UK Shelter Forum

16th April 2012

Hosted by CARE International at Ashurst

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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.

Contents

Welcome and Retrospective
Lizzie Babister, Emergency Shelter and Reconstruction Senior Specialist, CARE International UK

Rising to the Challenge in Aceh: NGO-Led Shelter Construction

11 December 2006

hosted by Oxfam GB at Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Oxford

Oxfam

Lizzie welcomed the group and detailed how the forum has progressed since its inaugural event 5 years ago. She reflected on the circumstances in which the forum began, following the damage after the 2004 South East Asian tsunami. Guests were reminded of issues which have previously been covered, including private sector engagement, climate change and the opportunity for the sector critiquing itself. Looking to the future Lizzie suggested the forum may benefit in future from a braver selection of speakers and making better connections with other sectors.

Left: 'Rising to the Challenge in Aceh' the meeting that gave birth to the UK Shelter Forum.

Knowledge and Learning
Tom Corsellis, Executive Director, Shelter Centre

Tom addressed the difficulties of managing information relating to shelter and humanitarian response, approaches to managing it better and the progress which has been made to date. He highlighted the need for greater coordination and professionalism, and posited a solution for this in the form of the Common Humanitarian Technical Library and Training, which Shelter Centre is currently developing.

Problem Statement

This section outlined the main problems with humanitarian knowledge. Access was seen to be the biggest issue, underpinned by a proliferation of thousands of web based sources with no coordination or mechanisms for management, mainly in the

English language. Moderation is one solution but is costly, impractical and reflects the priorities of the moderator not the user.

Approach

The Shelter Centre is leading a new approach to managing knowledge. Its core tenets are a website starting at national level and working up and across, integration with OCHA, regional advisory groups to address governance and participation and user driven knowledge sharing capabilities.

The website will include country profiles, a news and event feed, projects and innovation information, a learning platform for training resources, an online forum and vacancies. The overall aim is to integrate 'memory' i.e situation reports, maps and news reports with coordination, i.e information gathered during a response. This demands merging information from sources like ReliefWeb with that of sources like UNOCHA which is what the common humanitarian technical library will attempt.

To overcome language barriers Regional Advisory Groups will identify partners with specialist local knowledge who are able to upload content to the library in local languages. To ensure the programme is user friendly all will be able to upload, and these files will then be sorted by the amount they are used, so that the most relevant and useful information is most visible.

Progress to Date

So far the library has the existing shelter library and strong connections with other organisations through UN clusters, collaborations with UNOCHA and negotiations with USAID. They are a member of the Camp coordination and camp management, early recovery, emergency shelter, protection, and WASH clusters.

Overall, they are trying to progress towards a user friendly, common humanitarian memory with both local and regional focus.

Common Humanitarian Technical Training

The main issues with training are achieving sustainability and scale; training courses are also very Western-centric with only 14% of training courses in Asia or the Middle East. Generally there is a large deficit of trained humanitarian workers and people equipped to provide training. Cost wise current training can be inefficient and unsustainable.

Approaches

The first approach to tackling this is to franchise training to development stakeholders, this can be funded through cost recovery and function to raise the national visibility of stakeholders. This can also enrich participation for stakeholders beyond just agency staff.

The second is to develop national training capacity. By training local trainers scalability can be achieved, while reducing costs to up to 75%. This can be

supported by a website and learning platform with information on all capacity building initiatives in the region, supported by e-learning which would be integrated within the common humanitarian technical library.

Like the common humanitarian technical library a regional advisory group will offer a framework for accountability, engagement and dissemination.

Progress to Date

Successful pilot training project funded by DFID/ECHO for South East Asia took place in 2010-2011, and there are on-going collaborations with clusters and other training initiatives. Courses funded by DfID have been taking place in Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, India and Nepal. The participants have been diverse, including national and international NGO's, government organizations, UN bodies, academia and private organizations.

Negotiations are concluding with ECHO on the inclusion of a common training approach, with on-going discussions with other training organizations to ensure complimentarity.

Building for Safety Revision
Theo Schilderman, Independent

Theo discussed the "Building for Safety" booklets, which despite their usefulness for humanitarian practitioners, are currently mostly out of date and out of print. There is therefore a demand for a replacement and possibly a new approach; they need to reflect current standards and potentially be linked with training programmes.

The session posited the need for a think tank or working group as a next step.

Shelter Projects 2010: IFRC, UNHABITAT and UNHCR
Carlo Gherardi, Independent

This session presented an update on the latest Shelter projects booklet; a need for more case studies was identified.

Participants suggested it should link to other initiatives via the website.

The publication can be downloaded here:

http://www.sheltercasestudies.org/shelterprojects2010.html

Housing Land and Property Rights
Rick Bauer, Oxfam

Rick Bauer presented a session detailing the progress of the Emergency Shelter Cluster's (ESC) working group on housing land and property rights. Currently the group includes CARE, UN-Habitat, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Red Cross and Oxfam. The group is still in the process of developing their strategy, partly due to the complexity and multiple definitions of housing, land and property rights issues. Equally, it is important that the ESC's approach does not duplicate work already being done by the global protection cluster around the same issues; this will require careful consideration.

Three breakout groups were facilitated in the session to think over the way housing, land a property rights have been affected in emergencies in Haiti, Myanmar and Pakistan. Together these demonstrated the diversity ways housing, land and property rights are affected in different contexts. Recurring issues were the relevance of government restrictions and regulations and local politics.

Accountability and Shelter
Hugh Earp, ECB and CARE International UK

Accountability to Affected Populations

Mechanisms and approaches to accountability vary significantly between contexts; for example Pakistan has good feedback mechanisms but no funding for putting this to use, feedback in Burma has been a challenge as people fear speaking out and losing face. Perhaps, like the Human Rights Commission in Sri Lanka, humanitarians could explicitly reach out to affected communities to tell people their rights.

Overall it seems that accountability works better when led by national or local organisations, however these are often left out of cluster groups. There is some debate over the benefits of having a specific accountability officer as this can end up meaning that accountability begins to fall only within the remit of one person and stops being a group responsibility.

The Shelter Accountability Checklist

The current checklist is far too long, and it is unclear who it is aimed at. Ideally a five or ten point list is needed, or two separate lists, one for planning and one for review; they should also be more shelter specific. Lists should be adapted by the user to fit the specific context, and the adaptability needs to be made clear to the user. At current it focuses on satisfaction not impact measurement, this may need discussing further. There should also be a commitment to return five years later in order to deal with challenges and follow up on complaints, there is currently no funding for this though.

Photo to add

ECB Shelter Training Module
Gabriel Fernandez Del Pino, CARE International UK

Gabriel detailed the Shelter Training Module, an evolving element of the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB). The ECB is a consortium of six agencies -CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, OXFAM, Save the Children and World Vision- who came together in 2005 to respond to the increasing magnitude and complexity of humanitarian emergencies.

Field focused training enables the development of new practical tools, which then enables knowledge and best practice to be shared among other agencies, their partners, and the wider humanitarian community. The ECB teams are currently working to build capacity of all staff to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian community. This project is now in phase II from 2008-2012, in which CIUK is developing the Shelter Training Module.

The objectives of this training are two-fold. First it aims to give generalist managers specific understanding of the demands of the key concepts required for project management of a shelter response. Second, it aims to increase the number of humanitarian practitioners who can manage a quality shelter programme. By the end of the training participants should be able to: identify how they can support emergency staff during preparation of strategies; design the outline of an emergency shelter response; identify the key concepts for the project management of an emergency shelter response; explain the type and number of staff needed for different shelter responses.

CIUK piloted this in Indonesia, where it was decided that four days is the optimum length for the training, to allow enough time for a longer simulation and sharing of experiences. This pilot covered the key skills and knowledge required for the effective and accountable management of typical emergency shelter projects, including: coordination, assessments, designs, implementation, shelter NFI's, debris removal, land and property rights, and construction management. Overall the training was a success, the content and level was suitable for all participants and all participants were engaged with the material. As a result they plan to meet to start a community practice similar to the UK Shelter Forum to maintain contact with one another.

 A big focus for the training session was an adjustment towards thinking in terms of 'products' to thinking in terms of 'processes'. The only critique was that perhaps there could have been more attention on actual project management skills, perhaps specifically with a session in Gantt charts and human resource management. However, most of the feedback was very positive and the training seemed to meet a real need for the participants, therefore only minor changes are needed.

The intention is to adapt this training to different countries and contexts. This will be summarized and presented during the CARE Cuba humanitarian week next month, where we will explore the possibility of adapting or translating some of the training into Spanish.

Sustainability in Fragile Environments
Yetunde Abdul, BRE Global

Yetunde began by providing an overview of BRE's work before going on to detail their environmental assessment methods; their aims are sustainability, efficiency and minimalizing environmental damage, while making internal environments as pleasant as possible. They highlight their ability to attend to all stages of a project and work in many different contexts.
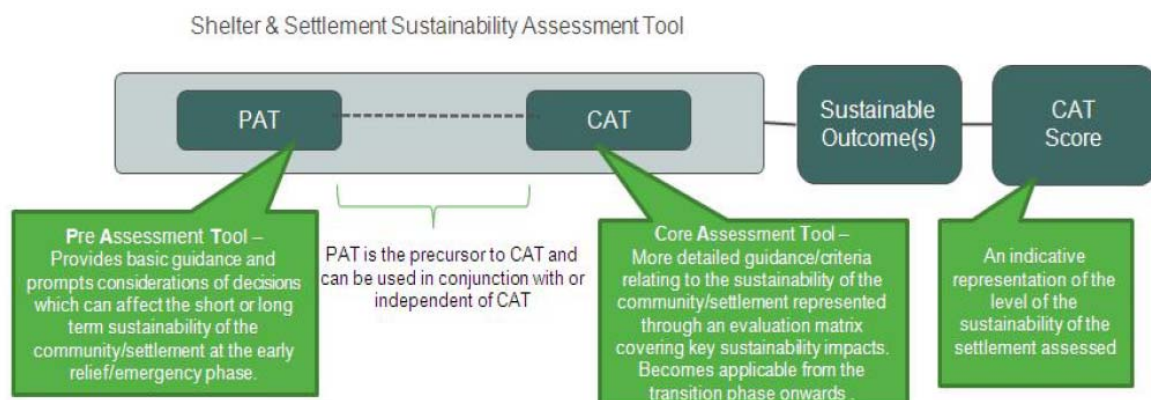
SIFE Project Overview

SIFE addresses relief, recovery and reconstruction in shelter and settlement after a natural disaster. Its objectives are to inform decision making, promote sustainable approaches, and provide coordination. It aims to provide both long and short term benefits.

They have developed an approach which combined desk and field research, consultation with strategic and technical stakeholders, peer review, while drawing on previous experience.

Main Output

The key outputs are an evaluation matrix, a training module to ensure correct use, and a publication on development and outputs. The central features are the shelter and sustainability assessment tools. The pre assessment tool (PAT) assists with early decision making, providing basic guidance to decisions which can affect the long term sustainability of a project. The core assessment tool is more detailed and addresses the long term needs of the affected community. Projects are then scored to asses there overall sustainability.

The main users are likely to be field operatives responsible for making decisions in the field. Online tutorials are available to ensure the measuring tools are used correctly; online tutorials make the information easy to disseminate from remote locations

Shelter & Settlement Sustainability Assessment Tool

PAT — CAT — Sustainable Outcome(s) — CAT Score

PAT is the precursor to CAT and can be used in conjunction of with or independent of CAT

Pre Assessment Tool – Provides basic guidance and prompts considerations of decisions which can affect the short or long term sustainability of the community/settlement at the early relief/emergency phase.

Core Assessment Tool – More detailed guidance/criteria relating to the sustainability of the community/settlement represented through an evaluation matrix covering key sustainability impacts. Becomes applicable from the transition phase onwards .

An indicative representation of the level of the sustainability of the settlement assessed

Qatar Shelter Initiative Study Findings
Bo Heiden and Desirée Bartosiak, Qatar Foundation

Introduction

The speakers began by setting out the national objectives for Qatar until 2030 which are: human development, social development, economic development and environmental development. These will be supported by the Qatar foundation, a non-profit founded in 1995 focused on education, research and community development.

Centre of Design Innovation

The Centre of Design Innovation is an organization which aims to improve quality of life while driving economic growth, balancing desirability and feasibility with financial viability. They support innovation for both social and consumer based products, including a shelter initiative.

Qatar Shelter Initiative

The shelter initiative aims to uncover solutions to address systemic challenges, while building on the strengths the disaster management sector. It initially aims to find the strengths and weaknesses of the shelter sector, as well what is needed in Qatar. Shelter is seen in the context of a cycle, where a shelter is a process rather than a product. Engagement of all stakeholders is prioritised, especially communities; they are therefore looking to become a development partner or facilitator. £1.2-5 million will be available this over the next 3 years

The shelter sector is presented poorly defined and relatively ambiguous, driven by funding, mandate and capacity. Actors are therefore seen as lacking in prevention or preparedness capacity, and concentrated on relief; relief and development actors work closely together in this sector.
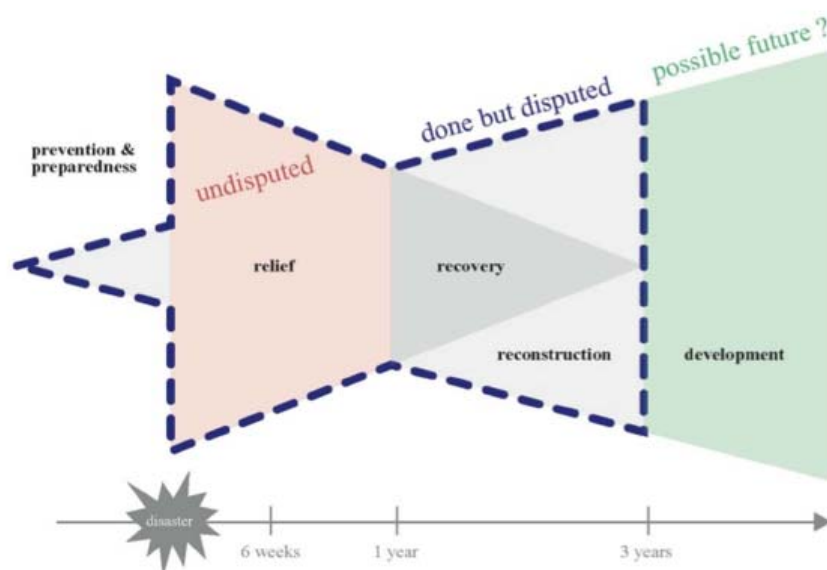
Lack of capacity is a critical issue within the sector, impacting negatively on projects; this is underpinned by a lack of funding. There is demand for more training and opportunities to gain experience, as well as experienced staff. These problems are exacerbated by weak relationships between different actors in the sector; interaction between global and local staff is limited. More input from peripheral groups such as think tanks, academics and training organizations would be valuable. Overall the shelter sector would benefit from closer relationships, more accountability, transparency, and a larger role in decision making given to those affected by disasters.

Funding, government red tape, time, coordination and lacking knowledge of the sector all hinder progress.

Training and Education

Training is largely carried out in Europe and North America in the English language. While there are diverse relevant courses, inconsistencies in length, cost and methodology is problematic. Logistics, technology and security are quite well covered, while there is a lack of technical courses for response in areas such as WASH, shelter and settlements. There is also a lack of widely recognised occupational standards or professional association. In addition to the demand for quality professional qualifications, the career pathway is ambiguous; there are no common routes or agreed skillsets. Further, the sector would benefit from mid-level vocational and technical courses, and more collaboration between Northern and Southern educational institutes.

There are significant gaps in knowledge and learning, both in using existing skills and in taking an innovative approach to developing the tools available in the sector.

Research and Innovation

There is a widely recognised need for innovation, especially in emergency relief. However, this may be a case of better utilising knowledge we already have and making it more widely available. It is important when looking at news tools to see them as a process, not just a product, thus valuing the knowledge and experience which went into production, not just the end point.

Many questions still remain, both strategic and practical, for example issues range from how to provide for families without land tenure to how to measure which rubble removal strategies are most effective.

Knowledge Management

The initial stages of any project develop a significant amount of knowledge which is rarely captured or written, and therefore dissipates at the end when the project finishes. While reports and evaluations are useful and important they usually capture only a fraction of tacit and contextual knowledge.

The synthesis of local and remote knowledge usually takes place at the implementation stage, but outside of this there is a heavy reliance on face to face

meetings which can be rare. A lot of knowledge is quite difficult to share, especially tacit knowledge which is gained through practice and experience. The sector would benefit from a more active engagement in knowledge synthesis, thus producing more robust evidence to be disseminated; this demands significant time and resources though. Manuals and guidelines achieve this to some extent although are often only in the English language.

Even when quality knowledge is produced it always demands contextualisation and relies on specific individuals to disseminate, the sector needs experienced individuals available who aren't learning afresh for each project.

The usual barriers to managing knowledge well remain; limited finding with inappropriate mechanisms, government barriers, coordination and leadership. These problems are exacerbated by the complexity of shelter as a sector. The sector perhaps has much to learn from other related sectors which may have more mature approaches to knowledge management and be able to provide useful benchmarks.

Before dissemination all knowledge demands analysis and validation, this constitutes the way forward for the Qatar Shelter initiative.

List of Participants

Aherne, Robin	BRC
Babister, Lizzie	CIUK
Bartosiak, Desiree	Qatar Foundation
Bauer, Rick	Oxfam
Charlesworth, Esther	Shelter Reference Group, Australia
Corsellis, Tom	Shelter Centre
Coughlan, Brnada	DFID
Davenport, Annie	DEC
Earp, Hugh	CARE
Elliott, Patrick	BRC
Farrington, Michelle	RedR
Fernandez del Pino, Gabriel	CIUK
Foley, Ann	Tearfund
Garvie, Neill	Christian Aid
Heiden, Bo	Qatar Foundation
Jefferson, Alice	ShelterBox
Kataria, Shailesh	RICS

Kelling, Fiona	Independent
Lyons, Michal	London Southbank University
Maynard, Victoria	Arup
Molina, Sonia	BRC
Morgan, Nicki	Christian Aid
Richardson, Jamie	Independent
Sanderson, D	Oxford Brookes University
Schilderman, Theo	Independent
Stead, Lisa	HFHGB
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Yetunde, Abdul	BRE
Zerjav, Boris	RICS