

The Emergency Shelter Process with Application to Case Studies in Macedonia and Afghanistan

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January 2002

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1. Introduction

In 1978 Ian Davis wrote, “...shelter must be considered as a process, not as an object”¹. This paper explores the processes involved in sheltering people in emergencies, when shelter is understood as a basic human need² because without it an individual is extremely vulnerable. When people are asked to define the word ‘shelter’ they will normally describe an action such as ‘protection’, rather than an object such as a tent. But an object can exist as an autonomous entity until it is placed within a process involving a sequence within time of intentions, decisions and actions. A process demands of an object: “What is it exactly that you are doing?”

This paper asks whether, two decades on, shelter has evolved from being understood as object to being understood as a process. It will concentrate upon relief programs in the emergency phase of a humanitarian disaster where people have an urgent fundamental need for shelter. It argues that the

¹Davis, I: ‘Shelter After Disaster’ Oxford Polytechnic Press 1978

²Zetter, R: ‘Shelter Provision and Settlement Policies for Refugees’ 1994

necessary material objects of shelter can only be of use to survivors if the whole process involving the political, the social and the environmental aspects are understood.

An understanding is required of the relationships between donor, implementer and survivors in this field. Even in the field of shelter where specific solutions can be proposed, as Peter Guthrie stated, ...”The right answer is not enough. There has to be an incentive for commercial or political support or the solution will never be implemented”³. It is not enough to understand the process as demanded from the survivors. This may be the ideal, but it cannot be upheld in reality if the intentions of all those involved are not fully understood. The shelter process relies on some basic principles in order that an appropriate response is carried out, but perhaps one of the reasons that it is so difficult to implement these principles is because of other larger interests. The basic principles behind an appropriate response must be tested against the reality of political pressure, donor interests and the needs and wants of the survivors.

To summarise, this paper looks at the idea of emergency shelter and asks whether it could better fulfil the needs of its beneficiaries if understood as a process.

2. Methodology

An introduction to the issues in emergency shelter will be followed by case studies that illustrate how the main principles are applied in practice. Research was commenced through a literature review of the small collection of publications that exist within this sector. These publications fall into the broad categories of academic research, promotional literature, field handbooks and media coverage. Further unpublished literature includes agreements drawn up by agencies such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) which describe the processes, and training literature from the NGO Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief (RedR) that teaches the processes to field staff.

In order to ensure the approach is relevant and to discover whether written accounts of the process were indeed a reality, interviews were carried out with the staff of various aid agencies, governmental staff and academics. In order to test how the contemporary process is implemented in the field, real time studies were carried out on a relatively small program in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM) through a field visit and on one of the largest programs ever in Afghanistan. Finally, media coverage was monitored through television, radio and the internet in

³personal communication. Guthrie, P, Founder of RedR, 15.11.2001

order to study how emergency shelter is portrayed to the public and to hear contemporary voices in the field. Diagrammatic images have been used in an attempt to present more clearly complex ideas.

3. Shelter as a Fundamental Human Need: The State of the Art

This section discusses whether shelter is a human right and what is represented by the fundamental need for shelter. It describes those who experience this need and why they are in that situation while illustrating how the implementers of relief have categorised them and the options they may be offered to fulfil their need for shelter.

3.1 The Implied Right to Shelter

Although there is no explicit right to shelter, this right is implied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948)⁴ and other similar documents drawn up by multilateral organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) and individual countries. These implications can be found in articles that refer to property⁵, security⁶ and asylum⁷. The entanglement of the issue of shelter with these associated rights makes it very difficult to describe what a right to shelter might be. A right to shelter would have to tackle possession of a place and the marking and defence of territory, as the laws of some countries already do, but attitudes to shelter in this context differ enormously from culture to culture and for this reason it would be very difficult to enforce an explicit right to shelter.

The need for shelter becomes fundamental in an emergency situation. Shelter can be one of the keys to saving life and prolonging survival⁸. To look at shelter as a fundamental human need is to look at desperate situations because when people lose their homes, they have lost is the last place regarded as essentially safe. Therefore when an individual is without shelter, the situation can be described as a crisis.

3.2 The Fundamental Need for Shelter

The need for shelter can be summarised as the need for:

- Protection from the elements

⁴ Appendix I: Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

⁵ UDHR: Article 17 and 25

⁶ UDHR: Article 3 and 12

⁷ UDHR: Article 14

⁸ Davis, I: 'Shelter After Disaster' Oxford Polytechnic Press 1978

- Preservation of dignity
- Orientation and identity

The relationship between an individual and the elements can be moderated with shelter. For shelter to protect an individual from the elements it must be constructed in a fashion appropriate to the elements that affect the site where it is found. Until recently, the vast majority of relief work has been in Africa⁹, so the technical expertise in the aid community lies in hot climate conditions. The relationship between individuals in a hot climate and the sun involves shade and disease control so this is where relief has been focused. The effect of this history has been a focus upon water and sanitation (WatSan) or food programs that can be more critical to survival in hot countries. In colder climates issues of exposure, heat production and condensation control become paramount. As the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan states: “While starvation occurs over a period of weeks, death from exposure can occur in a single night”¹⁰. Shelter systems used for years by aid agencies become climatically inappropriate in these situations, without modification. These systems can be seen in use in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. Nixon recalls: “In India after the Gujarat earthquake [January, 2001], people were in some villages living under the trees as there was no urgency due to climatic problems at that time. In Kosovo in the first winter [1999], people were put in tents in significantly sub-zero temperatures, or had temporary roof kits of plastic if only their roof was gone”¹¹. Protection from the elements also significantly contributes to lowering morbidity rates from diseases, especially acute respiratory infections. It can also slow the onset of shivering caused by malnutrition, provide a more hygienic environment and lower the risk of malaria due to insect bites if nets can be provided¹².

The preservation of dignity is a less tangible issue. It can be described as protection from human elements. Dignity demands an understanding of how shelter can temper the relationship between one individual and another. This may be between displaced individuals or between the migrant community and a host community. The restoration of an individual’s dignity in an emergency situation involves the construction of a place where the person can enjoy privacy and safety. This requires that the permeability of the shelter can be controlled by the user. This may be physical permeability but acoustic and visual breaches are equally important. The extent to which shelter can provide safety is depends upon the perception of its physical durability and its territorial identity.

⁹ Bakhet, 1987 from Corsellis, T: Temporary Settlements for forced Migrants PhD 2001 Unpublished

¹⁰ UNCA: 30 Day Emergency Operational Assistance Plan

for Afghanistan, 15 November – 15 December 2001

¹¹ personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

¹² MSF: Refugee Health: An approach to Emergency Situations, Macmillan, UK 1996

Displaced people also need to be able to temper their relationship with their host at a community level. This can often have as much to do with the layout and siting of shelter units as the type of shelter unit itself. Displaced individuals have occasionally refused aid because it is seen as too minimal. This was seen in the 1980s when Palestinian displaced persons famously burned tents provided to house them in disgust¹³. Shelter that had been accepted in the developing world was offered to a far more affluent community. However, if the standard of relief is higher than existing shelter within the host country, this can offend local people and jealousies occur. This can have an adverse effect on a shelter program as native individuals may also try to gain access to materials or camps, escalating numbers. This is described as 'draw' and an example of this occurred in 1995 in Dadaab, North Eastern Kenya, where Somali, Ethiopian and Sudanese refugees were camped. Local people wanted to get into the camps where conditions were better than conditions outside. 30% of the 120,000 strong camp turned out to be local people. Current agency policies attempt to provide shelter to standards recognised by the host country in order to avoid this situation¹⁴. The difficulty comes when the migrant population is used to a different standard of shelter to the host population.

Finally, shelter can provide orientation and identity for people. In an emergency people are often traumatised and confused. Some sort of shelter provides the individual with an environment in which they can begin to focus on their situation and identify their future needs. For this reason a house can be a keystone for recovery, providing a physical support mechanism¹⁵, where other resources cannot. Having a point to call ones own in the midst of chaos can be an important aid to regaining a sense of where one is and planning what to do next. It is important to understand that the type of shelter involved will carry its own social and cultural associations. If 'temporary' shelter is provided, this implies the possibility that migrants will return home. This signal is read both by the migrant community and the host community. People also need emergency shelter to be recognisable. Use of familiar materials and shapes helps the individual to accept shelter as a home. Different cultures use space in different ways and the design of domestic space particularly has strong meanings as it is the most intimate of settings. If a community is used to living in circular spaces, the construction of rectangular living spaces may adversely affect day to day life. Use of familiar materials and shapes also aids speed and quality of construction and paints a frightening situation in a less threatening colour.

¹³ Personal communication Guthrie, P, Founder of RedR, 15.11.2001

¹⁴ for example, the Norwegian Refugee Council's work in the Balkans uses local building standards

¹⁵ personal communication Corsellis, T, 13.01.02

3.3 Those Who Experience This Need and Why

Those who need shelter in an emergency can be survivors of disasters, or survivors of conflict. This paper explores all situations because although the causes are very different the process of fulfilling the survivors' shelter needs are often treated in a similar way.

There is an argument that states that all disasters are man made but a differentiation will be made here for the purposes of clarity. Survivors of 'natural disasters' experience a range of situations from light damage to their homes to major reconfigurations of the landscape around them. They may only need materials to fix their homes or they may need total relocation. Loss of their homes is likely to be a consequence of living in an area prone to an extreme natural phenomenon. Shelter is often not built to withstand extreme phenomena because their occurrence is infrequent cost level of protection, local coping strategies overwhelmed. Technology to strengthen shelter will not become the norm unless people continue to experience a need for it. The reasons for locating in this type of area were usually economic, but they are now historic because communities have stayed, but the economic conditions have changed. Some fault lines and flood planes are highly fertile¹⁶, encouraging settlement to occur. Population growth can also cause a community to expand into and are previously uninhabited because it is dangerous. However, some communities locate in disaster areas because it is the only land they can afford. In this situation permanent shelter may be especially inadequate to withstand the extremes elements. Ian Davis points out that "The public image of disaster as a great leveller, striking families irrespective of social position, is just one of many myths."¹⁷ Often, but not always, those affected worst by disasters are the poor who have the least resources to rebuild. They are also the least likely to have well built shelter and therefore the most likely to lose it. Replacing their means of shelter often represents replacing the largest capital asset they owned. If people need to be temporarily accommodated, the length of time they stay is usually directly related to the practical task of rebuilding of their homes. Homes may need to be rebuilt differently, however, in order to prevent a similar situation reoccurring. The boundaries between relief programs and development programs begin to blur here.

Survivors of 'man made disasters' include those affected by pollution from industrial explosions such as the Chernobyl disaster; intentional flooding such as that caused by the Aswan Dam; and arson, which at the time of writing was causing hundreds to flee their homes near Sydney,

¹⁶ Davis, I: 'Shelter after Disaster' Oxford Polytechnic Press 1978

¹⁷ Davis, I: 'Shelter after Disaster' Oxford Polytechnic Press 1978

Australia. Those who survive may need temporary shelter away from their homes or complete relocation because large areas can be affected for a long time.

Conflict is a special type of man made disaster because it is perpetrated and continuing. Survivors of conflict may need shelter for similar reasons. They too may experience artillery or fire damage to their homes, in which case they may need materials or skilled assistance to fix their homes. However, often they are simply forced to flee perfectly sound buildings for their own safety. Whether these buildings remain intact in their absence is a different question. In the case of conflict the possibility of return is therefore a political rather than a practical issue. “In war, vulnerability is not solely the province of the poor, but can also have its roots in wealth, politics, ethnicity and gender”¹⁸. Temporary accommodation must be sought, often for whole communities, a safe distance from the conflict zone. It is often impossible to estimate the length of time people will have to be accommodated which makes this type of shelter problem particularly sensitive. When return does occur, further assistance may be needed to repair damage to previously abandoned homes.

3.4 How Those in Need are Recognised by the Implementers of Relief

Those who lose their shelter may still stay in their homes or they may leave and become forced migrants. These are classified in the following way:

- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- Externally Displaced Persons (EDPs)
- Refugees
- Asylum Seekers¹⁹

IDPs are those who “have been forced to flee their homes but remain within the territory of their own country”²⁰. EDPs are those who “have crossed an international border but are not legally recognised as refugees.... Many people within this category are not included within the mandates of the UN and other providers of humanitarian assistance although they may be assisted by them”²¹. Survivors of disaster or conflict may fall into these categories. Those in the above categories are not

¹⁸ Ellis, S: ‘An Evaluation of Shelter Projects and Policies for Refugees and Displaced Persons within the Republic of Croatia’ PhD 1996 Unpublished

¹⁹ Jensen, E: Introduction and Overview: Typology and Causes of Emergency Settlement, The First International Emergency Settlement Conference Papers, New ‘Approaches to New Realities’, University of Wisconsin – Disaster Management Centre, Department of Engineering Professional Development, 1986

²⁰ ibid.

²¹ ibid.

recognised as refugees and therefore UNHCR is not bound by its mandate to help them. However, the General Assembly of the UN may request that UNHCR acts on the behalf of such people²².

Refugees are those who “owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, are outside the county of [their] nationality and [are] unwilling to return to it.”²³ These are survivors of conflict. They are recognised in two ways. Mandate Refugees are “people recognised by the High Commissioner for Refugees according to the 1951 UN Convention [recognised by Europe] and the 1967 Protocol [extended understanding to the world]”²⁴. Convention Refugees are those whom governments have determined are refugees according to the Convention. The significance of Refugee status is that “refugees should receive at least the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident”²⁵. This can imply the right to shelter if the laws of the host country state that right. If there is no implication of this right then a multilateral agency such as the UN may have to negotiate for shelter, among other needs, with the host government. Asylum seekers are those who have crossed an international border and are in the process of applying for refugee status. They may have an undetermined legal status and it may be unclear whether they qualify for shelter relief. However the UNHCR can act as an advocate for asylum seekers in an emergency to seek to ensure that they are given refugee status.

The overriding principle for the UNHCR is to return refugees to their home. Zetter writes: “... reassertion by the UNHCR and the international community that repatriation is the preferred solution to the world’s refugee crisis [...]has a crucial bearing on the nature of shelter and settlement responses for refugees and returnees”²⁶. But, as Taylor points out, “Once refugees repatriate to their homeland they cease to be “Refugees” although UNHCR does often to continue to assist in their resettlement”²⁷. When refugees return to their country of origin and become IDPs they are no longer under UNHCR’s mandate so there is no guarantee that they will be assisted. It is crucial, therefore, that refugees have durable, sustainable shelter to return to when they return home. At the time of writing the UNHCR is considering its mandate in relation to IDPs.

²² McNamara, D: UNHCR’s Protection Mandate in Relation to Internally Displaced Persons, Rights Have No Borders, Norwegian Refugee Council/ Global IDP Survey 1998

²³ UN Convention relating to the status of Refugees 1951

²⁴ Jensen, E: Introduction and Overview: Typology and Causes of Emergency Settlement, The First International Emergency Settlement Conference Papers, New ‘Approaches to New Realities’, University of Wisconsin – Disaster Management Centre, Department of Engineering Professional Development, 1986

²⁵ www.unhcr.ch/protectingrefugees

²⁶ Zetter, R: ‘Shelter Provision and Settlement Policies for Refugees’ 1994

Essentially the categorisation of those who seek shelter describes the system of responsibilities that exists to deal with survivors of crisis more than it describes their individual differing needs. It demonstrates what can be provided for them based upon whose mandate they fall under. However, this may be unconnected to what they need as the individual material circumstance of an IDP may be very similar to that of a refugee or asylum seeker. A sub-categorisation by need is often made by those in the role of providing assistance such as in repair programs, but perhaps this diversity of needs could be recognised at the level at which the above categories possess meaning.

3.5 Emergency Shelter Responses Experienced by Forced Migrants

In emergencies people will have different levels of resources to help them cope. The following are ways in which the displaced and those who take responsibility for them respond to a lack of shelter. It may be possible to implement all these solutions, several or only one.

- Repair and Rehabilitation of Houses
- Self Settlement
- Conversion of buildings
- Assisted self settlement
- Temporary Settlements²⁸

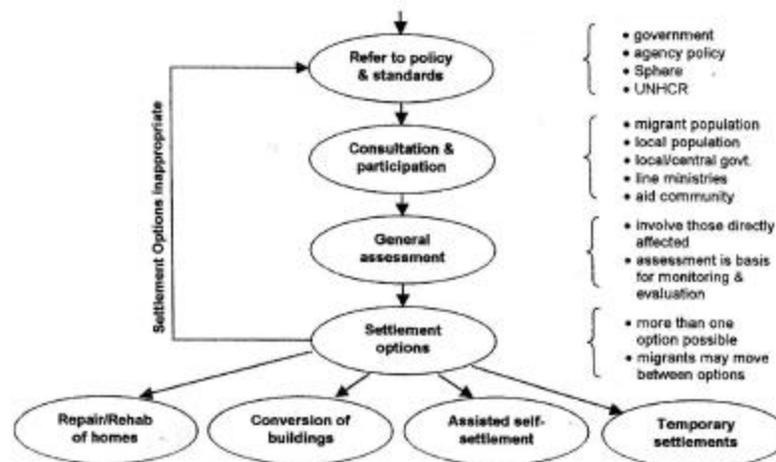


fig 1 Temporary Settlement Options for Forced Migrants.

²⁷ personal communication Taylor, S: Snr. Program Officer, Global Emergency Operations, Mercy Corps 02.01.02

²⁸ Corsellis, T: 'RedR Training Material' 2001 and Jensen, E: Introduction and Overview: Typology and Causes of Emergency Settlement, The First International Emergency Settlement Conference Papers, New 'Approaches to New Realities', University of Wisconsin – Disaster Management Centre, Department of Engineering Professional Development, 1986

Decision Making Flow Diagram²⁹

Repair/Rehabilitation of homes	Conversion of buildings	Assisted self-settlement	Temporary settlements
<p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> urban and rural own or other home increasing housing stock in region <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> security/stability ownership socio-economics demographics likelihood of return migrant/local cultures climate/environment factors for sustained occupation materials/skills/tools <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> materials & tools self-help & contract support in-country materials production communal services <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are homes occupied? 'ethnic cleansing': do occupiers become the owners? how are occupiers involved? are building materials sold on? 	<p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> urban and rural schools/barracks/halls/farm buildings/commercial structures <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> security/stability ownership and use socio-economics demographics likelihood of return migrant/local cultures climate/environment use of outside space materials/skills/tools fire/evacuation safety <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve owners/users communal services <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> set maximum socially-sustainable stay social/economic activities for the displaced? long term implications and developmental advantages? exist strategy/return to previous function? 	<p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> staying with families self-settled camps dispersed self-settlement <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> security/stability socio-economics demographics likelihood of return migrant/local cultures climate/environment access to services density & sustainability fire/evacuation safety <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support hosts through existing structures? support local services <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how are local people affected? long term implications and developmental advantages? How are vulnerable migrants accessed & served? economic and environmental impact 	<p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transit/reception 'Supported Temporary Settlement' (or camp) extension to an STS <p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> security/stability socio-economics demographics likelihood of return migrant/local cultures climate/environment self-sufficiency level integration with local community <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve local people/migrants/government in site selection and physical planning minimise environmental impact <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are migrants and locals involved in management? is settlement similar to migrant or local tradition? economic and environmental impact

fig 2 Features of Shelter Options³⁰

Providing that they can be reached safely, those who stay in their homes can be assisted through Repair and Reconstruction programs. This may be a two-stage process. Distribution of essential household items, plastic sheeting and construction materials to keep out the elements is followed by permanent reconstruction of the damage. This type of process will be explored further the FYRoM case study in 5.1.

Those who can find temporary shelter without assistance. This is known as self-settlement when the displaced may stay with friends, relatives, in hotels or, if the climate allows, in caves or under improvised shelter. Hosts may experience pressures from this type of arrangement if there is overcrowding, or if the home of the host has also sustained damage. Host families and friends can be offered assistance to help them cope which may be in the form of extra bedding and household items. They can also be put on a list of vulnerable groups who will receive aid first.

²⁹ Corsellis, T: 'RedR Training Material' 2001

³⁰ Corsellis, T: 'RedR Training Material' 2001

If there are existing buildings available, mass shelters (also known as collective centres) can be organised. This is the practice of converting buildings into communal shelters to house a large number of people. This type of shelter can be favoured by the distributors of aid because they can reach a large number of people in one location. However, this is usually for short periods only because communal living can have adverse effects upon the health and dignity. They are sometimes used as transit centres for migrants on their way to longer-term shelter. There is sometimes a time limit imposed upon mass shelters because they are required for use again by the host community. For example, educational buildings are used, but the displaced population must leave before term begins to avoid disrupting the host community's needs. In some countries where the same crisis regularly causes migration, emergency shelters are built to be used as other communal facilities during the non-crisis period. In Bangladesh, emergency shelters have been built to withstand cyclones, but are used as schools otherwise. This way, the building must be kept maintained and the community gets to know it rather than it being a monolith which people enter only once every ten years or more.

Where the above options have been exhausted, and land is available, camps are built. They are a controversial option and the UNHCR states that *'The establishment of refugee camps must only a last resort.* A solution that maintains and fosters the self reliance of the refugees is always preferable"³¹. Camps can be built as transit camps or as large longer term solution the size of a town. Site selection and planning of temporary settlements is crucial to their long-term success³² because they can affect non-shelter issues such as site administration and population health. If people make their own camps this can cause problems when sites chosen by the migrants themselves are suitable for a durable solution. For example, those who have settled closer to the border cannot be easily helped. The UNHCR recognises a safety zone from the border of a country in conflict because "Host governments are often anxious that migrant groups may attract or be the source of military insurgencies that can radically destabilise regional security"³³. The UNHCR quotes the OAU Convention which states: "For reasons of security, countries of asylum shall, as far as possible, settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of their country of origin"³⁴. The UNHCR has been known to try to move camps into the safety zone, but this can have adverse consequences upon the camp population. Agencies will sometimes pre-empt migration and build a camp before the migrants arrive. Camps can be 'closed' where the migrant population is detained inside the site and discouraged from mixing with the local community or 'open' camps where a

³¹ UNHCR Handbook For Emergencies: Field Operations 1999

³² Corsellis, T: Temporary Settlements for forced Migrants PhD 2001 Unpublished

³³ ibid.

³⁴ UNHCR: Handbook For Emergencies, 1999

relationship with the local community is established. This can sometimes be economic and a benefit to the hosts, but with any large influx of foreigners it can also breed tensions.

Although the shelter provided in these camps is intended to be ‘temporary’, ‘half of [refugee camps] last longer than five years, with under one quarter lasting under two years’³⁵. The UNHCR admits that its ‘history is littered with examples of ‘temporary’ refugee settlements which were still in existence five, ten or fifteen years after their establishment’³⁶. It is mistakenly thought that camps prolong the emergency period because they provide resources and delay migrant return. This creates implications not only for the careful planning of camps but also for the type of shelter materials used. Unfortunately one of the most difficult estimations to make about a camp is the length of its life. Shelter materials cannot be provided with an indefinite life for cost reasons but also for political reasons. As mentioned above, a settlement appears to be temporary, it will be more easily accepted by the host population. An agreement may be made with the host government that no permanent structures can be erected in the camp. This occurred in 1994 In Tanzania where Burundi refugees were not allowed to use mud bricks and the plot size was made too small to construct a permanent structure³⁷. Therefore shelter systems used in camps face the paradox of appearing temporary but being very durable.

3.6 Conclusions to Shelter as a Fundamental Human Need

The right to shelter is implied as a basic need. This need for shelter is the need for:

- Protection from the elements
- Preservation of dignity
- Orientation and identity

Forced Migrants are classified as:

- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- Externally Displaced Persons (EDPs)
- Refugees
- Asylum Seekers

They may experience the following Emergency Shelter Responses:

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 2, 6 December 2001

³⁷ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

Repair and Rehabilitation of Houses

- Self Settlement
- Conversion of buildings
- Assisted self settlement
- Supported Temporary Settlements

So the process of fulfilling shelter need must involve the identification of a need, identify the status of those who hold that need and take into account how this affects their entitlements and then identify an appropriate shelter response fig3.

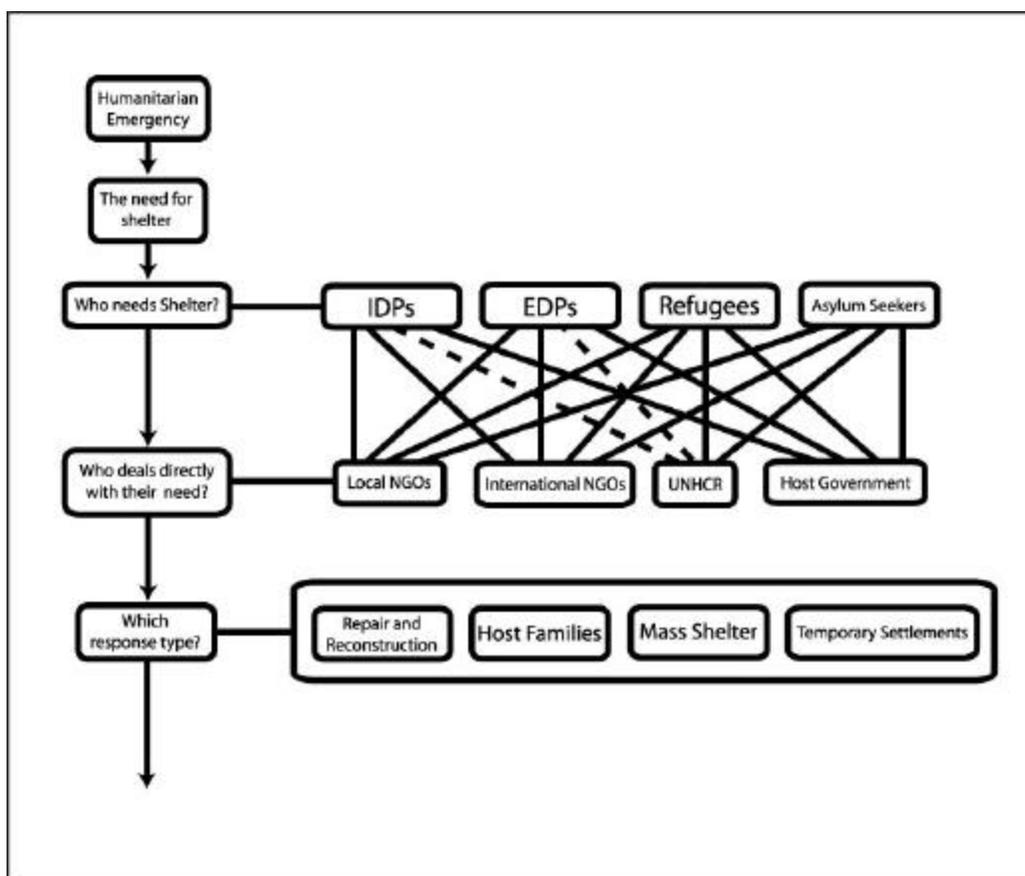


fig 3 The Emergency Shelter Process in Abstract ³⁸

³⁸ authors' diagram adapted from Corsellis, T: RedR Training Material 2001

4. The Emergency Shelter Process

The emergency shelter process is the act of fulfilling the needs of those who have lost their shelter with the most appropriate type of response. The scale of need can range from small communities to entire countries and accordingly those who aim to fulfil this need range from small local humanitarian agencies to international multilateral governmental bodies.

The 'shelter sector' is part of the enormous international relief system ^{fig4}. Its image has evolved over the last two decades from the Aid community; paternalism driven by compassion, through the Humanitarian community; compassion driven by equality and now it is beginning to become known as the Assistance community³⁹: equality driven by service. Simply understood this consists of donors who give money to governments or organisations who administer relief to beneficiaries.

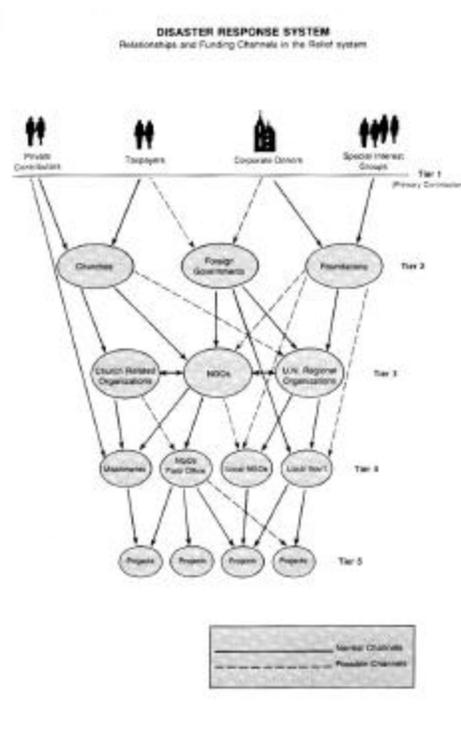


fig 4 Disaster Response System

Relationships and Funding Channels in the Relief System in the 1980s⁴⁰

³⁹ personal communication Graham, Clare, UNHCR London, Public Information 05.01.02

⁴⁰ Cuny, F: Disasters and Development, Oxford University Press New York 1983

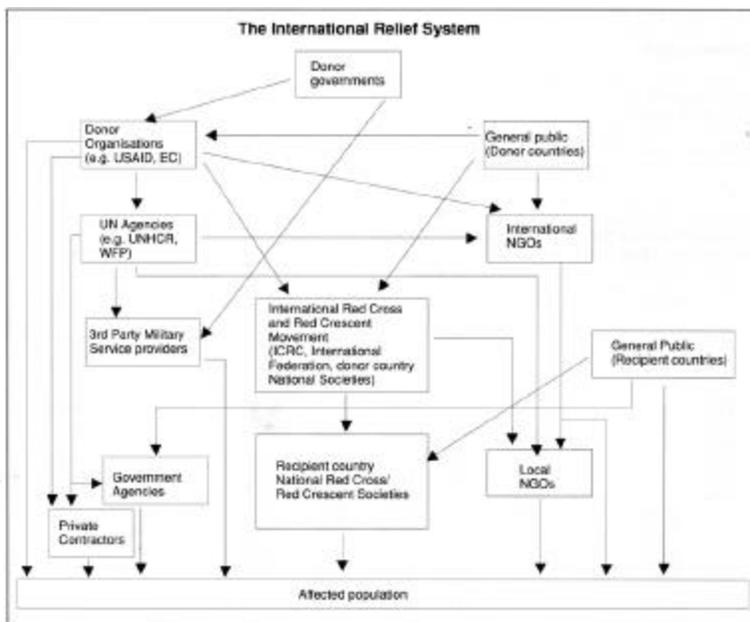


fig 5 The increasingly complex international relief system in the 1990s⁴¹

In reality the system is far more complicated than these diagrams show, because there are many hierarchies and distortions of those hierarchies. For example, donors administer aid, such as the UNHCR and EAR. The client is often a multi-headed beast represented by the donor, the coordinating organisation and the beneficiary. Each of these entities will have a different level of influence upon the process.

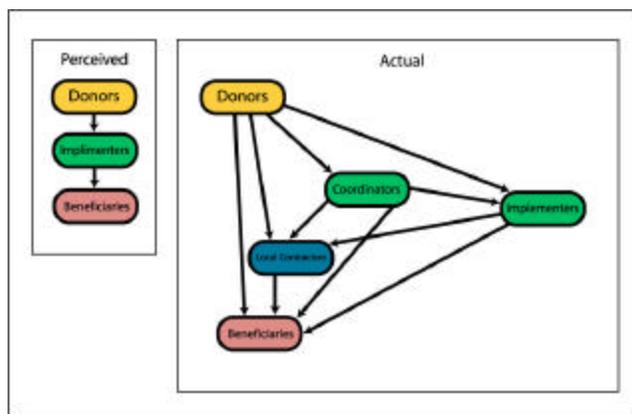


fig 6 Publicly perceived and actual relationships in the emergency shelter process⁴²

Beneficiaries are the survivors at whom relief is directed because they have been left vulnerable by an emergency situation described above. Relief programs are primarily established for their benefit

⁴¹ fig 2: Overseas Development Institute, London, referenced in World Disasters Report, IFRC, 1996

but the challenge is to keep the focus on their needs without letting other factors steer the process away. Demand led programs are hailed as the ideal where the survivor is the starting point and the end point, but this relies on the intent to involve and empower the survivor. Many programs result in a mix of what the beneficiary needs and what can be supplied in terms of cost and capacity. Survivor categorisation and the larger intentions of the major players can also affect how demand led a program is.

Donors are those who finance relief programs. Their motives can vary from purely philanthropic based upon religious or humanitarian beliefs, to heavily economic or political. They have a massive influence because without funding, programs cannot be implemented and needs cannot be met. The scale of disasters is what makes them disasters so the funding required for recovery can be substantial. As capacity to assist recovery has increased, such as airlifting aid, more money is needed. One of the results of this is that donors pledge the large amounts required but then struggle to meet these figures in real terms. Theresa Obradovich, QIPs consultant, for UNHCR Skopje, observed that: “ The UNHCR always performs cut backs in the middle of the year when donor pledges fail to materialise”⁴³. This has to be taken into account at the planning stages or it will have a significant negative effect upon operation.

As Guthrie comments: “Humanitarian relief is big business”⁴⁴, and this effects the way that implementers of relief operate. Nixon observes: “To be honest some of the most bitter competition I have seen has been humanitarian agencies competing for donor funding of their programs”⁴⁵. The cost and time scale of a shelter program directly impact upon its scope and effectiveness. Donors demand that programs be accountable and imposed deadlines can limit the quality and extent of what can be achieved.

Governments can be donors, implementers and/ or beneficiaries. As donors they are now represent the source of the most funding. Some governments may donate heavily to a national agency to the point where it runs programs through it. This can provide an agency with a large and reliable source of income, but it can also have a detrimental effect of the political image of the agency. Many governments have an obligation to their taxpayers that will govern how they conduct themselves as an implementer in an emergency situation. The UNHCR recognises that this may have an effect up on the way in which governmental donors want their money spent so they agree with their

⁴² authors' diagram

⁴³ personal communication Obradovich, T, QIPs consultant, UNHCR (seconded from ARC) 06.12. 2001

⁴⁴ personal communication Guthrie, P, Founder of RedR, 15.11.2001

⁴⁵ personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

Implementing Partners: “We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy”⁴⁶.

Organisations involved include governmental organisations such as the UK Department for International Development (DfID), multilateral organisations such as the UN and the EU or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that can range from aid agencies to self-support groups. NGOs need core funding so they are sometimes funded heavily by governments. This practice has increased as more governments make humanitarian aid part of their foreign policy. NGOs funded like this may struggle to maintain their autonomy. Oxfam tries to keep 30% of its funding independent by selling goods and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) keeps 50%.

The UNHCR works beside other UN bodies such as UNOCHA (United Nations Organisation Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs), UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), WFP (World Food Program) and UNDP (United Nations Development Program). It also coordinates Implementing Partners in the form of International and Local NGOs. UNHCR will sometimes appoint an umbrella partner that monitors other agencies and takes on some more specific administrative roles.

The press also play a part in the process because they can have an influence upon the way that an emergency situation is reported and how the role of agencies is described. The media profile of a situation is directly related to the level of funding implementers will receive because if an emergency is newsworthy, it is politically advantageous to be seen as a donor. The UNHCR recognises that fundraising through the press can encourage a patronising attitude so they encourage their partners to adopt this practice: “In our information, publicity and advertising activities we shall recognise disaster survivors as dignified human beings, not objects of pity”⁴⁷.

4.1 The Emergency Shelter Sector

Nixon observes :”If there were a defined “Sector” then it would be easier”⁴⁸. But the ‘shelter sector’ is conspicuous in its absence. As mentioned above shelter relief has been considered less than WatSan or food in the past, even though it plays an important role in ensuring the success of these other two needs. There are several theories behind why this should be so. One is based on the

⁴⁶ UNHCR: II/6/d Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership November 1999

⁴⁷ UNHCR: II/6/i Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership, November 1999

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

African history of humanitarian relief, as mentioned above, which influences the priorities of relief. In hot climates the top priority is likely to be water. Another is that the time it takes a human being to perish in a hot climate, without water or food (but with shelter) is less than the time taken without shelter (but with food and water). A further explanation is that water, medicine and food are all products that can be given to those in need as part of a simple demand and supply system. It is less obvious what the product is in the context of shelter because it can take so many forms. But for this reason it is also a versatile need that can sometimes be met in an improvised form by the survivors themselves. There are many different objects that can be described as shelter and many different sources for these but water, food and medicine are more specific, in that order.

The main agency that coordinates relief operations in the context of shelter is the UNHCR. This is by way of its mandate to protect refugees, the needs of whom include shelter. UNHCR was originally intended to last only three years and has continued under a renewable mandate⁴⁹. Many agencies carry out some sort of shelter program such as UNICEF which provides shelter systems for schools and healthcare, and WFP that provides shelter for storage of food and non-food items. There are some small organisations, such as Shelter Now International (SNI) who state shelter as their main activity, but there is no authoritative body within the relief community that claims emergency shelter as its own. Few see shelter as their main area of expertise.

Agencies tend to employ consultants to oversee the shelter process rather than employ permanent staff. Even the UNHCR only employs some in house staff and seconds consultants from other agencies who pay their salaries, and only UNHCR employ physical planners (PTSS) for refugee camps. It does not appear to be considered an exact discipline, as Clarke observes: “The attitude is that anyone can get a bit of plastic sheeting and do shelter.”⁵⁰ The effect this has is to keep knowledge and expertise with individuals rather than with the agency and the opportunities for the sector to develop an institutional memory are fewer. Expertise is shared between agencies as staff are shared, but this does not create an incentive for long term competition which can result in better practice. However, competition between agencies can also have a negative effect: “...some agencies and individuals and companies are reluctant to give away the benefits of their experience which they see as their edge”⁵¹. Furthermore, those in the field are not in an obvious position to question the fundamental principles of their assignment or the processes that their agency is involved in. They are too close to the situation to have an overview of the situation.

⁴⁹ Corsellis, T: Teaching material, University of Cambridge School of Architecture, 1999

⁵⁰ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

No major body exists to monitor how the process is carried out and most evaluation of programs is internal. To have an overview is not the duty of field staff, but then it is not anybody's duty. This is partly because it is taboo to suggest that good intentions could result in more harm than good or to ask aid agencies to try harder. There is not yet widespread acceptance that this is a professional sector for which one can be trained, so the standards to which work is evaluated continue to be elusive. Few agreed standards across the board making it easier to evaluate internally, but this has obvious drawbacks. Nixon comments that: "Because of the politics involved, no-body is too ready to admit a program went wrong and it does happen - especially in emergency programs - that they can go off the rails or fall short of expectations. As a result a lot of words may get written around the issues"⁵². The effects of this approach produce a situation that compounds its errors fig 7. Nixon continues: "So of course when the next disaster comes, they say "...what worked before" and end up dusting off a program modality which seems to have worked ... and so we go through the learning curve again a bit like reincarnation and Karma - learn it now or come back in another time to learn the same lessons"⁵³.

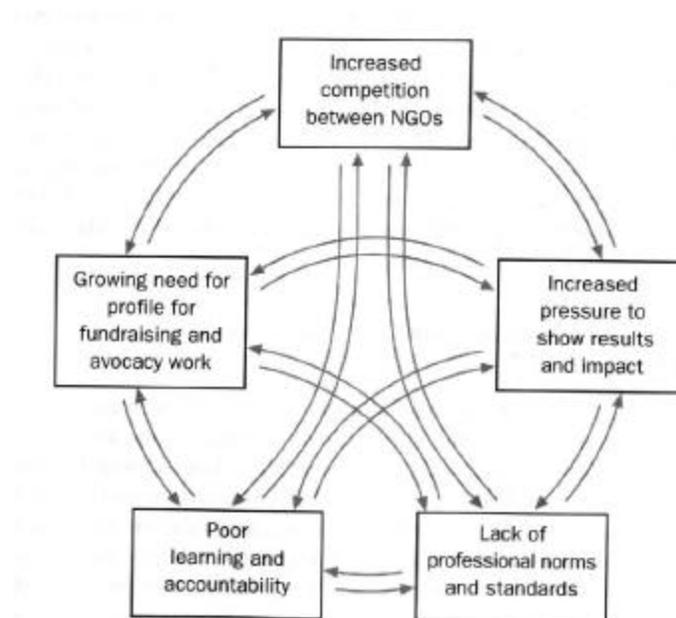


fig 7 The Vicious Circle of NGO Operations⁵⁴

⁵¹ personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Roche, C: Impact Assessment for Development Agencies: learning to value change, Oxfam 1999

Evaluation of emergency shelter is made complex by the fact that it is a process. Terje Bodøgaard, Shelter and Distribution Advisor for the Norwegian Refugee Council described the following criteria used to evaluate their shelter programs, revealing the priorities of this particular agency:

- “a. Results: how many houses, costs etc?
- b. Impact: did they contribute to refugee / minority return?
- c. Time: what we may observe now is just a tiny fraction of the life span of a house, is it possible to anticipate long-term performance?
- d. Appropriate Design and Technology: Culture, energy, resources”⁵⁵.

Certain factors can be measured numerically such as cost, time and refugee return, but others are more elusive. Objects can be counted but this alone does not reveal whether the process is effective. The UNHCR itself admits that “UNHCR’s performance in an emergency tends to be judged by the simple measure of how many tents, blankets and other basic relief items the organisation is able to purchase and deliver in the early days of a crisis”⁵⁶. The less quantifiable issues such as beneficiary satisfaction are not often mentioned which suggests that it is perhaps not the primary reason for some parties to be involved in the process. Mortality rates are often used to evaluate the success of relief programs, but they only describe whether life was saved, not whether it was adequately and appropriately sheltered.

The identity of the NGO is currently changing in terms of its relationship with its donors. Many NGOs were started as the result of a single appeal for a specific situation by a group of volunteers, OXFAM GB for example, but they have grown very quickly into large multi-tasking organisations with large incomes. The maverick who was initially attracted to the humanitarianism or the danger fieldwork has had to put on the business hat that does not quite suit yet. Talk of ‘stakeholders’⁵⁷ in the administrative and promotional literature of NGOs is not backed up by business like structures within these organisations. Clarke comments that there is a problem with techniques and attitudes filtering down from HQ, conferences and workshops ⁵⁸.EPAU discovered the effect that this has upon the process in its evaluation of UNHCR’s work in Afghanistan: “the evaluation mission identified something of a disconnection between Headquarters policy and field practice. While the last two or three years have witnessed an intensive discussion in Geneva about the ‘ladder of

⁵⁵ personal communication Bodøgaard, T: Shelter and Distribution Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council 12.11.01

⁵⁶ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 1, 7 November 2001

⁵⁷ Red Cross Statement 2010 and UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 1, 7 November 2001

⁵⁸ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

options’, ‘security packages’ and the deployment of ‘humanitarian security officers’, none of these initiatives appeared to be under active consideration in Pakistan”⁵⁹. When asked to describe a successful shelter program, two interviewees described situations in which success was due to a departure from agency policy and program⁶⁰. UNHCR’s Evaluation and Policy Assessment Unit (EPAU) also suggest that there is another contributory factor to this disconnection that must be expected because of the nature of the work: “Emergencies have an inevitable tendency to create tensions and conflict between the different actors and entities involved, whether at Headquarters, in the field, and between Headquarters and the field.”

The disparate nature of shelter relief is having an effect on how the process is developing. There is a small amount of research into the subject and only a small amount of literature has been published. Sometimes it is not easy to see for whom this literature is intended. The majority of those interviewed said that the UNHCR’s “Handbook for Emergencies” is not read by those in the field. Commentators who have no field experience are not highly regarded, but field staff who carry out research are few. Relief agencies are interested in solutions but do not have the capacity or inclination to fund the research to design them. Research is also seen as part of the ‘preventative’ sector for disasters, rather than the relief sector so it is sometimes difficult to divert relief funds there. Donors can sometimes be found in the commercial sector but their profit driven motives can sometimes lead to ideas being sold to agencies before they have been properly tested⁶¹.

⁵⁹ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 1, 7 November 2001

⁶⁰ personal communication Browne, G: Lecturer in Construction Technology, Southampton University, RedR Trainer 16.11.2001

and Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

⁶¹ First hand experience involving a material manufacturer

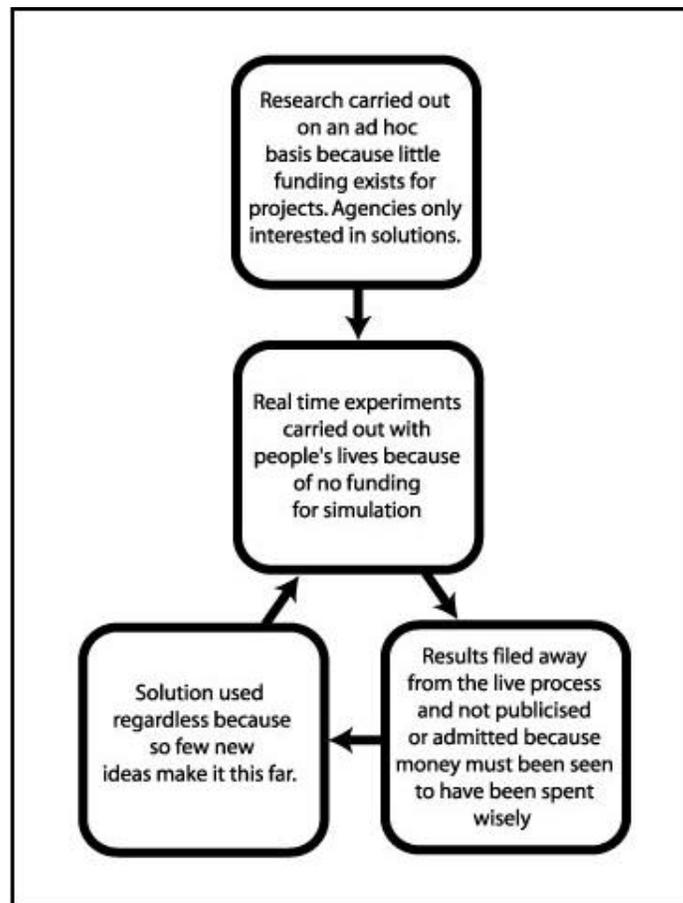


fig8 An example of how a research arm can have a negative effect upon fieldwork⁶²

One research project carried out and used by relief agencies is the SPHERE project⁶³. It involved collaboration between various aid agencies to describe the fundamentals of relief more accurately in order to formulate useable standards. The handbook produced goes further than other field manuals in the context of shelter because it actually states quantifiable standards. It also differentiates between different responses to different climates. Other handbooks such as the UNHCR 'Handbook for Emergencies'⁶⁴ has relied in the past on words such as 'appropriate', 'suitable' and 'adequate' in an attempt to cover many contexts with a few generalisations and has only in the last edition (1999) included a more precise section on shelter. Perhaps this reflects a sector that is spread too thinly. However, even when standards are formulated, they are not always greeted with uniform acceptance.

⁶² authors' diagram

⁶³ Wijmans, P : Minimum Standards in Shelter and Site Planning, Ch 5, The Sphere Project, 1998
<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/shelter.htm>

⁶⁴ UNHCR handbook for Emergencies 1999

4.2 Specific Issues Relating to Shelter that Influence the Process

The emergency shelter process faces specific issues that are not experienced by other sectors in the same way. Some are perceptual, but can halt the process to the same extent as actual issues. These can be summarised as:

- Territory
- Visibility
- Physically Large Scale
- Relatively High Family Unit Cost

Shelter occupies land that can be described as somebody's territory. Each culture has its own understanding of 'territory' and how this is recognised legally or socially which may not necessarily involve 'ownership' in a financial or inherited sense. This can affect the extent to which host communities will accept migrant communities. Access to land can be vital to the shelter process so disputes over territories can slow it down considerably. Nixon suggests that it is best for communities not to migrate, if possible: "It will, if security permits, be best to keep people where they are, in their communities and on their OWN land. Moving people around causes a multitude of problems and pressures on the communities they enter and especially problems with land tenure and ownership"⁶⁵.

Shelter programs can be complex because their visibility and scale make them politically controversial. Anyone claiming expertise in such an area must possess the diplomatic skills to field questions about the validity of shelter programs from the political arena. Nixon observes that: "Shelter and reconstruction is much more visible than say administering medicine and reconstruction in particular is much more permanent ... it is still there in a few years to remind people and the world they were helped, long after a vaccination scar or feeding program has disappeared"⁶⁶. However, the negative effect of this is born out by the survivors. Nixon continues: "Quite often after a disaster the donors want to spend money fast and be high profile and so they stipulate shelter / reconstruction as a means to do this. The agencies are then sometimes pushed into the shelter / reconstruction activities and are not really prepared for it"⁶⁷.

The cost per family unit is greater for shelter than for other types of relief. This is partly to do with the physical scale of shelter. For a shelter to be effective it generally has to be at least as big as the

⁶⁵ personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

person it is protecting. This means that unit sizes for shelter materials are large and this raises the transport costs. Transport costs have become one of the major issues with emergency shelter.

High unit costs can be taken advantage of in certain circumstances as Nixon point out: "... donors often have very fixed timelines and their budgets have to be spent by a certain date each year or the funding is lost. Reconstruction / shelter and similar construction activities are a very good way of very quickly and very visibly using up the available budgets.⁶⁸ The negative effect of this was also observed by Clarke⁶⁹, in Mozambique in 2000, where materials were bought to use up funds, but then left to waste because they were not needed.

Manfield states that "...donors for humanitarian aid are extremely cautious about involvement in shelter projects as the likely cost and length of involvement is so much greater than for other sectoral assistance programs⁷⁰," but this is only true for reconstruction programs. The initial capital involved is comparatively great but over the life of shelter materials their value is similar to, and essential to other types of relief. The more durable the initial resource given, the less the cost over time because it is the logistics of replenishing a resource that make it costly. However, the humanitarian relief system is not based on an investment mentality (as opposed to the humanitarian development). As affordability is directly linked to donations, the amount of capital is always going to be the most important factor rather than value for money. The argument that a refugee camp will cost less the longer it remains is contrary to the reason for its existence. Zetter describes this paradox: "The scale and speed of refugee movements and presumed temporary status of refugees contrasts with the relatively high costs and durable nature of shelter provision"⁷¹.

Different types of shelter also vary in terms of how effectively they fulfil the needs of the survivors. This is not the case for clean water or a measles vaccination. This makes it difficult to decide how many beneficiaries to provide for. With a vaccination there is a unit cost that can be divided into the level of funding. With shelter there are usually several options to complicate the calculation. Agencies are sometimes faced with the dilemma of whether to provide minimal shelter to many or good shelter to a few⁷².

⁶⁷ ibid.

⁶⁸ ibid.

⁶⁹ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

⁷⁰ Manfield, P: Emergency Shelter for Humanitarian Relief in Cold Climates: Policy and Praxis 2000, Unpublished

⁷¹ Zetter, R: 'Shelter Provision and Settlement Policies for Refugees' 1994

⁷² Browne, G: Lecturer in Construction Technology, Southampton University, RedR Trainer 16.11.2001

4.3 Characteristics of Shelter that Influence the Process

There are certain characteristics of emergency shelter that affect the way in which is supplied and constructed. Shelter in an emergency needs to fulfil the criteria:

Specific to protection from an immediate danger

- Quick to supply
- Low cost
- Buildable
- Adaptable
- Relief motivated but development driven

Shelter materials must take into account the dangers involved in the particular emergency. There are shelter materials that are reasonably universal such as plastic sheeting⁷³ which is waterproof, strong, flexible, looks temporary and is comparatively durable, but other materials must be appropriate to the situation in which they will be used. For example, Corrugated Galvanised Sheeting can be very versatile for roofing and is relatively cheap to produce and transport. However, it can be lethal in areas of high winds if dislodged as it can be thrown around at such a high velocity that it will kill people⁷⁴.

Materials or systems must be quick to supply because people are vulnerable in an emergency and need help fast. The longer beneficiaries stay without shelter, the more vulnerable they become to exposure, disease and emotional turmoil. The lead-time for supply becomes critical. The weight and unit size of a material also affects how quick it will be to supply. It is difficult to keep the unit size of shelter materials down and retain structural integrity so bulk is always a problem. The origin of a material will also determine how long it takes to reach the survivor.

In the early days of humanitarian relief, the capacity of large aircraft was used to fly in aid from outside the country in distress. While this makes dramatic newsworthy images, it also takes a long time, it is expensive (standard airfreight costs approximately US\$2/kg⁷⁵) and it uses vast amounts of polluting aircraft fuel. Now it has become more common to try to procure materials locally because this has many benefits of which short lead-time can be one. Another benefit of using local materials

⁷³ see Howard, J & Spice, R: Plastic Sheeting: Its use for emergency shelter and other purposes Oxfam 1989

⁷⁴ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 16.09.2001

⁷⁵ personal communication Ashmore, J: Shelter System Designer 08.01.2002

is the cost. Part of the cost of a material will be in the transport so the easier the material is to fetch, the cheaper it will be to obtain. However, if much of a material is bought locally over a period of time the price will rise, especially if bulk procurement starts to cause scarcity. The lower the unit costs of materials, the more beneficiaries there can be and the more lives are saved. Donors may want to use resources from particular sources and this can raise costs. For example, a government donor may want to use manufacturers in their own country to improve their own economy⁷⁶. Aiming to use local resources to improve the local economy and this will help the host population cope with the displaced population acting as a 'confidence building measure'⁷⁷.

One of the drawbacks of using local resources is the environmental impact⁷⁸. The influx of a displaced population creates a large rise in the person to resources ratio thus straining the host community. Use of local resources has a positive impact up to a point but overuse causes prices to soar and environmental devastation. This is another factor that should be taken into account as part of the planning process. Considering the minimisation of environmental impact should figure at the planning stage⁷⁹ because it is not only the construction of shelter but the way that it is used that has an effect. However, the devastation caused by the use of timber for shelter pales into insignificance when compared with that caused by the collection of firewood⁸⁰.

The construction of emergency shelter must be obvious to those who are to use it because there is no use supplying a something that fulfils the above criteria if it cannot be built quickly and easily. This is another argument for using local materials because these will be familiar to local craftsmen (although not always to the displaced population). The resources that a displaced population have are manpower and time so construction can be labour intensive as long as people understand the principles of the design. There can be as many skilled workers in a migrant community as any other community and these should be seen as a resource to be drawn upon for the benefit of that community. Solutions for this type of situation have been proposed in the past that totally disregard the resourcefulness of the beneficiaries themselves. This is direct result of considering shelter as a product to be provided and not a process that will involve people.

The involvement of the beneficiaries in the creation of their own shelter can also avoid the sense of paternalism and encourage essential feedback which can inform future demand based programs. It is important to realise that the shelter process carries on for the beneficiary after the aid agency

⁷⁶ First hand experience of the British Government Department DfID

⁷⁷ personal communication Obradovich, T: QIPs Coordinator, UNHCR Macedonia 06.12.2001

⁷⁸ Black, R : Refugees, Environment and Development, Longman 1998

⁷⁹ Corsellis, T: 'Temporary Settlements for forced Migrants' PhD 2001 Unpublished

leaves. This encourages people to realise that they can fend for themselves, which is vital for their well-being in a chaotic situation. In this way shelter relief can seed an attitude for development within the beneficiaries themselves. Involvement can also help to avoid dependency upon aid that can cripple communities. Clarke recalls that “In 2000 the flood survivors [in Mozambique] had begun replanting crops and building makeshift shelters three weeks after the flood and cyclone. In 2001 they were sitting around waiting for aid because they had grown dependent”⁸¹.

Nixon suggests that “If time and situations permit then the beneficiaries may have input. If beneficiaries can arrange shelter themselves then they tend to dictate what they want subject to availability and cost”⁸². However as Clarke points out, “All agencies ask communities what they need but it depends who they ask and how the reply fits into their program”⁸³. It also depends on the method used to put the question to them⁸⁴. Agencies sometimes offer materials plus a design of how to construct a shelter⁸⁵ in an STS or a new home that uses new technology to withstand an extreme natural phenomenon. This appears to be a more open-ended approach. It makes use of the survivor’s own resources and it allows them more of a sense of ownership over their shelter while saving money on manufacture. It can also guarantee a temporary appearance. However, building to a predetermined design does not allow any more freedom of expression or adaptability than provision of a shelter system. Perhaps the strongest motivation behind the design plus materials approach is actually cost based. A design provides an opportunity for easy auditing of materials and accountability for funds.

Shelter must be adaptable over a stretch of time, because circumstances have a habit of changing. Complex emergencies can occur when one crisis is overtaken by another, such as conflict as the result of the economic effects of a natural disaster. One natural disaster can follow an existing one such as in Mozambique in 2000 when the flooding was followed by a cyclone. Shelter response must also learn this habit of changing if it is to be of use to the survivor whose use is over time. Not only do flexibility and adaptability allow the user to make the most of their small amount of

⁸⁰ Willson, N: RedR Trainer 29.11.2001

⁸¹ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

⁸² personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

⁸³ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

⁸⁴ An extensive discussion on this issue can be found in Dudley, E: *The Critical Villager* London; New York: Routledge, 1993

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

and Piper, B : *Seven Years of Emergency Shelter: an evaluation and discussion of shelter development in Goldhap refugee camp*, 1998 Unpublished

resources but it also helps create a sense of ownership and identity. Freedom to decorate, extend or secure one's shelter is therefore an important consideration⁸⁶.

In order to achieve adaptability within the shelter process assessment of the situation needs to be continual. Planning for situation B happening during situation A is difficult, but preparations may be made for B while implementing A. Better still if preparation can be made for B with the funds being diverted back into A if B does not occur. The reliance upon donations creates a problem for this process because donors often like to know what their money will be used for. If assessment is continual and response contextual it is difficult to describe exactly how funds will be spent. Conversely, if donations are earmarked for a particular type of response, there is little flexibility to respond appropriately.

A further reason why emergency shelter should be adaptable is so that development can take place. Clarke states that "Relief should be driven by development principles"⁸⁷ because if it is not, survivors of disaster have no more chance of surviving the next crisis if they are put back in to the level of vulnerability they were initially in. This would appear to be a waste of resources. But the traditional separation of relief and development agencies can be seen in the UN system. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has always been a separate body but it has recently drawn up an understanding with UNHCR that they will work more closely together. The UNHCR exists for the benefit of refugees and therefore it cannot easily get involved in development work. Once refugees return to a situation where they could benefit from development they are unlikely to still be refugees.

Response and relief must be completed for sustainability and this concept expands beyond post-disaster actions (e.g. relief, response, and recovery) into using the entire disaster management cycle—including prevention, mitigation, and adaptation—for achieving sustainability. Nixon points out the problems involved in this type of response: "In practice some donors are moving straight to reconstruction but this can have its problems as it requires larger budgets and the speed necessary to provide shelter precludes a lot of emphasis on quality and permanence ... indeed that was one of the problems with the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) program in Kosovo and indeed our current program in Cambodia. Reconstruction can also be hampered by absence of tools and or skilled craftsmen, while shelter is much more basic can have lower budgets, is more rapidly

⁸⁶ Davis, I: Shelter after Disaster, Oxford Polytechnic Press 1978 and Piper, B: Seven Years of Emergency Shelter: an evaluation and discussion of shelter development in Goldhap refugee camp, Nepal 1998 Unpublished

⁸⁷ Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

mobilised and requires less skilled craftsmen, etc”.⁸⁸ Below is an example of how a relief program can fail to lift people out of vulnerability if funds for further relief or development are not found.

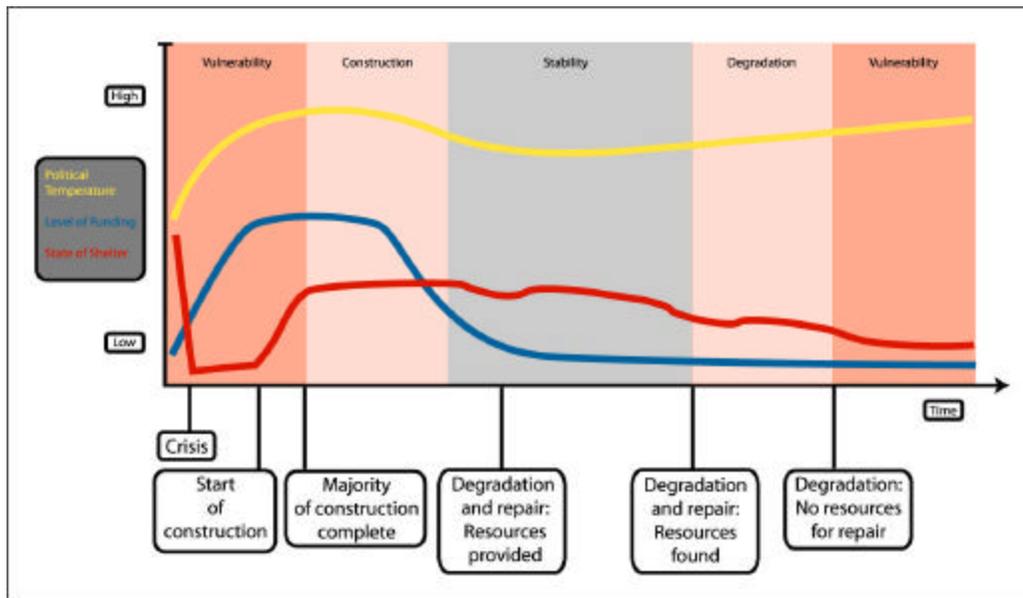


fig 9 The relationship between the factors involved in the life of a relief program using the example of a refugee camp⁸⁹

One problem with choosing and supplying resources that fulfil these characteristics is that those involved in the emergency shelter process have different priorities. Priorities depend on the power of the participant in relation to their position within the process. It can therefore be concluded that the hierarchy of characteristics is different for each participant fig 10.

⁸⁸ personal communication Nixon, C: Freelance, NZODA 07.11.2001

⁸⁹ authors' diagram

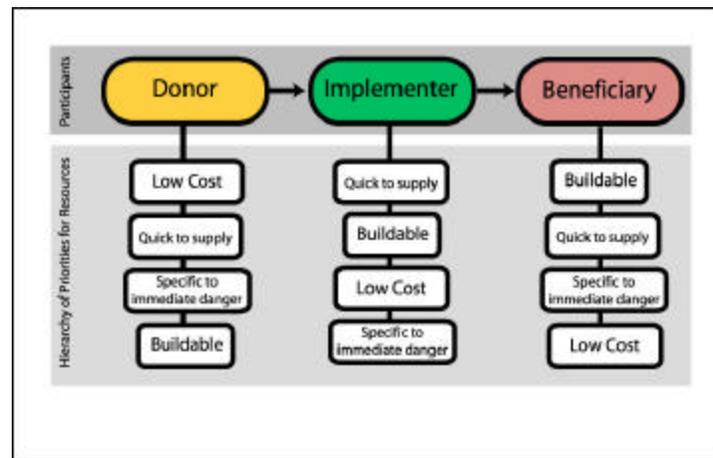


fig 10 The hierarchy of priorities for resources of the main players in the emergency shelter process⁹⁰

4.4 Characteristics of Shelter Systems

The criteria above apply especially to shelter systems which must be mentioned specifically as they are the most object-like response in emergencies. There are two main types of shelter system:

- In-situ construction
- Kit supplied

In situ systems are designs that can be constructed from materials procured locally. This has the advantage of keeping costs low because materials can be bought in bulk and also the advantages of local materials listed above. They are often large structures because it is more difficult to transport large kit systems. This type of shelter is used for feeding centres and health centres. Oxfam have developed domestic sized in-situ systems. Their first system was a ridge tent formed with plastic sheeting (almost always available in an emergency situation⁹¹) over a rope. This system is being redeveloped by Corsellis and Manfield⁹² into a poly-tunnel design made from plastic sheeting, rope, water pipe and reinforcement bar.

⁹⁰ authors' diagram

⁹¹ personal communication Clarke, J: IFRC, IRC, CARE, RedR Trainer 18.11.2001

⁹² Manfield, P: Emergency Shelter Systems for Hot Climate Refugee Emergencies 1998 Unpublished



fig 11 The New Oxfam Shelter

These materials can be recycled for use by the local or displaced population after the emergency period to sell or for use in reconstruction work. This design also has a much smaller footprint allowing use of the external space usually taken up by guy ropes for cooking and kitchen gardens. A kit version of this shelter is also used, made from the same materials.

Kit systems began with military tents made from canvas and supported by wooden or metal poles. These are still used today and can be produced relatively cheaply, for example ICRC/UNHCR “winterised” tents cost US\$220 for a 4 m × 4 m family tent. But they are also heavy (80-100 kg) and bulky to transport leading to a field cost of US\$500⁹³. They can take months to make in large quantities⁹⁴ and canvas tents cannot be easily stockpiled because they rot⁹⁵ and treatment to stop rot affects water-tightness⁹⁶. While they are reasonably durable they were never designed to perform for the length of time that some shelter programs demand. The average life span of a canvas tent is a year after which time it begins to rot and will tear easily⁹⁷. There have also been incidences of these catching fire⁹⁸ because they have been adapted to accommodate the flu of a stove or because of cigarettes and candles. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is currently considering a plastic sheeting version of a military style tent fig 12.

⁹³ personal communication Ashmore, J: Shelter System Designer 08.01.2001

⁹⁴ First hand experience and personal communication Ashmore, J: Shelter System Designer 01.11.2001

⁹⁵ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 1, 7 November 2001

⁹⁶ personal communication Manfield, P: CHAD DfID

⁹⁷ First hand tests

⁹⁸ personal communication Battilana, R: Engineer Researcher, Buro Happold 01.11.2001

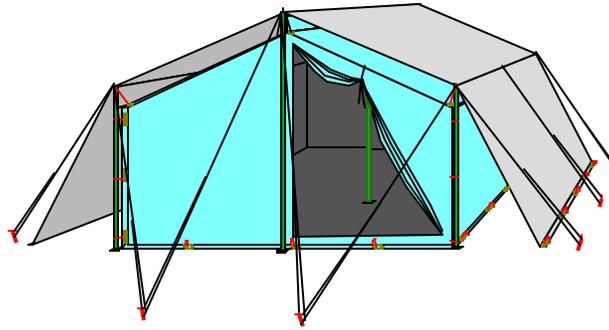


fig 12 Plastic double fly ridge tent⁹⁹

Not only will it have the advantage of durability as plastic sheeting only experiences UV degradation over a long period of time but it will cost and weigh half that of canvas tents. It may be able to be cut up when migrants vacate and used in reconstruction activities. However, it loses the versatility of a role of plastic sheeting and is unlikely to be fire resistant, possibly releasing fumes if it burns. Kit systems can be durable and quick to build, but they also tend to be expensive, bulky and unusable after the emergency period. They can also be culturally unacceptable because they are foreign in design or because they are seen as inadequate. Agencies procure kit systems mainly on the basis of cost and there is no independent body who has the authority to decide whether they are appropriate to house people for long periods of time in STSs or in cold climates.

This sub-set of the above criteria applies particularly to shelter systems:

- Durability
- Small and light unit size
- Temporary appearance
- Fire resistance
- Cultural Acceptance

4.5 Summary of Principles that Encourage an Appropriate Response

From the above characteristics it can be concluded that these characteristics must exist within the confines of certain principles that underpin the process of fulfilling shelter need. These encourage an appropriate and durable response. These can be summarised as¹⁰⁰:

- Continued assessment, evaluation and planning
- Involvement of beneficiaries¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Oger, P: Description of the 16m2 plastic double fly ridge tent 22.02.2001

¹⁰⁰ Adapted from Corsellis, T: RedR Training Material 2001

- Aim to use local resources
- Minimise environmental and social impact¹⁰²
- Development follows relief

Note that two of these principles are specified in the UNHCR Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership (FAOP) signed by NGOs who work with the UNHCR.

5. Case Studies

This section uses two case studies based on the work of the UNHCR, to explore the reality of the process versus object approach and to discover whether this process is driven by these ideal principles today. FYRoM and Afghanistan have been selected as a challenge to a sector with a history of practice in Africa. In FYRoM a small program in a relatively affluent, European setting was visited by the author. In contrast, a large complex emergency, involving extreme poverty in Afghanistan was monitored remotely. These studies illustrate the new problems the process faces.

5.1 UNHCR's Response to IDPs in FYRoM

In February 2001 sporadic exchanges of fire between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and the Macedonian security forces degenerated into a lengthier gun battle¹⁰³. Fighting in the northern villages near the border with Kosovo left homes in ruins so the people fled and became IDPs. Many stayed in Skopje with host families but their facilities were limited and, in some cases, also damaged. As the fighting lessened later that year, a Repair and Reconstruction Program began.

¹⁰¹ UNHCR: V/16 Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership, November 1999

¹⁰² UNHCR: V/15 Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership, November 1999

¹⁰³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk>



fig 13 The Balkans, Regional Map¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/map/yugoslavia/>

The UNHCR assisted the FYRoM government in devising a strategy¹⁰⁵ and an action plan¹⁰⁶ through the Macedonian Ministry for Transport and Communications. The UNHCR acted as the coordinating body for the Repair and Reconstruction Program while also carrying out its own work in parallel fig15. NGOs sought permission from the FYRoM Government to carry out work in the country and the UNHCR coordinated the NGOs who repaired the damaged villages.

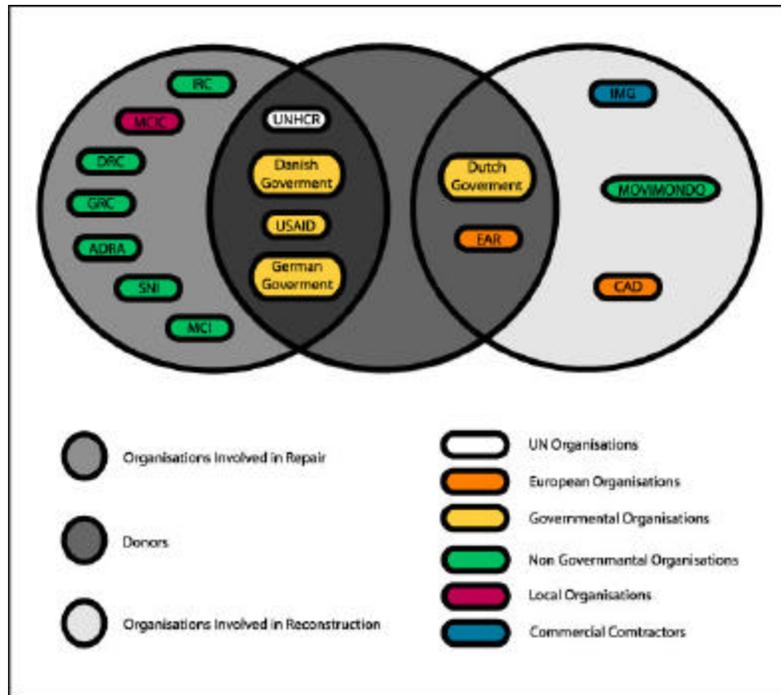


fig 15 Diagram showing the roles of various implementers in FYRoM¹⁰⁷

In August, Joint Village Assessment (JVC) teams were formed to assess the damage to people's homes. These teams consisted of 4 members: 2 from international NGOs, 1 from the FYRoM Governmental Institute for Earthquake Engineering and Seismology and 1 from local self-government. The NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC) also made technical assessments were of 40 buildings that were to become collective centres (mass shelters). No single solution could help on its own.

¹⁰⁵ Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Transport and Communication, Skopje: Strategy for the Repair and Reconstruction of Damaged Buildings and Roads in the Crisis Areas, 2001

¹⁰⁶ Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Transport and Communication, Skopje: Action Plan for the Repair and Reconstruction of Damaged Buildings and Roads in the Crisis Areas, 2001

¹⁰⁷ authors' diagram

By September, UNHCR were able to obtain an estimate of building damage from IRC. 10,000 houses had been assessed within the JVC and a projection was made from this data to a total of 35,000 houses in targeted villages. Resulting indications showed a range of 7000 - 15,000 damaged buildings¹⁰⁸. The European Commission (EC) contracted a commercial company, the International Management Group (IMG), to assess the damaged villages which had done the same in Kosovo and Bosnia.

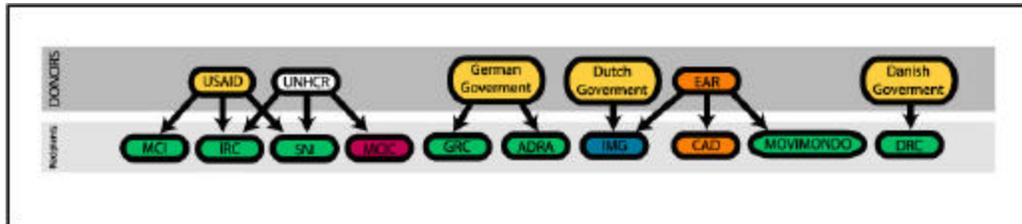


fig 16 Diagram showing the sources of funding for shelter relief in FYRoM¹⁰⁹

They classed each house with a system of Category 1 ^{fig17}– Category 4 ^{fig18} that describes how much repair is required¹¹⁰. Although they were not bound to an FAOP with the UNHCR which states that: ‘Partners will work together to determine the mechanisms required to enable agreement on specific guidelines and standards as required for a particular refugee operation’¹¹¹, UNHCR agreed with them a common categorisation method. This was influenced by complications in previous Balkan programs where three different methods had been used. IMG were commissioned by the EU to set up a website where this information could be accessed at the request of the UNHCR. Unfortunately by mid October IMG had not completed the damage assessments due to lack of access into some villages. The local NGO, MCIC also set up a website¹¹² to publicise the work being done. The information on the site covered much detail down to minutes of the shelter coordination meetings and was occasionally used as a resource for implementing partners to share information.

¹⁰⁸ Shelter Coordination Meeting Minutes: 11.09.01

¹⁰⁹ authors’ diagram

¹¹⁰ Damage Categorisation: Appendix II

¹¹¹ UNHCR: V/11 Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership, November 1999

¹¹² www.aidmacedonia.org



fig 17 A Category 1 building: a café in Orizari after work to the roof and walls and

fig 18 A Category 4 building: a hotel just outside Otlia awaiting reconstruction

By October the Committee for Reconstruction and Infrastructure of Macedonia (CRIM) was formed in order “to coordinate housing repair activities in ways of assuring the use of same standards and following of Macedonian law by all the actors”. Representatives of government, major donors, UNHCR and some NGOs sat on the CRIM. They reviewed weekly the work major donors, IMG and the IPs.

Damage Committees were formed by the heads of each village so that people could monitor the standard and scope of work locally. On principle, this appears to be an obvious course of action; however, the conflict situation meant that NLA members were sitting on these committees because they were the most powerful people in the villages. Once they realised that materials were available, these committees often became politically divisive in order to gain access to more materials.

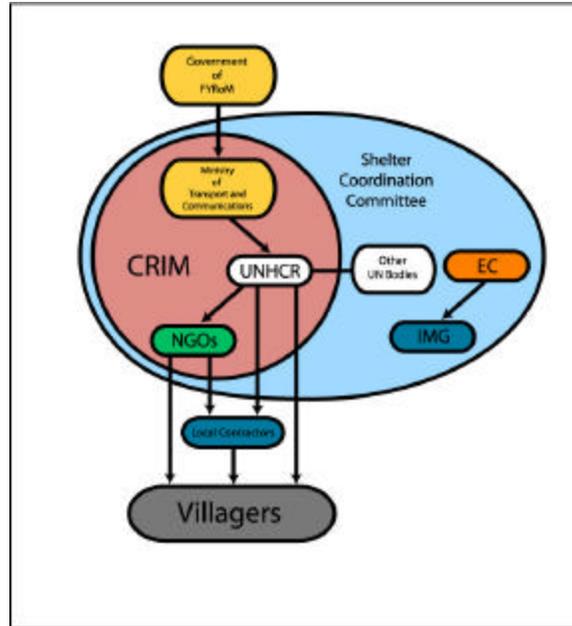


fig 19 Diagram showing the relationships within the emergency shelter process in Macedonia¹¹³

The damage estimate was used to bulk procure materials. The UNHCR were able to buy materials without paying VAT, which is usually a condition of UN involvement and represented a 20% discount in FYRoM. Bulk procurement gained a further 10-15% discount from commercial suppliers. For this reason a greater tolerance for estimation is built into the process. A list of 14 construction materials was drawn up by the UNHCR which were procured mainly from within FYRoM and Eastern Europe.

Material	Origin
Bricks	FYRoM
Cement	FYRoM
Doors	FYRoM
Glass	Russia
Roof Tiles (Continental and Mediterranean)	FYRoM
Timber	Bulgaria
Windows	FYRoM

Cement was needed from Cat 1, for patching bullet holes in external render, to rebuilding structural walls for Cat 4. Doors and windows could be manufactured locally. A house needing a new window or door is likely to be at least Cat 2 because damage to timber frames suggests further damage to the surrounding wall.

¹¹³ authors' diagram

Glass was delivered in large sheets. This was handled in two ways. UNHCR transported the sheets to the villages where a glass cutter would measure windows and fit the glass accordingly. MCIC measured the windows themselves and took these measurements to a glass cutter in Skopje who cut the glass to their sizes. The glass was then transported to the villages where it was fitted. This method avoided transporting the large sheets of glass along the winding roads.



fig 20 The steep track on the way to Selce in the hills

The difficulty of access to some villages in the hills should not be underestimated ^{fig20}. Roads into the hills are narrow and winding. UNHCR vehicles are supposed to stay on the tarmac because mines cannot be buried underneath it but this was difficult on narrow roads when there was a vehicle coming the other way. In the highest security zones (Phase 4), every truck had to go in convoy with two UNHCR vehicles and leave the zone by 4pm for security reasons, leaving less time for consultation with villagers.

UNHCR rented satellite warehouses on the outskirts of Skopje ^{fig21} and Kumanovo where materials were delivered and then trucked to the villages by the different agencies.



fig 21 A satellite warehouse on the outskirts of Skopje attached to a textile mill

At the height of activity 25 truckloads left for the villages each day. A template of the UNHCR logo was supplied to the warehouse staff so that materials could be identified with spray paint. However, “people do not want UNHCR written on their houses” ¹¹⁴ so the logo was only sprayed on the plastic packaging that could be discarded ^{fig22} and on packs of timber where the logo would be split apart when the lengths were separated ^{fig23}.



fig 22 & 23 The UNHCR logo sprayed on construction materials

As the winter approached, those who returned to their homes were given return kits containing household items such as jerry cans, buckets and string. Mattresses were also distributed because these may have been burned or got damp in the damaged houses ^{fig 24}.

¹¹⁴personal communication Dr Corsellis, UNHCR Shelter C oordinator 08-12.01



fig 24 Villagers unload a truck of return kits and mattresses at Selce

At the end of September, US\$300, 000 was secured for Quick Impact Projects (QIPS). These projects included repairs to schools, civic centres, ambulantas (small health centres), water and sanitation systems, collective centres (mass shelters) and garbage disposal. Afflicted communities were encouraged to propose projects that would have a local economic impact.

Oxfam GB was appointed by UNHCR in October as an umbrella organisation to act as a bank and to monitor the progress of repair and reconstruction. Oxfam GB also screened QIPs applications for practicality. A selection committee including Oxfam GB, Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (US) (BPRM), European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), UNHCR and DfID approved 18 QIPs by mid November. The average grant was US\$17,000. Of the 23 communities served by these projects, 8 communities were Albanian, 3 were Macedonian, 7 were mixed, 1 was Turkish and 1 was Roma representing 32,000 direct beneficiaries and 90,000 indirect beneficiaries. 23 communities were served by QIPS as some projects served several communities and some communities were served by several projects. NGOs and municipalities then tendered for the projects and were chosen on the basis of immediate delivery and allocated funds. 10 NGOs and 1 municipality undertook the 18 QIPs and on approval became known as Implementing Partners (IPs) of the UNHCR. Although not explicitly mentioned in the criteria for QIPs, religious buildings do not qualify even though they are at the heart of these communities fig 25 & 26. This is consistent with a

condition in the agreement that NGOs sign when they work with the UNHCR that states explicitly: “Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint”¹¹⁵. This sits uncomfortably with the condition in the same document, stating: “We shall respect culture and custom”¹¹⁶. UNHCR has to maintain its neutrality, but it is at the cost here of restoring a significant community resource. It is debatable whether UNHCR could have funded the repair of the mosques while local NGOs carried out the work.



fig 25 & 26 Mosques damaged in the conflict in Otlia and Matejce

The UNHCR Repair Program in FYRoM fulfilled the ideal principles in the following ways:

- Continued assessment, evaluation and planning.

The formation of various committees on different levels of the process, from the village Damage Committees to the CRIM allowed for continued assessment, evaluation and planning. However, this system only worked when a representative from each party involved attended the meetings and when that person truly expressed the concerns of the group they represented.

- Involvement of beneficiaries.

The self-help structure of the program ensured involvement of villagers, but it is unknown how the power structures within the villages influenced this process.

- Aim to use local resources.

This was possible for the majority of resources but the small size of the country made it difficult to find everything on a national scale.

- Minimise environmental and social impact.

There was some disapproval from ethnic Macedonians that UNHCR were helping the ethnic Albanians, but QIPs were well shared out across the board which helped to minimise a negative

¹¹⁵ UNHCR: II/6/c Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership November 1999

¹¹⁶ UNHCR: II/6/e Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership November 1999

social impact. The environmental impact did not seem to have been given enough consideration. There was a significant amount of building waste around the delivery points in the villages ^{fig27}. The bright blue plastic ties around the tile packs were the most obvious debris. There was no plan in place for the UNHCR to clear it away and local practice is to leave waste where falls. This relief program had no developmental obligation to raising the environmental condition above that which was found locally.



fig 27 A delivery point at Orizari

●Development follows relief

This program was rigidly a relief exercise and this helped to define the responsibility of UNHCR and her implementing partners.

The Strategy states that “the objective of the repair and reconstruction of the demolished and damaged buildings ... is to assist the affected population ... and restoring to their original condition all buildings ... damaged during the military actions”. Certain issues were created by the term ‘restoring to their original condition’. This term states very clearly that the program is relief and not development. Therefore funds could not be used to improve the situation of the villagers beyond that which they experienced before the conflict. However, even these funds had been hard to secure so finding enough to cover a very costly regeneration program would be even harder. Some houses appeared to be damaged but were in fact simply collapsing through age or bad construction ^{fig28}.



fig 28 An old house in Otlia.

The owners of these houses could not be given aid. Some tried to convince assessment teams that their houses had been damaged in the conflict so it was important that the assessment teams were trained to know how to recognise conflict damage. Another issue arose with houses undergoing construction. Villagers improve their houses slowly when they have enough funds to do a small amount of work. Some houses are visibly ‘unfinished’ but were also damaged [fig29](#), which left the UNHCR with the dilemma of how much repair to provide.



fig 29 An unfinished damaged building in Matejce

In comparison, QIPs are designed to increase community capacity and could act as catalysts for change. But since the communities have been returned to their pre-conflict situation, an expected Spring offensive could undo the work that has been done.

5.2 An Overview of Emergency Response in Afghanistan

In 2001 Afghans experienced “the double crisis of the worst drought and the most intense military action”¹¹⁷. A third year of drought coincided with bombing by the International Coalition against Terrorism, formed and led by the USA, in response to the events of September 11. Afghanistan is now country of origin for the largest refugee situation in the world¹¹⁸. In late September all expatriate staff of UN agencies, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and NGOs had left the country, leaving behind national staff to continue programs. Agencies regrouped in Pakistan, in Peshawar and Islamabad to concentrate on refugee assistance. The following months saw a race against time to administer aid as the harsh Afghan winter approached, bringing yet more obstacles to the shelter process. The period before December 15 became critical because after this date, some places were be cut off by snow and ice. Death from exposure became just as likely as through conflict or starvation. Simon Taylor, a senior program officer for Mercy Corps, commented that “aid agencies and the donor community are treating the shelter predicament as a priority, particularly given that winter is now upon us”¹¹⁹.

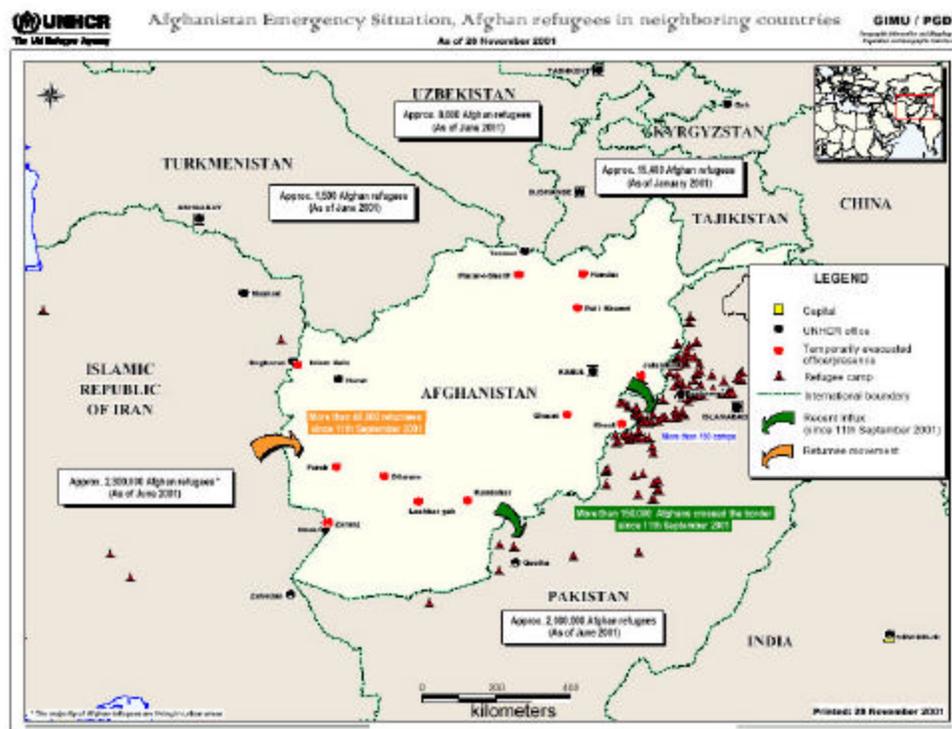


fig 30 Map showing the flow of refugees and UNHCR staff from Afghanistan¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ UNCA: 30 Day Emergency Operational Assistance Plan for Afghanistan, 15 November – 15 December 2001 (Hereafter Referred to as: UNCA: 30 Day Plan)

¹¹⁸ UNHCR: Operational Plan for 2002, Afghanistan

¹¹⁹ personal communication Taylor, S: Senior Program Officer, Global Emergency Operations, Mercy Corps 02.01.02

In order to deal with the rapid onset and unpredictability of the crisis, the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan (UNCA) drew up a 30 Day Emergency Operational Assistance Plan from which much of the information below is drawn. The UNHCR also had its Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) carry out a ‘Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency’, the bulletins of which have also been referred to in the text.

The Taliban demanded that the UN administer humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, but this proved an extremely difficult task. At first they agreed to protect the operations of the aid organisations but their relationship with the UN began to sour and on October 31st they seized a field office of the UNHCR at Spinboldak, about 15 miles inside Afghanistan. UNCA commented that with such a long history of war “Safeguarding humanitarian space, including the right of non-combatants to be treated as civilians and the right of civilians to receive life-saving support, has always been a difficult proposition in Afghanistan”¹²¹. The security situation had suddenly become very unpredictable and this had various detrimental effects upon the humanitarian situation. It escalated danger in some areas hindering access certain vulnerable groups. The UN air services to the region were suspended for a time, and major airports were some of the first targets to be bombed, hampering efforts to airlift aid. Afghanistan is one of the most mine and unexploded ordnance, (UXOs), affected country in the world,¹²² but new areas were contaminated from coalition UXOs and ammunition depots which, when hit, spread UXOs over as much as a five-kilometre radius. In November, UNCA stated that “The use of cluster bombs, landmines and destruction or theft of assets essential for survival are also taking a toll on civilians while simultaneously adding fresh obstacles to the work of humanitarian agencies”¹²³.

The UN operation in Afghanistan was perceived to be ‘coalition-aligned’ which meant that aid agencies could not enjoy a neutral image. This was not least because “UNHCR’s major donor, the United States, is a primary protagonist in the conflict...[and] the political and strategic interests of UNHCR’s major donors, ... are generally supportive of the US in its response the events of September 11”¹²⁴. The security of the western aid agencies was terribly compromised. This made hiring staff difficult because there was a reluctance to admit UN staff members of certain nationalities into the country. Many local staff had also fled. Four UN guards were killed by an

¹²⁰ www.unhcr.ch

¹²¹ UNCA: 30 Day Plan

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 1, 7 November 2001 (Hereafter Referred to as: Bulletin 1)

Many in the western and northern regions of the country had been dependant upon aid because of the drought when conflict cut them off from supplies.

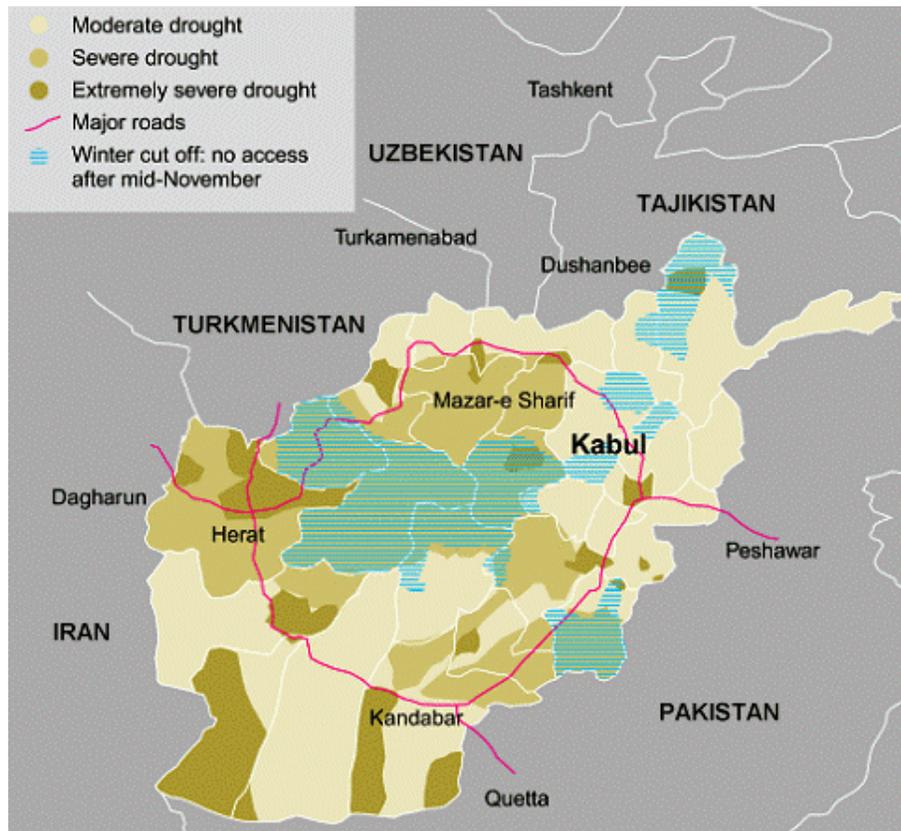


fig 32 Drought affected areas in Afghanistan and areas cut off for winter¹²⁹

Some had already moved into camps and their needs had been previously assessed because of the drought. UNHCR described these needs as: food, water, basic health, shelter and non-food items such as blankets, clothes, jerry cans and fuel for which UNHCR had maintained a regional stockpile for 425,000 persons. Positively, the new emergency allowed the existing drought crisis to be re-assessed. EPAU recognised that: “the current crisis in the region provides UNHCR and its donors with an important opportunity to assess the nutritional and other needs of the ‘old caseload’ refugees in Pakistan, and to reinforce the services that it provides to them and their local hosts”¹³⁰. This re-assessment also revealed that “the withdrawal of assistance and services in the mid-1990s had the effect of pushing many refugees into urban areas, a development which also led to growing Pakistani hostility to the Afghan presence”¹³¹.

¹²⁹ www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/where/asia/images/afghanmap.gif

¹³⁰ UNHCR EPAU: Real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 2, 6 December 2001 (Hereafter Referred to as: Bulletin 2)

The bombing caused new displacement of 40-70% of the urban population. Some of this displacement was to remote rural areas where people became more difficult to reach. Existing camps had to deal with the new influx, stretching scarce resources. The aid community expected a massive movement of populations towards Afghanistan's borders but migration turned out to be slower and in smaller numbers. This may have been a result all the borders being officially closed, but getting to the border is too expensive¹³² for most, many were too weak to travel long distances, and men were prevented from leaving the country¹³³. Agencies who had stockpiled supplies for the expected rush therefore had enough to cope with the new arrivals. This also allowed agencies time to plan ahead. There was time for non-food items to be brought in by sea rather than air, which proved far more economic and efficient. Pre-positioning of an estimated number of tents was carried out in logistics hubs established in Peshawar, Quetta, Mashad, Ashgabat, Termez and Dushanbe, in an attempt to be ready when more migrants arrived, but attempts to assess whether these numbers were sufficient were hampered by the security situation. Below is a table¹³⁴ showing how many shelter items were being distributed in Afghanistan in November 2001 indicating the enormity of the situation.

Region	Tents (1xshelters)	Shelter Kits
Central	1,000	
East-Central	7,200	
Western	9,000	11,600
North-Eastern	3,500	600
Northern	11,620	
Eastern	3,000	
Southern	5,000	
Totals	40,320	12,200

The UNHCR was faced with a complex categorisation of migrants who had different reasons for displacement, but sometimes the same needs. These groups were:

- Drought IDPs
- Drought Refugees
- Conflict IDPs
- Conflict Refugees
- 'Invisibles'

¹³¹ *ibid.* see also fig 9 (the life of an refugee camp)

¹³² UNCA: 30 Day Plan

¹³³ EPAU: Bulletin 1

¹³⁴ UNCA: 30 Day Plan

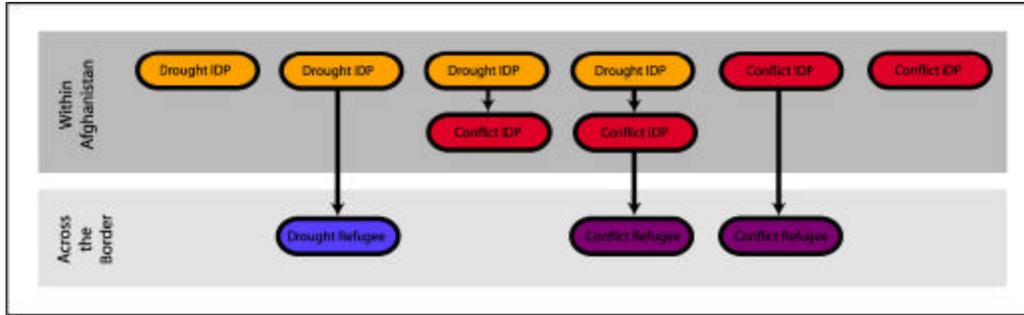


fig 33 The changing status of the Afghan migrant¹³⁵

Migrants from Afghanistan came in many guises as a result of the double crisis. Drought IDPs migrating in search of food could be found in camps or staying with host families. They sometimes found themselves trapped by the hostilities and unable to continue their journeys. Conflict IDPs in the north had made spontaneous settlements but were very difficult to reach in order to distribute resources to them. IDPs became “hidden” as they found accommodation with host families. In Faryab province at least half of the IDP population were estimated to be sheltered in this way. In November camps around Mazar-I-Sharif some IDP settlements began to decrease in size as families found alternative shelter for the winter. Some conflict IDPs were able to use the villages abandoned by Drought IDPs. In Rhogani, Howard describes the resourcefulness of the people: “Refugees are beginning to patch them up and cover them with tarpaulins for a roof. Also, as the newcomers are currently generally the better-off, they may have brought with them such things as doors, timber, beams and brushwood fig 34. Even so, shelter is a major problem”¹³⁶.



fig 34 Families carrying their own shelter materials¹³⁷

¹³⁵ authors' diagram

¹³⁶ www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/camp3.htm

Some Drought Refugees who had crossed the border into Pakistan and Iran could afford to stay in hotels, but prices escalated¹³⁸. Pakistan hosts the world's largest refugee population of up to 3.2 million Afghans, some of whom have been in the country since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 22 years previously, yet these continue to have the status of illegal immigrants¹³⁹. These faced a further influx of Conflict Refugees into their camps. This situation made monitoring and assessment very difficult because some of these new arrivals became hidden amongst the much larger population of 'old caseload' refugees. These became known as 'invisibles'. Unfortunately, the new arrivals also gave the Pakistani police an excuse to deport people. Howard, reported that they were "rounding up anyone without papers in Quetta and dumping them back across the border, including many of these long-established refugees"¹⁴⁰.

The siting of camps became a contested issue. UNHCR was criticised by some international NGOs for hesitating to become involved in the Afghan side of the frontier where they might have averted the need for people to enter Pakistan¹⁴¹. But the surrounding countries were opposed to new arrivals in areas with an existing refugee presence. One government minister commented that: "humanitarian assistance provided through neighbouring countries must not serve as a pull factor." EPAU expressed concern that "UNHCR's acknowledgement of the fact that Pakistan wishes to keep any new arrivals as close to the Afghan frontier as possible may undermine the organisation's efforts to promote the location of camps away from borders in other parts of the world."¹⁴² Here politics had a direct effect on an appropriate shelter response, and perhaps to the detriment of the refugees.

New arrivals living at the 80,000 strong Jalozai refugee camp ^{fig35}, near Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), were living in extremely harsh conditions, so UNHCR relocated these refugees to camps near the border such as Kotkai in the tribal agency of Bajur.

¹³⁷ www.intrescom.org/images/afg_fam_210.jpg

¹³⁸ www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=NEWS&id=3ba8ae037&ID=3ba8ae037&PUBLISHER=TWO

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/camp2.htm

¹⁴¹ EPAU: Bulletin 2

to the Afghanistan emergency, Bulletin No. 2, 6 December 2001 (Hereafter Referred to as: Bulletin 2)

¹⁴² EPAU: Bulletin 1



fig 35 Jalozai Camp where some people constructed shelters from found materials¹⁴³

Some International NGOs opposed the relocation of new arrivals to camps in the border areas, believing those locations were insecure. They felt that the establishment of expensive new camps less than 10 kilometres from the frontier could be a prelude to the deportation of the refugees¹⁴⁴. Another complex issue was the ethnic origin of some refugees. Those associated with the Northern Alliance could not be relocated to Pashtun tribal areas that were sympathetic to the Taliban. The UNHCR had to identify the origin of each refugee and then send them in buses to the relevant camp¹⁴⁵. Ghettoisation of different communities was a necessary measure in the short term in the light of the tense atmosphere, but in the long term segregation is unlikely to promote peace. The Pakistani authorities initially insisted that new camps would have to be fully fenced before any refugees were accommodated there. This requirement was later dropped but in Baluchistan, UNHCR staff agreed that fencing the new camps actually reinforced the security of refugees.



fig 36 Proposed site for camps at Tortangi, near Roghani¹⁴⁶

Local ethnic tensions also undermined the process of land acquisition. The site for two proposed refugee camps at Tortangi, near Roghani can be seen in fig 36: “a desolate plain with no water, only

¹⁴³ www.intrescom.org/images/jalozai.jpg

¹⁴⁴ EPAU: Bulletin 2

¹⁴⁵ Wright, R: Radio 4 News 04.02.02

2 kilometres from the border”¹⁴⁷. The UNHCR was already staking out the site when it was discovered that the land is subject to an on-going, 10-year dispute between local authorities and a local tribe. Work on the site had to stop while issue went through the courts. The land acquired was also difficult to construct shelters on. Afghanistan is mountainous and barren, the ground is hard and there are few wind breaks from trees.

The expectation from the aid community was that many people would return as the conflict lessened. UNCA stated that “As always, displacement and return patterns follow military developments on the ground”. However, many would not return until weather conditions permitted. This made any estimates of the level of resources needed and where they would be needed almost irrelevant. Conflict IDPs could entertain the possibility of returning to their homes if the security situation improved, but Drought IDPs had the same situation to face, albeit with more humanitarian support. Those who chose to return were given cash grants, food and household items so that they would not just be returning to an empty house, but many would face villages completely destroyed by the fighting¹⁴⁸. Some people had begun to return home without help during the bombing because they found difficult economic and social conditions in neighbouring countries, or they needed to find their families¹⁴⁹. It became increasingly urgent to distribute shelter items within Afghanistan but as NGOs returned to their offices, they found them looted with vehicles and computers stolen.

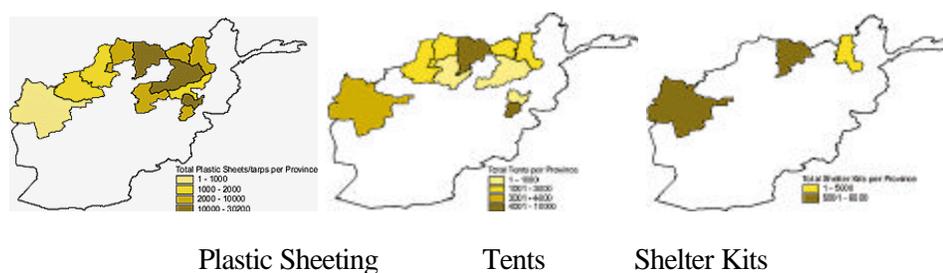


fig 37 Distribution of Shelter Materials inside Afghanistan¹⁵⁰

There was heavy use of tents in this crisis, as explained by Taylor: ‘the traditional dwelling being constructed of mud/straw brick with a timber and mud/straw roof, weather conditions are not conducive to rebuilding until the spring in many areas. Therefore assistance with temporary shelter (tents / host families) is being addressed with wide-spread reconstruction efforts expected to begin

¹⁴⁶ www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/images/camp1.jpg

¹⁴⁷ Howard, J: www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/camp1.htm

¹⁴⁸ personal communication Taylor, S: Senior Program Officer, Global Emergency Operations, Mercy Corps 02.01.02

¹⁴⁹ UNHCR: Operational Plan for 2002, Afghanistan

¹⁵⁰ www.hic.org.pk/activityDB/distribution.html

in the spring” However, some people had been able to adapt their shelters to make them more appropriate to the winter conditions” fig38.



fig 38 A man using a local building technique to construct a mud wall around his tent to protect it from the wind¹⁵¹

Tents also meant good visibility for the UNHCR and in contrast to the FYRoM repair program, having UNHCR written on a shelter could be a positive thing. It branded the settlements as temporary which could help to diffuse political tension if the tents were perceived to be transitory.



fig 39 Note UNHCR logo on the tents and also the slope of the land¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/images/tentmud.jpg>

¹⁵² www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/emerg/afghanistan/images/diglatrine.jpg

The UNHCR Emergency Response in Afghanistan fulfilled the ideal principles in the following ways:

- Continued assessment, evaluation and planning

The Real-time Assessments carried out by the EPAU could prove to be a useful way of learning quickly and applying these lessons within a situation because the circuit of assessment can be closed. However, it is likely that funding may only exist for this system in large-scale emergencies. The challenge is to promote this method as mainstream if it proves successful.

- Involvement of beneficiaries

Large numbers of weak and starving migrants may have hampered involvement of the migrants¹⁵³. This illustrates that large populations may not always provide a large source of manpower. However, migrants have been shown to be resourceful by themselves.

- Minimise social impact

The relationship of the UNHCR with host countries proved to be a strong factor. The movement of the Jalozai camp shows that political pressure from Pakistan, had to be followed over the wishes of the migrants. Separating the different ethnic groups was used as a short-term measure to lessen the social impact but this could have negative consequences if the camps continue to exist for any length of time.

- Aim to use local resources and minimise environmental impact

Years of drought coupled with the access problems meant that local resources were scarce. In this case their use might have led to further desertification with long-term consequences.

- Development follows relief

The conflict has heightened awareness of the other problems Afghanistan has, such as drought and an unsustainable agricultural system, resulting in more widespread understanding that development work needs to follow relief. Whether the high profile will continue to bring in funds to make this possible remains to be seen.

6. Summary of Lessons from the Case Studies

These studies highlight the practical obstacles to keeping ideal principles and the needs of survivors in focus. The success of the process will depend upon the extent to which these can be overcome. Specific lessons learned here include:

¹⁵³ UNHCR: V/16 Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership, November 1999

- Continued assessment, evaluation and planning can only occur if the capacity is available and the security situation permits.
- Involvement of survivors must take into account their own political stance which will affect what they want.
- The aim to use local resources can conflict with their availability. When local resources cannot be found and shelter systems are provided they must be able to be adapted to the climate.
- Minimisation of environmental impact must be written into the program from the start, or no funds will be available for a clear up operation.
- Development follows relief only when the reasons for it are clear, funds are available and it is planned from the start.
- On the ground a greater understanding of the process could make way for more respect for the predicament of host governments and communities. Understandings such as planning conditions for temporary emergency shelter with Host Government could lead to confidence boosting measures and a smooth seam with development programs.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has established that shelter is a fundamental human need, implied as a right in the laws and constitutions of countries and multilateral powers, but that its lack of status as a formal right has negative implications for those who would seek it in an emergency. Those who display this need in an emergency are vulnerable through exposure to the elemental forces of natural, cultural and personal phenomena. The range of crises which produce these needs is vast and the process must be tailored to the individual situation. The type of response and material objects which constitute shelter relief are as likely to be related to the climate and culture of the place where the crisis occurs as the nature of the crisis itself. For this reason the intentions behind the process are similar in all types of crisis but the obstacles encountered are likely to be different. The categorisation of those who seek shelter is imposed to aid those who would assist in clarifying their own responsibilities. While these labels can mean all or nothing to the survivor, they affect the process because they describe how that person may be treated. Categorisation by need might be more meaningful.

Settlement options presented as possible outcomes of the process illustrate further the political ground on which emergency shelter stands. The intent to provide a durable, sustainable solution can only be fulfilled if chosen option is appropriate. But questions of “: What it will look like?” and “How long will it will stay for?” are subject to the differing interests of all those involved. The diagram below simplifies these options to illustrate the decisions made in delivering them. But is

important to note that the answers to the questions asked in the diagram are with the survivors themselves fig40. If survivors can be seen as participants in the process rather than ‘beneficiaries’ the chance that they might be consulted rises. But a good response must ask the right questions, in the right way and of the right people.

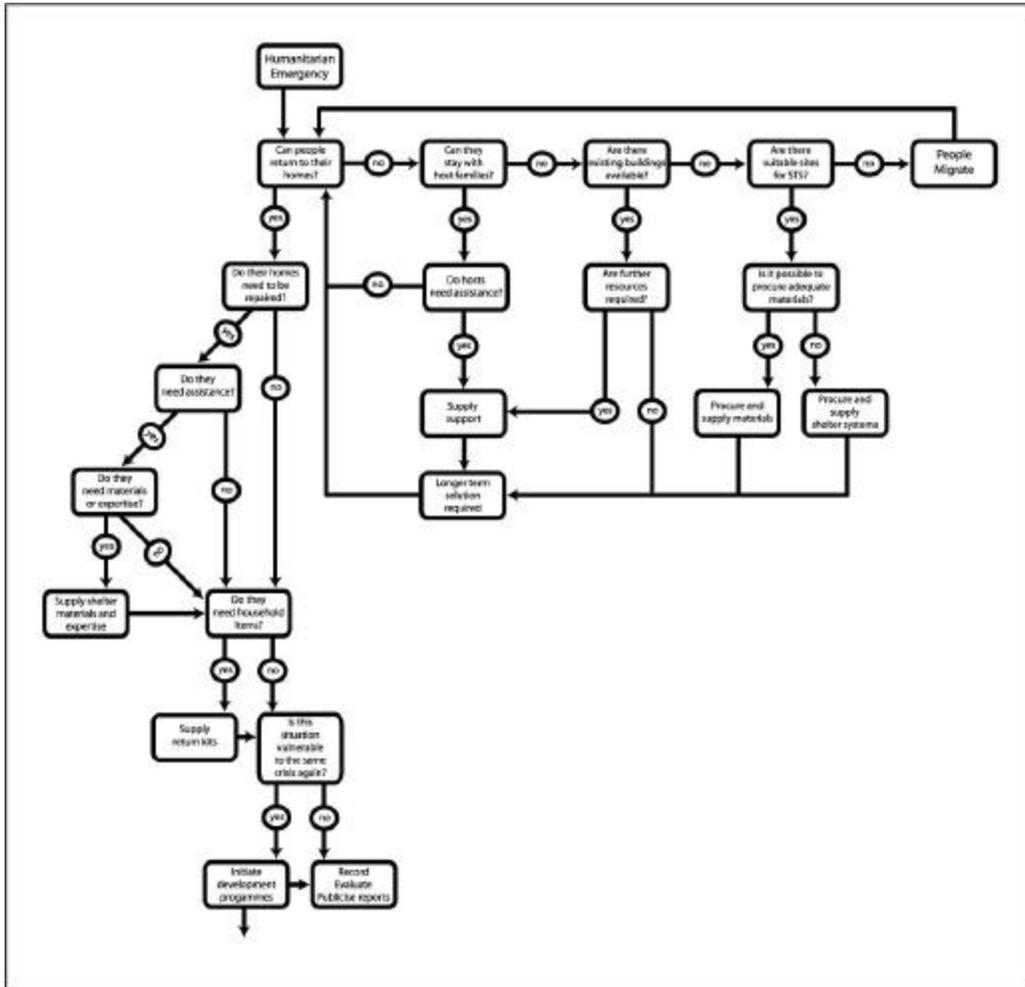


fig 40 Decision making process for selecting appropriate shelter response¹⁵⁴

This study has shown that those who implement the process specific to shelter are few and elusive. The creation of a shelter sector has been suggested to assist the development of a more mature institutional memory. However, a separate sector risks becoming isolated from those fields on which it has a fundamental effect, such as health and social services. For this reason a shelter sector must consider itself as one part within the processes of other sectors that protects their considerations with its own. For example, ‘shelter as a precaution within the process to prevent the

¹⁵⁴ authors’ diagram expanded from Corsellis, T: ‘RedR Training Material’ 2001 (fig40)

spread of disease’ or ‘shelter as a space within the process to empower the female head of the family’. This has the potential to act as a catalyst to establish demand led programs because the focus upon survivor need would be explored rather than assumed.

Perhaps with the professionalisation of the relief sector, it might become more widely accepted that there is an appropriate and an inappropriate way to operate and that you can be trained to do it in the appropriate way. But in order for lessons to be learnt and taught, the culture of self-evaluation needs to evolve into something more autonomous. Although different types of evaluation are being tested, notably UNHCR’s real – time evaluations, only an independent body can maintain an unbiased overview of the whole process. Acceptance of the fact that to provide shelter is to be part of a process would particularly aid evaluation as the question would evolve from: “How many X were achieved?” to: “What was the impact of X upon Y?”

If the results of evaluation and research could be fed into the sector on a more formal basis to more permanent staff, this would facilitate the establishment of communication between theory and practice. Those above field level must understand the implications of this system in order to appropriately make policy or donate funds. Then if research covered prevention as well as cure, the sector could start to gain a momentum for sustainable practice. At the design stage the process is hungry for input and dialogue. A coherent system of research can raise awareness across the process of best practice and new ideas. A well-structured research arm could help the sector develop a better institutional memory and a forum where evaluations could be discussed openly. But in order for this to happen donors and implementers must recognise the value of channelling some essential funds for relief into research instead. The diagram below shows how that funding could be used to develop the process fig41.

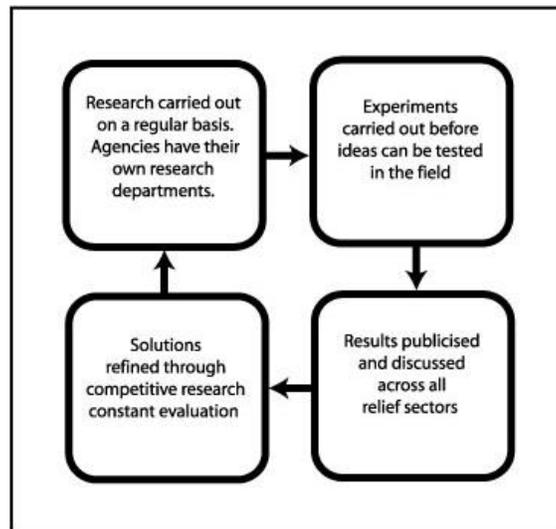


fig 41 An example of how an effectively structured research arm can feed the process¹⁵⁵

If a shelter sector is going to emerge it must be more aware of the issues it is taking on and how current practice is evolving. Once this is understood, it will be in a position to describe to the humanitarian sector what specific and relevant skills are needed. Consideration of the emergency shelter as a process rather than an object will focus these skills more appropriately upon the real needs of disaster survivors and how they might be fulfilled.

Acknowledgements:

- Dr. Tom Corsellis and the shelterproject.org team for inspiration, advice, and support.
- Relief and development workers for their courage and dedication.

¹⁵⁵ authors' diagram

Appendices

Appendix I: Extracts from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Article 3

‘Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.’

Article 12

‘No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.’

Article 17

‘Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others’.
‘No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property’.

Article 25

‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control’.

Appendix II: Damage Assessment Categorisation

From the Social Assessment Form Written by IRC, FYRoM.

CATEGORY U	CATEGORY 0	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfinished house • Complete tiled roof • Open brick, no/few windows or doors (shell) • Unfinished floors 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undamaged 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undamaged or minor damage • Bullet impacts, broken hinges and locks in doors and windows, roof tiles <p><i>No need for assistance</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 30% roof damage • Light shelling • Partial fire damage <p><i>Can be repaired</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 30% roof damage • Severe fire damage • Need for replacement of floors • Doors and windows destroyed <p><i>Can be repaired</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destroyed • Needs complete reconstruction <p><i>Cannot be repaired</i></p>

Appendix III: Glossary

- Asylum Seeker:** A person applying for refugee status.
- BPRM:** Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (US)
- CC:** Collective Centres (UNHCR)
- CRIM:** Committee for Reconstruction and Infrastructure of Macedonia
- DfID:** Department for International Development (British)
- Durable Solution:** One that can be sustained over an indeterminate length of time with the minimum outside help and the maximum comfort for the beneficiaries.
- EAR:** European Agency for Reconstruction
- ECHO:** European Community Humanitarian Office
- EDP:** Externally Displaced Person
- Emergency Shelter:** Shelter constructed as the first step to shielding victims of disaster from the elements in an emergency.
- Emergency Shelter Process:** The method by which fundamental need for shelter is fulfilled
- EPAU:** UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Assessment Unit
- EU:** European Union
- FAOP:** UNHCR Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership
- FYRoM:** Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- IDP:** Internally Displaced Person
- IEES:** Institute for Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (FYRoM government)
- IMG:** International Management Group
- IP:** Implementing Partners / Umbrella Agencies (UNHCR)
- IRC:** International Rescue Committee (US, Britain, etc) (NGO)
- Humanitarian space:** Area in which humanitarian operations can safely take place.
- Lead time:** The time taken from order to delivery of resources.
- MCI:** Mercy Corps International (NGO)
- MCIC:** Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (local FYRoM NGO)
- MSF:** Médecins Sans Frontières (NGO)
- NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation
- NLA:** National Liberation Army (Ethnic Albanian)
- NRC:** Norwegian Refugee Council
- OCHA:** United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OSCE:** Organisation for Security Coordination in Europe
- QIP:** Quick Impact Project (UNHCR)

RedR: Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief, an organisation that supplies skilled personnel to aid agencies (NGO).

Refugee: Persons who owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, are outside the county of their nationality and are unwilling to return to it.

SNI: Shelter Now International (USA and Germany) (NGO)

Shelter Program: A particular project implemented by an agency or donor to provide shelter relief.

Shelter Relief: The products and logistics necessary to provide emergency shelter for the emergency period only.

Shelter System: A kit of parts that form a whole shelter such as a tent.

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNOCHA: United Nations Organisation Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs

UNHCR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UXO: Unexploded Ordinance

WatSan: Water and Sanitation

WFP: World Food Program