The Evolving Post Disaster Shelter Approach in India

Experience of Uttarakhand Floods, 2013
The Platforms

• Sphere India’s Shelter Sub-committee: Coordination of post disaster shelter relief. Members: Sphere member organisations

• The Shelter in Emergencies Forum: Open, informal reflection on issue of shelter in emergencies. Hosted by rotation, membership open to NGOs, academia, individual experts
Activities of Shelter in Emergencies Forum

- Conceived in 2012
- Two formal meetings in 2013
- 1st hosted by SEEDS – theme ‘owner driven reconstruction’
- 2nd hosted by CARE in response to 2013 Uttarakhand (UK) Floods
- Joint assessment mission to Uttarakhand, along with Sphere India
- Process of coordination handed over to Sphere India Shelter Committee after evaluation and strategy discussion
Thinking on UK Floods - Glimpses
Situation of those displaced

UK Joint Shelter Needs Assessment
UK Joint Shelter Needs Assessment
# Shelter Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Want to move out of communal shelters</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Want to return home</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need materials and tools to repair or rebuild houses</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need skills/labour to repair or rebuild houses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need basic household items (NFIs)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need land to rebuild</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
Challanges

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>Ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials/tools for repair are not available</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/tools for repair are not accessible (not enough money)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled/labour for repair not available</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/labour for repair not accessible (not enough money)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are potential grievances on land issues</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>No land to rebuild</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UK Joint Shelter Needs Assessment
UTTARAKHAND floods 2013: NGOs Responding

Based on Sphere India's Uttarakhand URS Matrix (30th July 2013)
Shelter construction materials and technologies play a key role in determining vulnerability levels. Unfortunately, recent trends have led to increased vulnerability through poor siting and inadequate knowledge and skills.

Carbon footprint of different materials:
- 126 kg/m³ Burnt brick
- 26 kg/m³ Concrete
- >1 kg/m³ Earth material

Traditional construction with earth based materials and indigenous knowledge based technologies was resilient and sustainable. New materials and technologies, through their insensitive application, have tipped the balance. Shelter interventions need to be sensitive to these issues.

Based on Census of India, 2011 data of houses by predominant materials in Uttarakhand
An endless wait for a new, more sustainable home

We need a new home, as soon as possible. Somewhere far away from the river.
— Amit, GIC relief camp, Bhatwari, Uttarkashi

Amit’s family of four (his one-year-old Sonu, his 58-year-old father and his wife, Poonam who was three-months pregnant) ran in the dead of night. They stumbled over the poorly-ill, newly built stairs, onto the roof; then jumped parapets and darter over four ceilings of corrugated tin to get to the road. Standing at a relatively safe distance with thousands of other Valmiki colony residents, they watched the Bhagirathi swell to astonishing levels. A few hours later, the home he’d built just two years earlier sank beneath the river. He’d spent Rs. 25,000 on the land title alone and many more thousands on the construction.

At a loss for ideas, Amit turned to the shelter provided by the local administration at the Girls Intermediate College. Initially, he and his family spent their nights at the shelter and the day scooping out lumps of wet, grey sand from their living-cum-bedroom. Now they wait, tired from scooping endlessly. At the time, the Uttarkashi District Magistrate’s office was still deciding where all those displaced by the floods could be moved, so that the college could restart.

The 500-odd houses on the left bank of the Bhagirathi that is called Valmiki colony technically still stands. But it has become unlivable.

The river brought it accumulated silt and clay, depositing roomfuls and taking away anything that may have mattered in exchange; food grain, important documents, money, bed linen and clothes.

In fact, post these flash floods, the extent of damage seems to have jolted Uttarakhand awake to the dangers of climate change. More and more people across the state are worried about where they can build a house safely now. The flood plains area seems to be widening and increasing rainfall levels will enhance the risk posed by landslides.

The Himalayas are a relatively young mountain range and viscous soil underneath makes for very unstable bedrock. Amit and his friends at Valmiki colony are just a few amongst the many thousands affected across Uttarakhand who are starting to wonder. Without stronger, more weather-proof walls, can the Himalayas in fact be a viable dream home anymore?
I feel like...
I'm not a student anymore
Struggling for toilets and hunting for safe water
How do we protect the children?

We are most concerned about our children’s security now that we are living in the open in the forest. There was a time when a lion came and ate a cow and a calf. We worry all the time about how to protect them.

— Kunwar Lal, father of 3, in Chandrapuri, Rudraprayag

Aside from recovery from the trauma, children's security issues are a growing concern for those now living in the open. In other cases, only young children have survived; having watched their entire families being washed away. Though unsubstantiated, there are several stories of these orphaned children being trafficked and exploited.
Marginalised and now left out...

We are Valmikis. We serve all communities. Now in this distress situation, if we are not helped then who will be? When we are disturbed, then who will take care of the society? Yet our story has never been shared in any media.

– 48-year-old Munnu Singh Balmiki, Ward 4, Sangam, Nandprayag, Chamoli

A large number of affected families are Valmikis – an extremely marginalised community who mostly work as sweepers. In the most remote places, where these groups are already relegated to the fringes of society, there is a desperate need to extend them a hand.
A growing struggle for people with disabilities

“Look at my feet. They are badly swollen. But I can't walk and no doctor has come here yet.”

— 36-year-old Shiva Prasad Vaishnav, Chandrapuri, Rudraprayag

In 2012, Shiva Prasad Vaishnav fractured his backbone. He has been bedridden ever since. His wife, Anjana Devi, had to take over his postman job to support their three children. Shiva also owned several acres of farm land that have now largely been washed away. When the flood waters rose, Shiva was the last to be evacuated. Neighbours and family managed to carry him out to a safer location. However, he had to be left mid-way in the fields in the pouring rain. With great effort, the villagers finally managed to move him up the hill to where most are now sheltering. Shiva's condition continues to deteriorate, as access remains difficult. No doctors had yet visited and Shiva is unable to walk to the closest clinic.

It's a question that begs some thought. For all those with disabilities across affected areas, are there any specific plans in place?
The Needs Ahead

• Need for peace-time research and thinking on appropriate and contextualised shelter response processes and partnerships
• Quick flow of knowledge to responders during emergency phase – many government organisations and NGOs responding with inappropriate prefab shelter programmes
• Quick flow of information from affected areas – information is too little, inadequate and late
• Shelter information management
Scope for Cooperation between Forums

• Context-wise roster of shelter `informants’?
• A discussion group over email / social media?
• A repository of reports, presentations, talks?
  Join an existing one?
• Joint advocacy with donors for appropriate shelter resource allocation
Thank You!