22ND UK SHELTER FORUM BRIEFING NOTE

The future of shelter

Briefing note prepared by Tom Newby
Please contact ukshelterforum2013@gmail.com if you have comments on this paper.

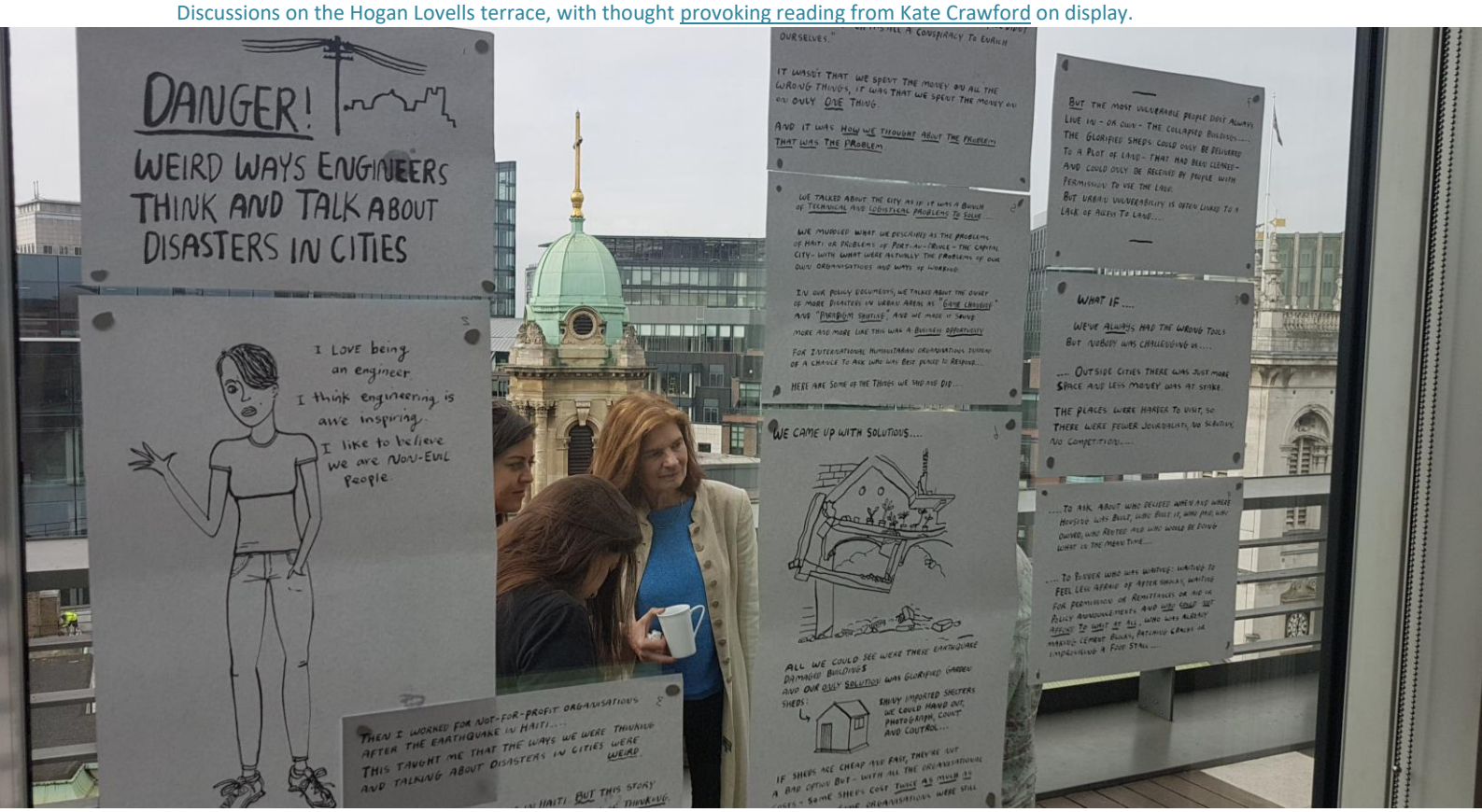
The UK Shelter Forum is a community of practice for individuals and organisations involved in shelter and settlement reconstruction activities supported by twice yearly meetings (Shelter Forums), a website and a LinkedIn group.

The 22nd UK Shelter Forum was organised by CARE International and Habitat for Humanity on the 8th of June 2018, and was kindly hosted by Hogan Lovells at their London offices. The forum was attended by 87 participants from humanitarian and development organisations, academia and the private sector. The theme for the forum was *the future of shelter*.

For more details please visit www.shelterforum.info**.**

Presentations from the day can be found here: http://www.shelterforum.info/uk-shelter-forum-22/.

Discussions on the Hogan Lovells terrace, with thought provoking reading from Kate Crawford on display.



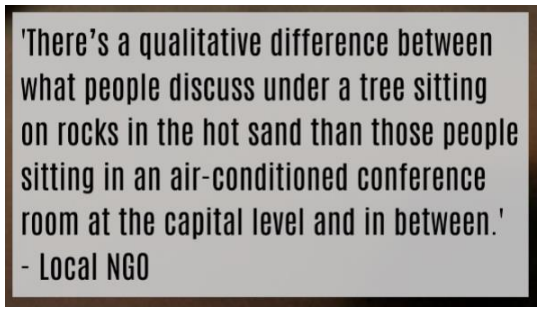
The future of shelter

Two years after the World Humanitarian Summit, humanitarian reform remains high on the agenda. Multi-purpose cash offers opportunities and challenges to sectoral objectives, the 'humanitarian-development nexus' asks questions of who does what in shelter responses, the gaps between humanitarian needs and funding are ever-growing, and conflict and displacement are increasing. How will the shelter sector respond and adapt in the future? Will there be continued incremental change, or major disruption? How much does the shelter sector need to challenge itself to change? UKSF 22 sought to examine these questions, and what the future holds for the shelter sector and the people it seeks to help.

Keynote presentation

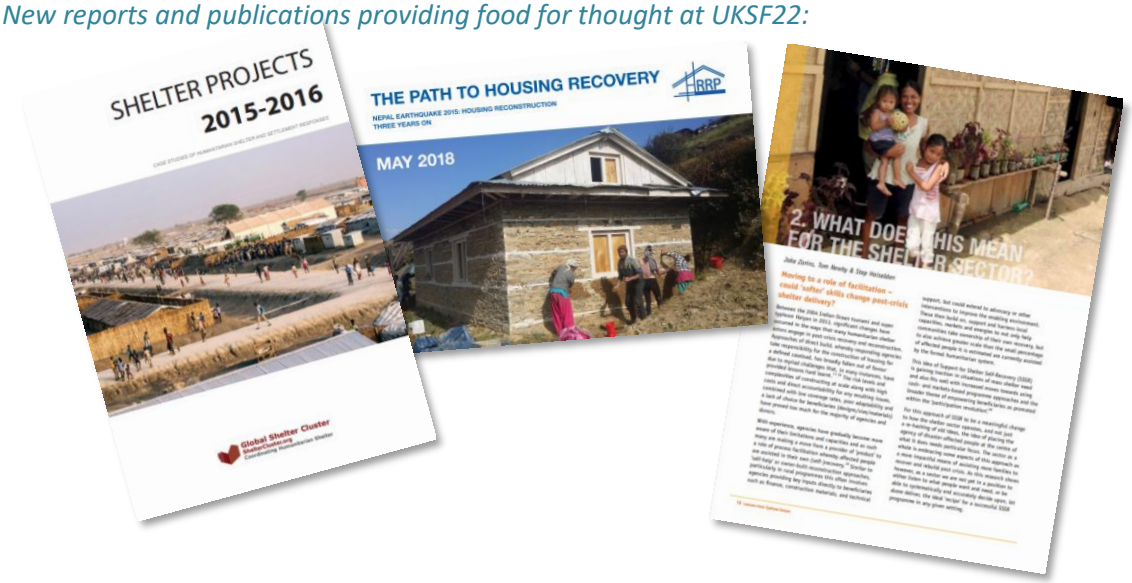
The forum's keynote presentation was given by Christina Bennett, Head of Programme of ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group, on the topic of Change in the Humanitarian Sector.

Christina spoke of recent work by ODI HPG on reform of the humanitarian sector, and highlighted power imbalances, corrosive competition, political drivers, lack of trust and aversion to risk as problems that need to be overcome.



The thought provoking talk continued with possible Improvements and changes to the humanitarian sector, with thought provoking challenges to the shelter sector. It is well known that a leopard cannot change its spots, but if the environment the leopard lives in changes the leopard must evolve, or die. In a changing world, can the shelter sector evolve to remain relevant and useful?

New reports and publications providing food for thought at UKSF22:



Updates

The day started with updates and announcements:

- Announcement of Shelter Meeting 18.
- Update on the Promoting Safer Building Project.
- Update on the next edition of Shelter Projects.
- Feedback from a side event: multi-purpose cash & grand bargain round table discussion on the 7th of June.

Discussion groups

How should we be measuring success in the sector?

The discussion started with Victoria Maynard giving a short presentation on some of the findings from her recent CARE & Habitat for Humanity funded review of evaluations of six different support to shelter self-recovery programmes in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, Lessons from Typhoon Haiyan. This research found that different projects and agencies judged the success of their programmes very differently, and there are no accepted measures to determine if projects are successful or not. The group went on to discuss this extract from the briefing document that accompanies the full research report:

"A telling failing from years of shelter programming is that the sector itself does not have a common understanding of, and even worse we don't tend to agree with our project beneficiaries on, what constitutes success. Too often our only measures of success are numbers of shelters built, and sometimes the occupancy rate should we have the opportunity to go back and look at a later date. Given that this research shows that affected people usually contribute more resources and more value than the external shelter actors do, the lack of control they have over what assistance projects are trying to achieve is particularly shocking, and places the power imbalances we perpetuate into stark contrast.

If we don't agree with affected people on what we are trying to achieve, we can never support a process which can meaningfully be called self-recovery. It will never be a process with the agency of disaster-affected people at its centre.

If supporting self-recovery means surrendering control to affected people, and if affected people have different, more complex objectives to shelter practitioners, then can the sector have the difficult conversations that follow about our approaches and what, ultimately, we are trying to achieve? Should we accept lower design and construction quality in return for higher satisfaction from those we seek to help? Do we sacrifice the objectively measurable for the subjectively important? Do we need to, or can we, achieve both if we meaningfully change the way we approach projects? For the sector and its practitioners to be held accountable by both donors and project participants, we need collective agreement on what constitutes success wherever we work."

Questions discussed, in three groups, were:

A) What are measures of success in humanitarian shelter programmes? Think about the diversity of programming we do.

B) What should they be?

There was discussion of the difficulty the shelter sector has in measuring long term outcomes and judging success that way, and the focus on outputs and hardware rather than outcomes, and particularly socio-economic outcomes related to housing.

Interesting ideas that came up included:

- Focussing on how to measure failure, rather than success, as this may be easier to define.
- Finding ways to move to a more 'retail' consumer choice approach, where affected people can choose the support to self-recovery approach that is used for them.
- Ask the affected people at the start what success would look like (but recognise and accommodate that for them this will change over time).
- Recognising that what is deemed successful changes over time as the response progresses, and adjusting our objectives accordingly using a 'timeline of success'.
- Using different indicators than we currently like, such as:
  - Activity indicators, like the number of visits by an engineer;
  - Measuring the ratio of involvement between the NGO and the beneficiaries
  - Rather than measuring compliance with technical standards, measure buy-in to the importance of those standards.

Sliding into irrelevance? Does urbanisation mean the end of the shelter sector?

There was a discussion of the impact of increasing urban responses on the relevance of shelter as a standalone sector. It's clear that shelter needs remain ever relevant, but is it the case that the shelter sector is best placed to meet them?

The shelter sector is the only sector that works with space and the built environment. This means its role continues to be relevant but needs to shift in form as we carry out urban responses. However, there are plenty of things which humanitarian actors in the Shelter sector simply can't do, but which at the same time are necessary for the large-scale repair, reconstruction and spatial planning which are necessary to have a significant response in urban emergencies. For instance, no Shelter actor has the mandate, and no major Shelter donor has the funding mechanisms, for the complex set of bonds and insurance for the construction of multi-storey, multi-unit housing.

The Shelter sector as a whole therefore needs to re-think the realistic limits of its role, and how to engage with a wide range of other actors, including government offices responsible for regional planning, and the private construction industry. At the same time, even in the first phases of an emergency response in urban areas, before the construction of larger buildings can be contemplated, there needs to be a more intelligent flexibility, when it comes to the range and mix of methods for providing Shelter support, ranging from understanding more about how cash is used in urban areas, to a better understanding of voluntary and non-voluntary re-location, and the spectrum of formal and informal HLP issues.

It is clear that the shelter sector must have very different operational approaches in urban areas, and needs to have different ways of meeting needs than the traditional owner-occupier construction approaches typical in rural responses. The sector also needs to be able to work more collaboratively, and to bring in a much wider range of expertise and views in order to ensure its work is relevant. It can't all be about construction professionals.

However, despite the challenges the sector faces in working in urban contexts, the shelter sector is the only sector that works with space and the built environment. This means its role continues to be relevant but needs to shift in form as we carry out urban responses.

Needs or markets? More analysis for more adaptable programming

This discussion focussed on where the shelter sector needs to improve its assessment and analysis so it can deliver more adaptable and more relevant programming to people in need. Key points, and questions raised, were:

- Information and Communication is vital: If we are distributing cash in a post disaster scenario what does effective communication look like? What are good examples and how do we improve it? We need to assist those affected in building back better, but we need to improve the tools for doing this.
- Appropriate standards of construction are critical: How do we ensure appropriate standards (including Sphere Standards) are met in the construction phase when there is a rapid or multi-purpose cash approach?
- Predictive context assessment: There are housing market analysis studies that already exist in places which might be vulnerable to natural disaster, similarly there might be local institutions there working in the housing market. Can these be pooled in a priority data repository representing areas of high risk? Can these studies be commissioned in places where disasters are anticipated as a means of disaster risk reduction?
- Context assessments: How do you correctly assess the local housing market context in the rapid response phase, especially in cases where there are limited institutional and other data sources in place prior to the disaster?
- Running processes in parallel: How do you balance the need for a rapid initial response (to satisfy clients, users, donors, investors) with continuous assessment? What tools are available for continuous assessments and what is the data that can be most useful in this process, and can show patterns over time.
- Apps and tools: There are some existing tools and apps that have been developed which could be relevant. This would need further investigation and resourcing.
- Current CASH trend: Current focuses are on food and rent and leave a gap in housing market analysis and development.
- Skill sets: There are varying different skill sets in local markets, how can these be rapidly assessed and usefully deployed?

The Grand Bargain: Friend or Foe?

The purpose of the session was to test the Grand Bargain commitments to examine how well they align with priorities in the shelter and settlements sector. The group included a balanced mix of participants from INGOs, multilaterals, academia and independent consultants. First, the group brainstormed their priorities for humanitarian system reform, then the Grand Bargain commitments were revealed one by one as a comparison with ideas from the group.

Grand Bargain commitments that tallied well with the group's suggestions included transparency (1), national level support (2), needs assessment (5), participation (6), multi-year funding(7), earmarking (8) and enhancing engagement between humanitarian and development actors (10). Under transparency, the group wanted to see more clarity around donor relationships and funding plans, with a view to engaging with donors more meaningfully. While the actual commitment around transparency is focused mainly on retrospective data collection, there is an

opportunity to broaden the discussion out to improving donor relationships and joint planning. At the level of national support and participation, the group were most interested in increased capacity building for local actors, with flexibility to fund local actors directly, which currently aligns well with the work stream under this commitment. Accountability was a common theme, with priorities such as bringing marginalized groups into policy and decisions making processes, and making visible self-recovery funds and remittances to reveal a clearer picture of community capacity. Linked to this, needs assessments was mentioned to ensure accountability to beneficiaries through back dated funding for primary data assessments. Priorities also included un-earmarked, multiyear funding to allow for longer term planning.

Commitments not mentioned as sector priorities included increased use of cash (3), reduction of management costs (4), and harmonizing reporting requirements (9). Streamlining financing administration may not be a priority for the sector because these commitments arose more directly from the overall aim of the Grand Bargain to address the financing gap. The commitment felt to be the least critical to the sector was increasing the use of cash based programming. This may be because, cash has been familiar to the sector for some time, or it be because the current promotion of cash focusses on multi use grants which are not always considered appropriate for the support of infrastructure.

Additional priorities mentioned by the group that are additional to the Grand Bargain commitments include: flexibility of funding, increased support for markets approaches and for learning. The group were concerned with funding for adaptive management and flexible programming, responsive to developing trends and technologies. They suggested a focus on inter-sector, collaborative or cross cutting funding, and the ability to use 'relief' funding for more durable solutions, thus breaking down sector silos and traditional phases of response. Markets approaches also featured heavily including funding system level capacity, such as the repair of construction industry manufacturing, insurance markets and landlords, to ensure that households could repair or rent and insure properties. Lastly, learning was a focus, with priorities including engagement of researchers in the work for independent evaluations, and setting up peer reviews. In terms of funding, one suggestion was to have a percentage of each grant as funding earmarked for impact evaluation, including longitudinal studies.

Project reports

Four presentations were made to the plenary:

1. *Mike Waugh* presented NRC's development of A Safe Night's Rest: an online platform for matching housing to those who need it in Lebanon and Jordan' for managing relationships between landlords, tenants and communities; and for ensuring adequacy of the housing.
2. *Caroline Dewast* presented NRC's approach to and learning from cash for rent programming, and how this might fit into the future of shelter programming.
3. *Alisar Bey* from Save the Children presented their cash for weatherproofing programme in Lebanon, which provided unconditional, unrestricted cash with the specific aim of improving shelter in small informal tented settlements. The programme demonstrated that unrestricted cash when used appropriately can achieve specific sectoral outcomes.
4. *Shaye Palagi*, PhD candidate at the University of Boulder, Colorado, and sponsored by Habitat for Humanity Int'l, presented her case studies of relocation in Tacloban following Typhoon Haiyan. She highlighted successes, areas of improvement, and failures of post-disaster relocation approaches used.

Breakout discussions

A. Shelter recovery

The discussions were preceded by short presentations:

- Victoria Maynard - Lessons from Typhoon Haiyan: Supporting shelter self-recovery in the Philippines
- David Dalgado – Promoting Safer Building Messaging Protocol
- Laura Howlett - Assessing Knowledge in Reconstruction
- Loren Lockwood – Post shelter cluster coordination

Two main questions were then discussed, in plenary:

A) In recovery what role should humanitarian shelter agencies play / what activities (and what not)?

B) In recovery what can humanitarian shelter agencies do/ change to ensure better recovery outcomes in future? What actionable priorities?

The main points that resulted are:

- Shelter actors should be looking to fill the gap in what the government or market is not filling, using a market approach.
- Shelter actors should focus on recovery much earlier, recognising that even emergency actors are not that quick at delivering emergency shelter
- Shelter actors should provide information when assistance will not be forthcoming to avoid compromising self-recovery.
- Retrofitting is a key gap, but one that humanitarian shelter agencies may not be best placed to fill.
- All sectors and clusters need to look at a recovery plan much earlier. With a plan in place actors could look at where humanitarian objectives in recovery meet development objectives.
- Responding agencies need to become better at addressing the humanitarian-development nexus. This could involve working with donors to bring funding streams closer together.
- Recovery should be less focussed on sectors, and requires an integrated approach.
- As early as possible indicators must be framed at an outcome level, and start to push for more recovery level outcome indicators. (See *How we should be measuring success in the sector discussion* above).
- Agencies should consider using knowledge, attitudes & practice surveys as part of measuring in relation to build back safer. (See *How we should be measuring success in the sector discussion* above).
- The shelter sector needs to make more space for local actors.

B. Building local capacities

This session consisted of three presentations followed by questions and discussion. The presentations were:

- Jamie Richardson – Localisation in emergencies:
  Is localisation such a new thing, or is this something that many of us have been doing for longer than is recognised? Caritas Bangladesh have built over 500,000 shelters and have more than 25 years experience of development and research in supporting the growth of local capacity in Bangladesh. Some of the issues that Caritas face in developing local capacity start with language and communication, capacity of local actors, how delegation actually works, and retention of capacity. The end goal or aspiration of Caritas Bangladesh is to lead the cluster. They believe they are using innovative ways of partnership for example bring in other specialist partners to compliment and to learn from community based approaches. The role and definition of 'partner' can be strained, and can imply contractor or implementer and therefore real partnership is to be aspired to. Some of the realities such as having good leadership; access to adequate funding; investment in capacity building and conditions by donors and partners, can all restrict development and make capacity building difficult.
- Seki Hirano – Area-based approaches in urban areas: Area Based Approaches, are an entry point and seen as a holistic approach not just sectorial. Seki explained the approach of documenting how settlements are developed and how urban settlements in particular are cyclical and ongoing. This initiative aims to ensure clarity in what is required in building settlements. A pilot of Area Based Approach coordination is being considered to help deliver better and more relevant support in disaster response. It is a challenge as it is not sure of this is going to be adding to an already complex system or is this to be complimentary? Supporting the existing system through this piloting will target local capacity.
- Fiona Kelling: Faith-based-organisations are increasingly recognised as valuable local capacity actors because of who and what they are. The Grand Bargain calls on resources to be put into the hands of local organisations which is good for the future development of faith-based-organisations but faith-based-organisations do struggle with humanitarian systems and bureaucracy. There is scepticism felt towards faith-based-organisations perhaps because of perceptions of the motivations and principles of faith-based-organisations. The legitimacy of faith-based-organisations seems not be recognised by other NGOs and lack of dialogue can cause conflict and misunderstanding. There are many challenges and problems however there are lots of opportunities especially when reaching out to beneficiaries who will recognise and often be already connected to a faith-based-organisations through community and family ties.

C. Linking research & practice

There was a fruitful discussion with a number of academics and practitioners present. Following presentations on current or potential research activities the discussion examined what prevented academics and practitioners collaborating more, and what could be done to improve that.

Discussion focussed on:

Agreeing and prioritising research questions:

There are two ways in which the intention and role of research can be understood: (1) research as a philosophical undertaking & (2) research for the practice of a sector. Both have value. For practitioners, and no small number of researchers, the second is of most interest. The definition of a question and why we are asking it is somewhere where practice and academia really need to collaborate. This will be more relevant and likely to happen productively when,

from the start, the intention and purpose of research is related to no.2 (above), which is not always the case.

Advocacy to research funders

There was discussion of the fact that funding often excludes practitioners from participation in research funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and other funding streams. It was agreed there is a need for joined up engagement with funders to prioritise themes emerging from research questions identified, and to ensure that those who influence research funding calls are aware of gaps in practice, so these gaps are identified in funding calls.

It was agreed to constitute a group, initially part of the UK Shelter Forum, which can meet around the time of future forums, and at other times as necessary, to discuss these areas further, to take action, and to help address issues of choosing relevant research questions, share methodologies, and feed back on current research. This group can also link to UKADR as necessary to engage with its discussions. An email list has been set up for this group. Those interested in joining it can do so here: http://eepurl.com/dBKG0f.

Leaving no-one behind. Is shelter sufficiently inclusive?

Amelia Rule, with support from from UCL, gave an overview of inclusivity in humanitarian shelter programming, followed by a plenary discussion about what this does and should mean for the shelter sector and its constituent organisations.

Participants were reminded of the existence of the Shelter Cluster Community of Practice for Gender & Diversity, and participants were encouraged to join and use the community of practice. The CoP can be found here: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/sc-gender-cop.

Any questions on diversity and inclusion can be addressed to the community of practice, which will endeavour to provide assistance.