



Summary of breakout groups on urban response at the humanitarian shelter and reconstruction forum Shelter Meeting 09b, 13th November 2009

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Structure and formation of breakout groups	2
3	Summary of topics raised	3
4	Breakout Group 1	4
4.1	Identification and profiling	4
4.2	Livelihoods	4
4.3	Housing, Land and Property	4
5	Breakout Group 2	5
5.1	Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)	5
5.2	Livelihoods	5
6	Breakout Group 3	6
6.1	Basic services	6
6.2	Fundraising	6
6.3	Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)	6
6.4	Design related issues	6
7	Breakout Group 4	7
7.1	Objectives	7
7.2	Roles	7
7.3	Liabilities	7
7.4	Private sector	7

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The biannual global sector forum Shelter Meeting is facilitated by Shelter Centre



The Shelter Meeting is part of an integrated Shelter Centre programme with DFID



UNHCR was the generous host of Shelter Meeting 09b, 13th November 2009



1 Introduction

This summary is of breakout group discussions on urban response, from the perspective of shelter and reconstruction, which took place on the 13th November 2009 during the humanitarian shelter and reconstruction sector forum the 'Shelter Meeting'. The host for this Meeting was UNHCR and the theme was urban response.

This summary has been prepared following a request from UNHCR and seeks to contribute to other ongoing initiatives relating to urban response, including: the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges; the IASC 'Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas' Taskforce; and the NRC 'Urban Assistance Project', funded by Shelter Centre.

While not all of those who attended the Shelter Meeting attended the breakout groups, they were attended by 72 participants and 7 observers, including 5 independent humanitarian shelter specialists and representatives from: 2 governments; 3 donors; 3 IASC clusters; 4 UN bodies; 4 members of the Red Cross Movement; 1 International Organisation; 19 NGOs; and 4 academic and research groups.

The Shelter Meetings are facilitated by Shelter Centre, funded by DFID, and have been held biannually since 2004. The Meeting is the global forum for humanitarian shelter open to all stakeholders in humanitarian Shelter and reconstruction.

The Shelter Meeting objectives include:

- prioritising and sharing information on sector project activities;
- reviewing and forming external working groups for project activities; and
- supporting consensus on policy, standards, specifications and good practice.

All presentations from Shelter Meeting 09b are available for download on the Shelter Centre Meeting page <http://www.sheltercentre.org/meeting>. Where presenters offer permission, presentations are also available to download as podcasts.

2 Structure and formation of breakout groups

In the context of the urban response theme, a full half day of Shelter Meeting 09b was dedicated to a series of discussions in breakout groups, with participants deciding in plenary which urban response topics should be considered. The plenary concluded by vote that the following topics would be discussed.

(Group 1) Identification and profiling, livelihoods, and housing, land and property rights

(Group 2) Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), land, and livelihoods

(Group 3) Basic services, fundraising, DRR, and design related issues

(Group 4) Objectives, roles, liabilities, and the private sector

Plenary participants were free to choose which group to attend once the topics had been decided. A facilitator and a Shelter Centre rapporteur were chosen respectively to lead the discussion in each group and to report back to plenary with conclusions from the breakout groups.

A detailed one page summary of each breakout group can be found on the four pages after the listing below of summary of topics raised.

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3 Summary of topics raised

The following topics have been summarised in no order and compiled from the breakout groups. The topics are presented in outline only, as opinions differed within the groups.

Objectives Group participants discussed the importance of agreeing an humanitarian objective when offering shelter and reconstruction assistance. It was debated that such an objective would aid both planning processes, as well as understanding the role of humanitarian stakeholders with respect to the population affected, government, IFIs, and the private sector. Fundraising and exit strategies might also be made easier.

Roles Whilst improving working relations with government was identified as key, it was noted also that funding is never available to meet all shelter and reconstruction needs, and that the population affected undertakes the majority of activities. There was general agreement that the role of the humanitarian community should be in offering some support to the entire affected population, rather than "building a few model villages". The nature of this support should include improvements to: liaising with the affected population to ensure they had sufficient information about their assistance and rights; support to resolving housing, land and property challenges; and legal support to housing, land and property. It was a surprise to many of the group that activities unrelated to construction were listed as requiring more attention, however they considered that this was also more within the scope of skills and capacities of many of their agencies.

Identification and profiling Emphasis was given to supporting the entire population affected, including those affected but not displaced, who are often overlooked in wider discussions over IDPs and refugees. How to distinguish between the affected and unaffected populations was discussed, and what criteria should be used in order to determine which populations are at higher risk than others in an urban setting. There was also discussion about assistance to those affected by a conflict or disaster, but not directly, such as those sharing common infrastructure and host families. Lastly, it was also suggested by some in the group that assistance be offered to all of the most vulnerable, regardless of whether or not they were affected by a conflict or disaster.

Housing, Land and Property It was affirmed that in urban settings, upon average more than half of the population are tenants, and few agencies have experience of offering assistance to tenants. In addition, there are many multi-story apartment blocks in urban settings, which present a further complication in HLP for both tenants and owners.

Livelihoods Recognition was given to the significant impact upon livelihoods by shelter and reconstruction, as well as how to support livelihoods in order to support shelter, reconstruction and recovery. Questions were asked about both why assistance did not generally include support either to business, or to market interventions, in order to improve local and regional materials supply.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Consideration was given to DRR being complicated in urban settings by rapid urbanisation, involving settlement in hazardous areas. Also, the density and nature of the built environment was noted as different to rural areas, including in the scale and nature of retrofitting, especially multi-story buildings, and the collapse impacting neighbouring buildings and their occupants.

Basic services It was agreed that support to basic services, such as schools, hospitals, water and electricity, should be considered as essential to reconstruction. The complexities of urban communal services, utilities and transport infrastructure were discussed in terms of the cost, speed of response, and the role of humanitarian stakeholders with respect to government.

Fundraising The cost of shelter and reconstruction assistance to urban affected populations is greater *per capita* than to rural populations. Discussions included how to justify this expenditure within agencies and to donors, many of which appear reluctant to support shelter and reconstruction assistance.

Liabilities Concerns were raised over the professional liabilities of the humanitarian community over both building performance and tenure, especially in peri-urban response.

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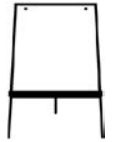
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4 Breakout Group 1



Facilitator Jeff Dougherty (CHF International)
Rapporteur Elizabeth Palmer (Shelter Centre)

4.1 Identification and profiling

Summary Emphasis was given to supporting the entire population affected, including those affected but not displaced, who are often overlooked in wider discussions over IDPs and refugees. How to distinguish between the affected and unaffected populations was discussed, and what criteria should be used in order to determine which populations are at higher risk than others in an urban setting. There was also discussion about assistance to those affected by a conflict or disaster, but not directly, such as those sharing common infrastructure and host families. Lastly, it was also suggested by some in the group that assistance be offered to all of the most vulnerable, regardless of whether or not they were affected by a conflict or disaster.

Discussion Participants focused discussion on situations of those not displaced and internal displacement, as opposed to refugees, as the challenge of identification and profiling is more acute with internal displacement. The issue of 'who qualifies as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP)?' was discussed in addition to whether or not displaced populations should be the first to receive aid.

Recommendations Participants outlined three potential criteria to determine which populations are the most urgently in need of help: the level of support that the person is already receiving; the person's vulnerability, with an emphasis on particularly vulnerable persons such as women, children, the handicapped and the elderly; and the coping mechanisms available to each person, from a livelihoods perspective.

4.2 Livelihoods

Summary Recognition was given to the significant impact upon livelihoods by shelter and reconstruction, as well as how to support livelihoods in order to support shelter, reconstruction and recovery. Questions were asked about both why assistance did not generally include support either to business, or to market interventions, in order to improve local and regional materials supply.

Discussion Participants discussed the need for livelihoods assessments, as opposed to simple needs assessments, given the complexity of urban social and financial networks.

Recommendation Participants stressed that the humanitarian shelter community needed to support livelihoods and recognise the prevalence of home based enterprises.

4.3 Housing, Land and Property

Summary It was affirmed that in urban settings, upon average more than half of the population are tenants, and few agencies have experience of offering assistance to tenants. In addition, there are many multi-story apartment blocks in urban settings, which present a further complication in HLP for both tenants and owners.

Discussion Participants agreed that the shelter community should not support only owners of property, and that the most vulnerable often had few property rights. Security of tenure was considered more important than ownership.

Recommendations The shelter community should as part of its response identify and support the capacity and institutions within government and civil society involved in housing, land and property. Advocacy and legal support was required as an integral part of all shelter and reconstruction programming.

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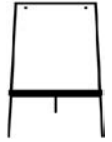
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5 Breakout Group 2



Facilitator Lee Malany (USAID/OFDA)
Rapporteur Johanna Weststrate (Shelter Centre)

5.1 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Summary Consideration was given to DRR being complicated in urban settings by rapid urbanisation, involving settlement in hazardous areas. Also, the density and nature of the built environment was noted as different to rural areas, including in the scale and nature of retrofitting, especially multi-story buildings, and the collapse impacting neighbouring buildings and their occupants.

Discussion Initial vulnerability is linked to poverty and lack of information. In an urban setting, political and economic aspects cannot be separated from shelter and reconstruction. During reconstruction, DRR can be used to reduce vulnerability, so build back safer. Social and empowerment issues are also important to reduce vulnerability.

Recommendations Participants concluded that DRR is not achievable without the correct economic and legal frameworks. In areas of acute poverty, there will not be sufficient investment in sufficiently to minimise the impact of a disaster. Governments often required support in planning and zoning activities, as well as the development and enforcement of appropriate building codes.

5.2 Livelihoods

Summary Recognition was given to the significant impact upon livelihoods by shelter and reconstruction, as well as how to support livelihoods in order to support shelter, reconstruction and recovery. Questions were asked about both why assistance did not generally include support either to business, or to market interventions, in order to improve local and regional materials supply.

Recommendations Participants concluded that assessments should be broadened to form understandings of both livelihoods and markets, especially for construction materials and supply chains. Financial assessment tools are also essential and should be used widely in the shelter sector to better understand urban economies.

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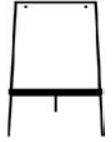
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6 Breakout Group 3



Facilitator Manoucher Lolachi (UNHCR)
Rapporteur Brenda Coughlan (Shelter Centre)

6.1 Basic services

Summary The complexities of urban communal services, utilities and transport infrastructure were discussed in terms of the cost, speed of response, and the role of humanitarian stakeholders with respect to government.

Recommendations It was agreed that support to basic services, such as schools, hospitals, water and electricity, should be considered as essential to reconstruction. Participants stressed that in urban context lines of communication and transport can be greatly affected by a conflict or disaster. Consideration should be given to contingency planning, including the development of business continuity plans, in order to mitigate the damage caused to basic services.

6.2 Fundraising

Summary The cost of shelter and reconstruction assistance to urban affected populations is greater *per capita* than to rural populations. Discussions included how to justify this expenditure within agencies and to donors, many of which appear reluctant to support shelter and reconstruction assistance.

Recommendations Building on existing markets through market interventions in the local economy was highlighted by participants as a key area for implementing assistance. In addition, better linkages between fundraising and disaster risk reduction initiatives should be developed. Funding for the provision of training and education for existing urban workforces should also be prioritised, including the capacity building of humanitarian and developmental stakeholders in urban areas.

6.3 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Summary Consideration was given to DRR being complicated in urban settings by rapid urbanisation, involving settlement in hazardous areas.

Recommendations Participants suggested a possible 'mapping' of scenarios and identification of lessons learned from the past, to help inform disaster risk reduction initiatives. DRR and advocacy in the areas of urban planning and building codes should be strengthened; participants recommended this could be tied into local governance and local planning mechanisms.

6.4 Design related issues

Summary Urban design and reconstruction needs to be culturally, socially and economically viable.

Recommendations Urban context design solutions could be considered to help to avoid internal displacement, for example by adapting the available existing building stock. Standards and basic principles exist but are not adhered to in most countries and this should be responded to as an integral part of programming.

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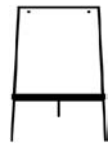
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7 Breakout Group 4



Facilitator Tom Corsellis (Shelter Centre)
Rapporteur Henry Pinder (Shelter Centre)

7.1 Objectives

Summary It was debated that agreeing an objective or outcome when offering shelter and reconstruction assistance would aid both planning processes, as well as understanding the role of humanitarian stakeholders with respect to the population affected, government, IFIs, and the private sector. Fundraising and exit strategies might also be made easier.

Recommendations Group participants concurred on the importance of agreeing an humanitarian objective when offering shelter and reconstruction assistance.

7.2 Roles

Summary Whilst improving working relations with government was identified as key, it was noted also that funding is never available to meet all shelter and reconstruction needs, and that the population affected undertakes the majority of activities. There was general agreement that the role of the humanitarian community should be in offering some support to the entire affected population, rather than “building a few model villages”. The nature of this support should include improvements to: liaising with the affected population to ensure they had sufficient information about their assistance and rights; support to resolving housing, land and property challenges; and legal support to housing, land and property. It was a surprise to many of the group that activities unrelated to construction were listed as requiring more attention, however they considered that this was also more within the scope of skills and capacities of many of their agencies.

Discussion Working in an urban environment is more of a planning issue than a construction issue. The shelter community is obligated to follow the planning and zoning laws and building codes that are often ignored locally. This can often cause delays in supporting the population affected.

Recommendations The role of the shelter community in the urban setting should depend on where the gaps lie. Reconstruction design in an urban setting at both community and family levels should be undertaken by the affected population, with technical advice provided by the shelter community. The shelter community should offer an intervention, rather than attempt to manage any the single building process, and should engage in resource identification and market interventions.

7.3 Liabilities

Summary Concerns were raised over the professional liabilities of the humanitarian community over both building performance and tenure, especially in peri-urban response.

Recommendations Participants agreed that the issue of liability must be resolved as some humanitarian stakeholders consider the range of their responses constrained by lack of clarity over liability, presenting the danger of only responding to those affected in ways which avoid liability. Some concerns over liability may be removed if the shelter community reconsiders its role.

7.4 Private sector

Summary The private sector has been criticised as resulting in ‘contractor driven’ projects, whilst ‘owner driven’ projects have been promoted in their place. In urban contexts, however, the large tenant population, type of building materials required, and multi-story buildings make it essential to involve the construction industry.

Recommendations Participants stressed that a new relationship was required with the private sector, engaging and supporting all areas of the construction industry. Small works contractors were identified as particularly important, as they are familiar with the local market and business practices.

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