanie van den Brandt
British Red Cross	John Taylor Patrick Elliot
Buro Happold	Bethan Davies
CAFOD	Claire Goudsmit
CARE International UK	Lizzie Babister Geoffrey Dennis
DEC	Annie Devonport
DFID	John Adlam
Habitat for Humanity	Ian Pearce Lisa Stead
IFRC	Graham Saunders
KOMBI Design and Development	Matti Kuittinen
Muslim Aid	Mujeeb Akhtar
Oxfam	Rick Bauer
Practical Action	Theo Schilderman
Red R	Toby Gould
Reset Development	Sarah Kent Blanch Cameron Dhanya Gangitano
Save the Children	Charlie Mason Naomi Bourne
Shelter Centre	Antonella Vitale Tom Corsellis
Southbank University	Michael Lyons
Southampton University	Gordon Brown
TRADA	John Kirkby
World Vision	Jason Garret