SHELTER PROJECTS
essentials
Learning from programming in humanitarian crises

Global Shelter Cluster
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

Shelter Projects Essentials

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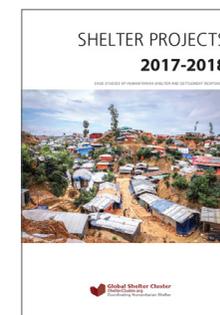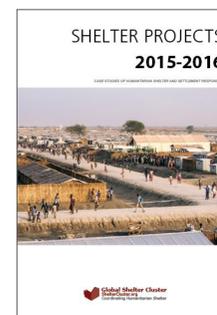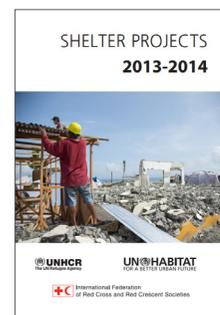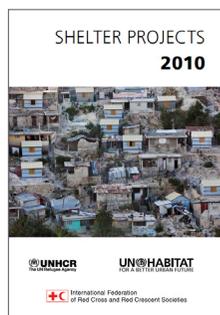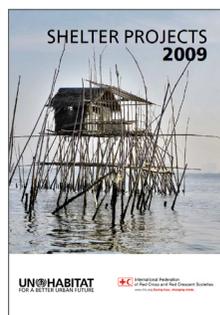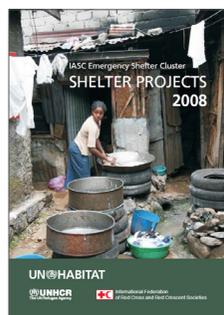
Foreword

With this publication we hope to provide insights drawn from hundreds of projects that have provided shelter and settlements assistance to people affected by crises. This publication builds upon more than 250 case studies that have been compiled over the past 13 years in the regular Shelter Projects publications.

Shelter Projects is a Global Shelter Cluster initiative with the primary goal of documenting and sharing lessons from past responses in order to improve current and future practice. These case studies are based on the hard work of thousands of people, primarily those affected by crises, but also those working for governments and supporting organizations. They include projects implemented by over 60 humanitarian organizations and governments, across 71 different countries. This initiative represents the largest consolidated body of evidence demonstrating what works and what does not work in shelter and settlements assistance.

Looking back across these 250 case studies, there are multiple points of learning and of good practice that arise time and time again. In this publication, these points have been distilled into a series of essential messages that highlight crucial issues to be addressed in all shelter and settlements programming. Extracts from a wide range of Shelter Projects case studies illustrate examples of how these messages have been applied in a variety of crises and contexts.

In compiling this publication, we are keenly aware that affected people are the primary responders after crises and the primary actors in any subsequent recovery. The people in these projects are seldom passive recipients of aid, but active participants.

All Shelter Projects case studies are available free of charge and are available to download at www.shelterprojects.org. Click on the booklets below to learn more!

Why is shelter and settlements assistance important?

Shelter and settlements assistance is the foundation of humanitarian response, crucial for rebuilding communities and family life. When people are forced to flee from their homes, shelter is required at every stage: at the onset of the crisis; while they are displaced; and as they recover and re-establish a sense of home and community. Shelter can be both lifesaving and life-enabling.

The primary objectives of shelter and settlements assistance are to safeguard the health, security, privacy and dignity of families and communities affected by crises. Beyond lifesaving, shelter and settlements assistance is fundamental in rebuilding the psychological, social, livelihood and physical components of life – in short, all the aspects necessary for people to move on from survival to being able to effectively exercise their rights and fulfill their potential.

Shelter provides:[1]

i. **a physical dwelling** that protects the health, security, privacy and dignity of families and is designed to bring communities together. It provides protection against threats – including those associated with gender-based violence (GBV), theft, climate and disease.

ii. **a stable location**, and an 'address' where other services can be accessed including healthcare, education, nutrition and safe and dignified water and sanitation facilities. Essential to this stability is a strong sense of secure tenure – that the occupant's rights to live in a place will not be infringed, encroached, nor arbitrarily extinguished by another actor. In some cases, a dwelling can be a valuable asset that can be the beginning of a bigger investment. It provides a place to re-start livelihoods and economic recovery.

iii. **a sense of identity**, a place to gather belongings, family and community, a neighborhood to belong to, a place in which one can consider the past and rebuild a sense of future.[2]

The phrase "shelter and settlements" is used because it is not possible to talk about individual dwellings without consideration of the place and context in which they are located (see Message G.).

Shelter provides...
- protection from the weather
- health: I am less likely to get ill because I have a shelter.
- support for family and community life: We can live together as a family.
- dignity: I can change clothes because I can close the door
- livelihoods: My shelter is near my work...
- security: I feel safer because I have a door.

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1 For further research on the importance of shelter and settlements assistance see this report by InterAction: The Wider Impacts of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Assistance (2019): https://www.interaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1.-Wider-Impacts-of-Shelter-Key-Findings_Final1.pdf
2 Global Shelter Cluster Strategy 2018-2022 p7. https://www.sheltercluster.org/strategy-2018-2022/documents/gsc-strategy-2018-2022
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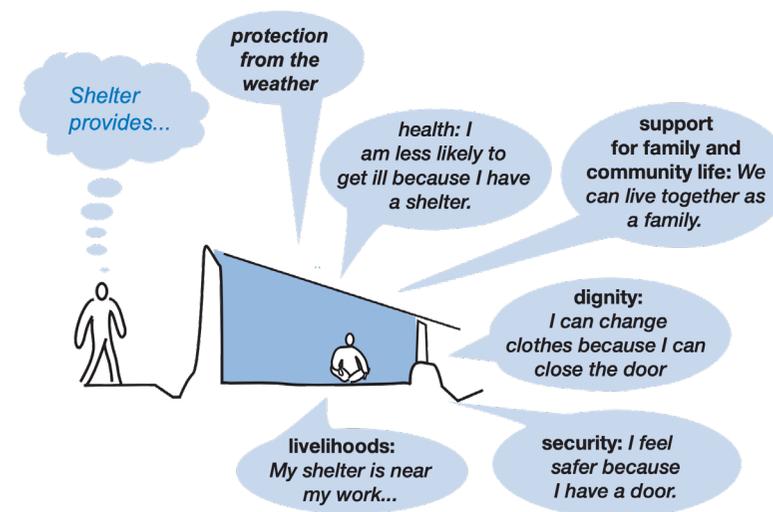
The scale of shelter and settlements assistance

By the end of 2019, 177 million[3] people were **forcibly displaced**[4] by conflict or persecution or had been affected by **disasters.**[5] Of these people, it was estimated that **37.8 million people had new needs for shelter**. This is equivalent to a family losing their home every 5 seconds throughout the year. 2019 was not an exceptional year.

In the same year, **Shelter Cluster partners delivered some form of assistance to 14.2 million people** globally.[6] 80% of these people initially received this assistance in the form of Non-Food Item (NFI) distributions.[7] This assistance was delivered with 403.4 million USD.[8]

The funding received amounts to just 28 USD per person to meet all shelter needs. Not all crises are funded equally, so many crises remain significantly underfunded in comparison to others. This is particularly the case for protracted crises and crises that receive less global attention. In 2019 the Shelter Cluster was only able to reach 57% of the people that it intended to. Lack of resources compared to the level of needs is a clear constraint in most, if not all, shelter programming.

Although every year humanitarian organizations support over 10 million people with shelter and settlements assistance, tens of millions more people remain unassisted by humanitarian organizations. For the majority of people who do receive assistance, the assistance received is not comprehensive. Many people in need of assistance will receive support from others, including community and civil society groups, through government support, and remittances from diaspora. However, many people affected by crises will simply not receive the level of assistance required to effectively meet their basic needs and support their recovery.

These figures demonstrate the need for more adequate funding of shelter and settlements assistance. They also highlight the importance of effective coordination and good programming.

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3 Breakdown of figures: 97.6 million people were affected globally by disasters in 2019. 79.5 million people worldwide who had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.
4 Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019, UNHCR https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html
5 World Disasters Report 2020, IFRC https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20201116_WorldDisasters_Full.pdf
6 Note: Shelter Cluster data excludes information on assistance delivered for refugees.
7 Global Shelter Cluster: https://www.sheltercluster.org/operations
8 Ibid

© Muse Mohammed

Levels of shelter assistance vary by country.

Recurring messages from Shelter Projects

There are multiple overlaps between each of these messages. This is because all these messages are inter-connected and reinforce one another.

Context is everything

Shelter and settlements assistance is part of a process. It has long-term impacts

People are active participants in their own response and recovery

Shelter and settlements assistance must be inclusive

There is a balance between scale, coverage, quality and impact

Security of tenure underpins all shelter response

Shelter and settlements go hand in hand

Shelter and settlements assistance must link to other sectors and priorities

Local environmental damage is long-lasting

Locally appropriate technical solutions work best

Good projects reduce the impacts of future shocks

Effective projects are coordinated and planned

A. CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

Shelter and settlements assistance must take a wide range of different forms. This is required to ensure that assistance is appropriate and impactful, depending on specific conditions and contextual factors. Of all the Shelter Projects case studies, no two are the same. There is no standard template for a shelter and settlements response that will work in all contexts. Even projects in the same response usually differ.

The 250 case studies illustrate that shelter and settlements assistance can take many forms and include multiple components. These include, but are not limited to:

- distribution of cash, vouchers or materials for shelter construction, repair or rehabilitation;
- training and awareness raising on hazards and improved construction methods;
- rental assistance;
- advocacy and wider support relating to improving the security of housing and land tenure;
- market-based interventions to improve access to quality construction materials;
- facilitation of participatory planning processes at the community-level;
- community infrastructure rehabilitation or construction.

The case studies provide practical examples of how shelter and settlements assistance must be grounded in the context of the people and the place. A wide range of contextual factors must be considered. These include the resources, needs, capacities, vulnerabilities, intentions, priorities and barriers faced by crisis-affected people.

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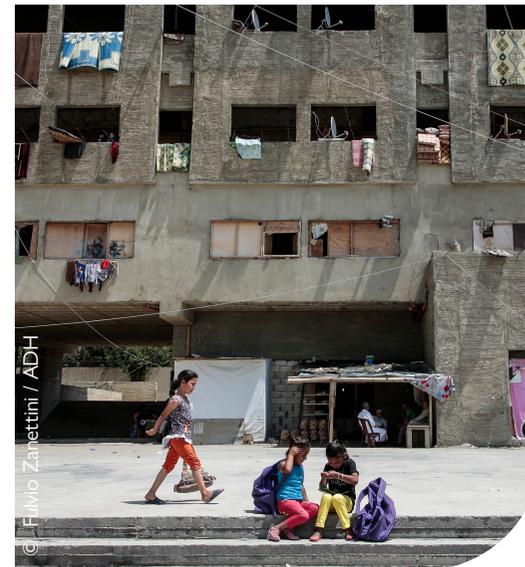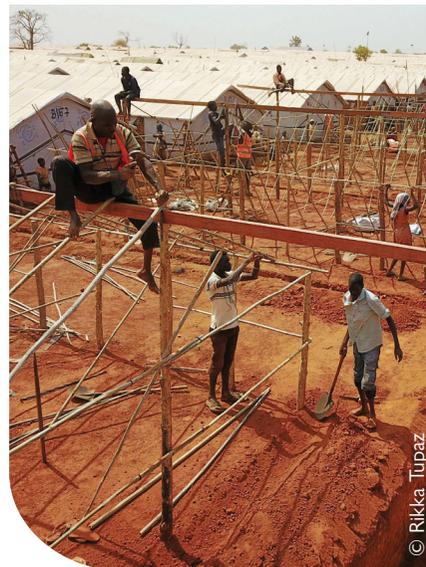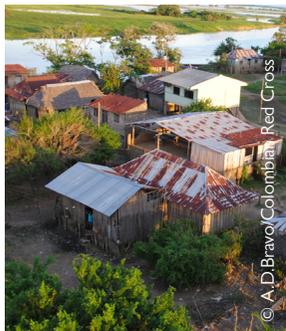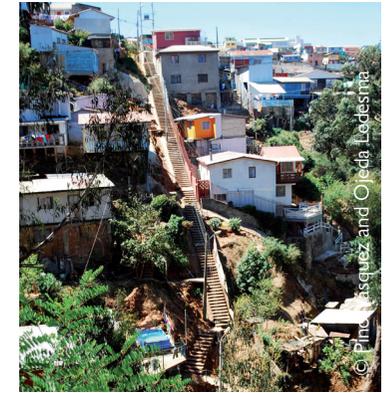
B. SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS ASSISTANCE IS PART OF A PROCESS. IT HAS LONG-TERM IMPACTS

Shelter and settlements assistance is part of a process and crisis-affected people are active participants in that process. How and where assistance is provided in an emergency can have long-term impacts on people's ability to improve their situation and eventually recover.

People will start to improve and upgrade their living conditions as soon as they can get access to land, materials and other resources, especially in post-disaster contexts where often 'recovery begins on day 1' — immediately after the disaster. Many case studies illustrate how shelter and settlements assistance can remove barriers and support incremental recovery.

In contexts of conflict and prolonged displacement, crisis-affected households are often in a state of flux for many years. Multiple case studies show how shelter and settlements programs can be designed to support people during their displacement. They also show how to support an end to their displacement, for example by helping people return to their original homes and communities and rebuild their lives. This is especially the case when people can gain secure access to land.

How assistance is provided also has lasting impacts on host communities. Many case studies illustrate how projects can be designed to reduce social tensions and mutually benefit host communities.

© Marta Leboreiro

Camp closure and support to returnees in Burundi

In Burundi, four emergency camps were set up to assist people displaced by flooding and landslides in 2015. Two years later thousands of people were still living in the camps. Living conditions had rapidly deteriorated and many inhabitants wanted to leave and requested assistance for a more durable shelter solution. This project decommissioned the camps and offered shelter support, transportation and reintegration assistance to the camps' inhabitants, resettling more than 5,000 people. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A1) p2.

Increasing access to affordable rental housing in Jordan

There was a shortage of affordable housing in Jordan prior to the Syria crisis, which began in 2011. It was then reported that the housing needs of Syrian refugees exacerbated this shortage, raising rental prices, increasing social tensions, and straining urban infrastructure. Many refugees were living in abandoned or partially constructed buildings, or in flats that were overcrowded and poorly maintained. This project identified unfinished housing units and signed contracts with building owners, who received grants for repair and rehabilitation to an agreed standard. In so doing, they agreed to the condition that a refugee household would be granted a rent-free lease for a specified period of time. Rather than simply paying out cash for housing, which would have inflated rents, the project helped house refugees and increased the available stock of affordable housing in the country. This contributed to a more sustainable solution. For more information see Shelter Projects 2013-14 (A11) p38.

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Core shelters in Sri Lanka

This project, supporting families returning to their villages after being displaced by conflict, took an incremental approach to reconstruction. The project worked with households to construct "core shelters". These were small but durable homes that cost a similar amount to build as less durable 'semi-permanent' shelters. Core shelters were designed to be easily expanded and adapted to reflect changing household needs. Most families did indeed start upgrading as soon as their core shelters were ready to move into. For more information see Shelter Projects 2009 (A18) p36.

C. PEOPLE ARE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THEIR OWN RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

When a crisis strikes, the first responders and the principal providers of shelter come from within the affected communities. Effective shelter and settlements assistance reinforces local community structures without duplicating any actions that are best undertaken by crisis- affected people themselves.

From reading the "strengths and weaknesses" of case studies, it becomes immediately clear that in order to best support people, shelter and settlements assistance needs to be "people-centered". This means that successful projects meaningfully engage with crises-affected people to better understand their intentions, resources, needs, capacities, vulnerabilities and priorities. They also plan with crisis-affected people what shelter and settlements assistance should look like. Many case studies show how shelter and settlements assistance can take an enabling approach to identify what support is needed and how assistance can remove barriers to achieving durable solutions.

A "People's Process" in Myanmar

This project aimed to improve security, shelter, livelihoods and disaster resilience in a part of rural Myanmar hit by Cyclone Nargis in 2008. People took part in a "People's Process" where they organized themselves to identify and prioritize their recovery needs. They formed 32 Village Reconstruction Committees which took ownership of decision-making and of all activities performed at the local level. Women comprised 46 percent of committee members and 42 percent of management positions. For more information see Shelter Projects 2010 (A19) p61.

©UN Habitat, Veronica Wijaya

Ensuring culturally appropriate shelter assistance in Burkina Faso

In this project, nomadic Tuareg refugees displaced from Mali to Burkina Faso took a lead role in shaping what appropriate shelter assistance would look like for them. Traditional Tuareg tent shelters are made from wooden supports covered with tanned animal skin roofs and are designed to be easily dismantled. Participation in the selection of the type of shelter assistance to be provided was particularly important since the refugees had already rejected other solutions proposed by other organizations. A sample shelter was built following discussions with community groups about the design. The project worked within the cultural norms of the Tuareg population where women are the main constructors of tents, and families moved their shelters according to nomadic traditions to increase spacing between shelters and tribal groups. For more information see Shelter Projects 2011-12 (A2) p6.

© Christian Jepsen

Community planning in Haiti

Based in a densely populated informal neighborhood of Port-au-Prince that was hit by the 2010 Haiti earthquake, this project used the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA). The PASSA process aims to raise local awareness of shelter-related risks and to develop community skills in analysis, learning and decision-making. Community members collectively decided on a reconstruction plan and a list of activities such as building a canal to improve drainage and installing solar street lighting. Identifying problems and their solutions enabled the community to make plans for their own long-term recovery. For more information see Shelter Projects 2011-12 (A13) p40.

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D. SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS ASSISTANCE MUST BE INCLUSIVE

People affected by crises are not a homogeneous group. They have differing needs and priorities and varying levels of resources, influence and power. Crises can exacerbate inequality and marginalization. People's ability to access appropriate assistance may be affected by their gender, age, marital status, health, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and whether they have a disability.

Different groups within the affected population have different needs, use services and utilities in different ways, and face different risks. Projects that neglect these differences may exclude the most vulnerable people in society, or put them at further risk of being exposed to harm.

Many case studies highlight the need to understand the social structures in each context. If all segments of the population, especially the most marginalized groups are not consulted, do not receive adequate information, or are not represented in humanitarian programming and decision-making, they risk being (1) less likely to be able to access life-saving services and (2) more likely to experience unintended negative consequences as a result of humanitarian activities.

Disability inclusion in Haiti

This project focused on providing appropriate shelter assistance to people with disabilities who had been displaced following the 2010 earthquake. Each constructed shelter and its sanitation facility were individually adapted to the beneficiary's specific needs. The project was accompanied by a rehabilitation program for people with disabilities, to increase their mobility and make it easier for them to use and access their shelter and latrine. At the end of the project the pilot shelter became a treatment center for disabled people. For more information see Shelter Projects 2010 (A10) p32.

© David Sacca

Women's empowerment in driving reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka

After Sri Lanka's civil conflict, many displaced households were headed by women because so many men had been killed or had left due to the breakdown of family cohesion. This project aimed to involve and empower women in the reconstruction process. Approximately 250 community-based reconstruction committees were formed, with at least 40 percent female membership. The committees were trained on bulk procurement of building materials, basic bookkeeping, mine risk education and participatory settlement improvement planning. Committees were also empowered to voice the collective needs of communities with relevant government departments. For example, they helped many families to gradually regain their lands from military occupation. Many women were trained in skills such as masonry and carpentry, enabling them to do building work and to supervise construction workers. Training was also provided on negotiation skills, to prevent extortion or exploitation by suppliers. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A23) p112.

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Customized housing rehabilitation in the Syrian Arab Republic

This project focused on rehabilitating housing to accommodate people displaced by ongoing conflict. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach to rehabilitation, the specific priorities and needs of each household were considered. This included requirements relating to age, gender and disability. This was achieved through: vulnerability-based targeting, community consultation, tailored interventions based on beneficiaries' inputs, mixed-gender teams with technical and social skillsets, and mechanisms for regular monitoring and feedback. Additional items such as disabled-friendly toilets, ramps and handles were included in the assistance package, to help address specific mobility issues. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A29) p145.


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E. THERE IS A BALANCE BETWEEN SCALE, COVERAGE, QUALITY AND IMPACT

Effective shelter and settlements strategies are based on an analysis of the overall scale and nature of needs and support required. Resources in humanitarian responses are usually limited, so shelter and settlements assistance must be applied strategically and fairly. It must consider the impacts on both those who will receive assistance and those who will not receive assistance.

The diversity of case studies illustrates how project design should take into account how to maximize the capacities and strengths of both affected people and humanitarian actors. Case studies also demonstrate how strategic interventions – such as infrastructure improvements and targeted technical support – can maximize impacts. Where small scale projects are undertaken, whilst they do benefit a few households, their impact is increased when significant effort goes into ensuring scalability. The biggest, fairest and most consistent impact is achieved when there is coordination and partnership involving local and national government, humanitarian and development organizations and civil society groups.

Structural damage assessments in Gaza

After the conflict of late 2008/early 2009, the Palestinian National Authority initiated a housing rehabilitation and reconstruction program. This program enabled families to apply to banks to receive a grant that could be dedicated to rebuilding homes, or to constructing new residences on legally owned land. The organization involved in this project reviewed approximately 29,000 grant applications and carried out structural damage assessments on 12,000 homes. Repair costs for each home were calculated through an agreed and transparent method. Unfortunately, the second phase of the project to carry out repairs was not implemented as part of this program due to a blockade on construction materials entering Gaza by the Israeli authorities. However, the first phase of the program still demonstrates an effective partnership approach to carrying out structural assessments and grant application review at scale. For more information see Shelter Projects 2009 (A6) p13.

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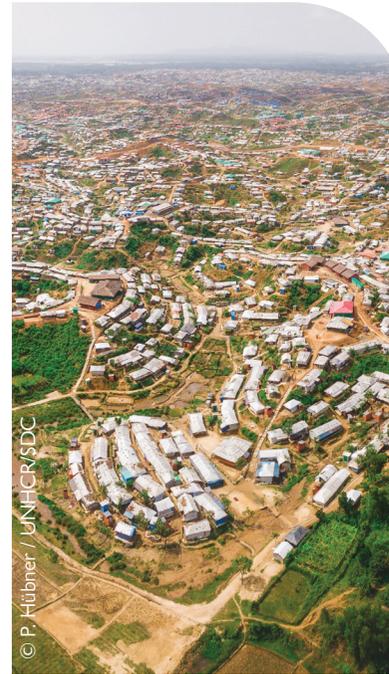
Site planning in Bangladesh

Starting in late August 2017, in less than two months, over 400,000 Rohingya refugees self-settled around existing refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. One year later, the whole area was regarded as the largest refugee camp in the world, hosting 631,000 refugees. This project highlights the large-scale impacts and importance of site planning activities. The case study tells the story of the first attempts to map and understand the spontaneous settlements, to identify additional land and design the first planned resettlement areas, and to prepare for and mitigate the effects of the imminent monsoon season. The case study highlights that the majority of settlements grow organically and are shaped by the physical environment and the locations of key infrastructure. As a result, decisions made during the first few months of an emergency may have impacts for many years. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A14) p67.

Supporting self-recovery at scale in Pakistan

Following extensive flooding in 2011, in this project, the organization worked with 27 implementing partners across 920 villages to deliver shelter assistance at scale. The project provided cash to households to build their own shelters. It aimed to increase the resilience of communities. It did this by increasing the quality of technical input, incorporating more disaster risk reduction components, monitoring to ensure compliance, and supporting the construction of safer shelters to catalyze self-recovery. The project used knowledge and cash transfers to enable households to make choices based on their needs and priorities. For more information see Shelter Projects 2011-12 (A22) p71.

F. SECURITY OF TENURE UNDERPINS ALL SHELTER RESPONSE

Tenure is the relationship between people and land, that determines who can use which resources, for how long, and under what conditions. Tenure security comes from the certainty that people's rights to their home or a parcel of land will be respected. This is essential to people's sense of safety, dignity, and confidence that they can (re)build their lives around their home – improve it, invest in it, and engage in its surroundings.

Well-designed projects can enhance tenure security and lead the way for durable recovery. Poorly designed projects that fail to pay attention to tenure issues, can expose people to major protection risks, including creating new layers of conflict or exacerbating existing issues. Poorly designed projects can also undermine the rights of host communities and rights holders, setting the stage for conflicts between host communities and displaced people.

Many case studies demonstrate ways in which humanitarian actors have successfully worked with local communities to understand local tenure dynamics, identify appropriate sites, avoid overlapping claims, and use appropriate tenure arrangements to secure the rights of the parties. Case studies also highlight the importance of avoiding reinforcing existing inequalities by ensuring that people who are tenure insecure are not excluded from shelter and settlements assistance.

Improving tenure security in Turkey

This project assisted Syrian tenants and local host community households in south-east Turkey with rehabilitation and upgrade works and written landlord agreements. As many refugees did not have any legal or written rental agreements with their landlords, they were exposed to the risk of forced eviction or a sudden increase in rent. The organization assessed the tenure situation during the beneficiary selection process. Local authorities, established community representatives and neighbors were approached to verify ownership claims made by beneficiaries and landlords. To improve households' tenure security, rental agreements were signed between the landlords, the households and the organization, which bound landlords to continue hosting the households for a minimum of 12 months after rehabilitation work was finished, with a condition of either a rental freeze, free rent or a rental discount. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A32) p158.

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Removing barriers to assistance in Ecuador

© Ecuadorian Red Cross

Following the 2016 Ecuador earthquake a large proportion of people did not have formal land title. As a result, there was concern that many of the most vulnerable of the affected population would not be able to access government assistance for repair and reconstruction. In recognition of this, this initiative was able to identify potential barriers to assistance. With this information it managed to actively influence public policy in order to ensure that the humanitarian response and reconstruction process did not exclude the most vulnerable populations. The ongoing advocacy and a collaborative approach with the authorities resulted in the government developing a regulation to recognize different forms of tenure as appropriate or relevant to the context. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A12) p54.

Overcoming land issues in Haiti

© Betsia Egea

© Sandra Tapia

In this project implemented following the 2010 earthquake, shelter support was provided irrespective of land tenure status. Shelters were intended to be constructed on land where the beneficiaries lived before the earthquake, promoting the return of displaced people to their places of origin. However, there were multiple challenges as land ownership was difficult to verify and rental agreements with the landowners had been made verbally in most cases. To overcome this, a variety of approaches were used to develop signed agreements on land ownership and rental status. All of the approaches involved local authorities and intensive community mobilization. If families were landless, community networks were encouraged to help them to find land. There were also negotiations with local authorities to find a solution for beneficiaries who had lived in squatter settlements. For more information see Shelter Projects 2010 (A8) p26.

G. SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS GO HAND IN HAND

Shelter assistance must always be considered in the context of settlements and the people who live there. By considering settlements, projects can build upon crisis-affected communities' social and support networks, and tenure relationships. Settlements-level thinking also ensures access to infrastructure and services (such as schools and healthcare), access to markets, and access to livelihood opportunities.

In contexts of displacement, as the situation allows, displacement should always be minimized, both in terms of the distance that people are displaced from their homes, and in terms of the duration of time that people are forced to be away from their homes. Setting up of camps is always a last resort. Where camps are the only option, case studies demonstrate that shelter must be considered in the context of settlement planning. Additionally, the more successful projects considered the relationships between camps and surrounding settlements. For example, they considered access to services, livelihoods, infrastructure, and relationships with host communities.

Holistic programming in urban communities in Lebanon

In this project in Lebanon, the organization took a holistic participatory approach to supporting refugees and host communities in dense urban areas. At the household level, shelter rehabilitation and upgrades were provided, along with improvements to water and sanitation facilities. Campaigns on hygiene promotion and housing, land and property rights were also conducted. At the community level, the project provided a catalyst for change and community-wide projects were implemented to improve service delivery such as water and solid waste management. The project also helped to identify engagement opportunities for better responses in the future. As an example, the committee in one of the neighborhoods was able to solve a ten-year problem related to solid waste management. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A31) p130.

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Building community resilience in the Philippines

Following Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013, this program adopted an integrated approach, taking shelter as an entry point for area-based programming. It then expanded to a broader program of community resilience-building. The program supported remote indigenous communities and in addition to shelter assistance, supported 41 community managed projects. These projects included infrastructure, livelihoods, water and sanitation, and disaster risk reduction initiatives. The program was based on a key principle of maximizing communities' agency, with the communities managing their own funds, planning and implementation of the activities. The program led to a variety of collective infrastructure projects and communal facilities, led by the communities themselves. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A13) p53.

Site planning to reduce fire risk in Somalia

This project aimed to meet the shelter needs of displaced people living in urban temporary settlements in the cities of Galkayo and Bosasso in Somalia. The exceptionally hot and dry climate combined with overcrowding, poor sanitation and social tensions between host and displaced communities meant that large groups of shelters were frequently destroyed by fire. To reduce the risk of fire, fire breaks were introduced by creating more space between shelters. Additionally, sites were cleaned up, the most flammable shelters were removed and replaced by tents designed to be more fire-resistant, safe cooking areas were established, and stoves were distributed. Further support was provided in sanitation, hygiene promotion, and the construction of latrines. For more information see Shelter Projects 2009 (A15) p29.

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H. SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS ASSISTANCE MUST LINK TO OTHER SECTORS AND PRIORITIES

People's lives do not fit neatly within the sectoral divisions of humanitarian organizations, clusters or government line ministries. Shelter projects that ignore other areas of assistance risk creating gaps, and can miss opportunities that can arise from more integrated support.

Shelter and settlements assistance can have much wider positive impacts than simply ensuring people have a roof over their heads. For example, shelter is clearly linked to safety and security, disaster risk reduction and physical and mental health. Many case studies highlight in the weaknesses section that they did not work closely enough with other sectors – for example where shelters were constructed without water and sanitation facilities, leading to problems. Conversely, there are many good examples of where this was done well.

There are also multiple case studies that demonstrate how approaches to shelter and settlements assistance – which often involves large-scale construction works – can create livelihoods opportunities and invigorate local markets. This can be for example through supporting local procurement, training construction workers in safer construction practices, and improving the quality of construction materials produced by local manufacturers.

Protection awareness and education in the Syrian Arab Republic

Linking relief to recovery, this project supported displaced people and host communities in Aleppo and Idleb. It conducted repairs to the main damaged parts of their houses and distributed shelter repair kits, heaters, winterization kits and kitchen utensils. Throughout this project, physical and psychological protection were seen as priorities, and protection awareness and education were integrated into the other activities. The project created safe havens within communities wherever possible (homes, schools, underground sites). It also increased privacy within households by establishing internal partitions. The organization also delivered a range of sessions to reinforce emotional and psychological protection. The sessions focused on 1) human rights; 2) anti-violence, and prevention of domestic abuse and GBV; 3) energy sources; and 4) hygiene and health promotion, and the importance of maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A30) p126.

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Supporting local economies through voucher fairs in DRC

© Brett Morton / UNICEF

Since 2008, there has been a dramatic transformation in the way the humanitarian distribution of household items takes place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Distributions have increasingly used vouchers that can be redeemed at organized "voucher fairs". Previously they exclusively used in-kind distributions of basic household, personal and hygiene items. The voucher fair approach enables families to select items based on their own priorities, while also supporting local economies. By 2013, over 50 percent of all NFI beneficiaries in DRC were being assisted using the voucher fair approach, and a total of 790,000 families – nearly 4 million people – had bought goods at voucher fairs. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A17) p70.

Livelihoods support to returnees in Nigeria

© Munakur Ijai

This project helped displaced people return to their areas of origin in northeast Nigeria. Crucially through taking a holistic approach to recovery, it also helped people to re-establish themselves upon their return. The project was linked with several livelihood activities in the same locations. This included the provision of short-term cash-for-work opportunities to rehabilitate community infrastructure (schools, markets, roads, etc.). Vocational training was provided to the same communities on the trades that were most in demand and these were supplemented by a start-up business grant. The project also provided capacity-building and para-veterinary kits to a local group and distributed animal food to livestock owners in the same communities. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A4) p17.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE IS LONG-LASTING

The natural environment can be severely damaged by humanitarian crises and by the ensuing humanitarian response, including shelter and settlements assistance. Environmental damage can have severe and long-lasting effects on both displaced populations and host communities. Local environmental degradation can impact livelihoods, damage access to natural resources that people rely upon, increase the likelihood of hazards such as flooding and landslides, and have wider impacts on biodiversity. Environmental damage can also strain relationships between host and displaced communities.

Case studies illustrate that good projects assess and monitor the potential environmental impacts that would be created by assistance (or lack of assistance). Examples of areas in which projects considered local environmental impacts include; the sourcing of materials and other resources (such as water) for construction, the impacts of large-scale clearing of vegetation from land to create sites for shelter, the sourcing of fuel for cooking and heating, the risks of pollution, and the wider strain on resources that can be created by an increased population living in an area. Whilst most case studies have primarily humanitarian objectives, many have shown that there is also the potential for shelter and settlements assistance to promote positive environmental interventions.

© Rikka Tupaz

Fuel-efficient stoves in South Sudan

In a Protection of Civilians site for internally displaced people, this project supported the construction of fuel-efficient stoves using a design developed by the community. Stove designs were tested on insulation, firewood consumption, smoke reduction, local production and material availability. The use of fuel-efficient stoves reduced firewood consumption. This lessened the strain on the surrounding environment and the frequency of long trips to get firewood, which regularly put women and girls at risk of attack. The use of fuel-efficient stoves also improved users' health by reducing smoke pollution. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A7) p30.

Reducing the environmental impact of shelter construction in Tanzania

This project provided durable shelter in three camps in western Tanzania for refugees fleeing violence in Burundi. Three designs were constructed with the refugee communities. They were tested against four criteria, including environmental impact (consideration of materials used from natural resources, distance to transport, impact on host community, water, forest and other environmental resources). The communities chose the adobe brick shelter design, which was deemed the least environmentally damaging and most culturally acceptable. The project then engaged the refugee communities in adobe brick production. For environmental reasons, there was a strong focus to ensure the restoration of the soil extraction areas in each community. A parallel project planted banana trees in the pits as part of a restoration phase. The shelter design was approved and promoted by the government as it met the required minimal environmental impact standards while also providing a durable solution. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A27) p110.

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Salvaging materials to reduce environmental impact in Sri Lanka

This project supported people affected by floods and landslides with lifesaving shelter assistance. The project worked with a network of community-based organizations and affected families. They were engaged to conduct shelter repairs, build transitional shelters for those unable to return, distribute household items and upgrade evacuation facilities. Salvaged materials were used to reduce costs by decreasing the procurement of new materials, and to limit the environmental impact of the disaster by recycling debris. Affected households recovered roof tiles and timbers, and doors and windows damaged by the disaster, stored them on site and reused them both for repairs and new construction. The debris available on site (such as bricks and concrete rubble) was sorted, cleaned and reused as aggregates for foundations and as floor concreting. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A24) p117.

J. LOCALLY APPROPRIATE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS WORK BEST

People build homes in their own way, incorporating old traditions and new methods. Local housing typologies are specific to each context. They can be made up of a mixture of traditional, vernacular design and construction approaches that have been used for generations, and newer construction approaches and materials that may have become common more recently. Many case studies show that shelter assistance needs to learn from and support the use of local techniques, which have been shaped by the local culture, climate and environment.

Many case studies also show that if local building techniques need improvements it is better to adapt and strengthen local methods, rather than introducing unfamiliar construction approaches. For example to better withstand earthquakes, storms or flooding, bracing and joints may need to be improved. Using local building techniques often means using locally available materials and supporting local markets. Promoting and strengthening local building techniques means that people are better able to recover, and to maintain, repair and extend their dwellings in the future.

Bamboo transitional shelters in Indonesia

In response to the Jogyakarta earthquake, this project aimed to empower community members to rebuild their lives, starting with the construction of a transitional shelter. A locally appropriate shelter design was developed based on traditional building materials and construction techniques. It was designed after considering the local availability of materials, community needs and the capacity of the humanitarian organization. Cash was distributed to support affected families to build their shelters, and construction was supported by hundreds of volunteers. Extensive instructional and promotional materials were made, including short training manuals, video compact discs, posters and radio advertisements. The project was able to build on the Javanese self-help culture of 'gotong royong' (shared burdens) and successfully used materials that kept funds in the local economy. For more information see Shelter Projects 2008 (B6) p45.

© IFRC

Seismic retrofitting in Tajikistan

This project helped to rebuild communities affected by earthquakes in the Kumsangir district. It also aimed to help prepare remote rural communities against further earthquakes and mudslides. The project used alternative and affordable construction technologies and provided loans to help families to rebuild or retrofit their homes. A mesh of mulberry branches was used to retrofit existing rural homes to make them more seismically resistant. This was a new technology to the area. It aimed to stop buildings collapsing and lessened the risk that smaller tremors would damage houses. The low technology reinforcement and construction technology was simple and was 30 percent cheaper than the standard reinforcement techniques. For more information see Shelter Projects 2010 (A29) p92.

© Habitat for Humanity Tajikistan

Tukul construction in Ethiopia

This project supported the construction of transitional shelters in a camp for South Sudanese refugees in the Gambella region of Ethiopia. The shelters were constructed with traditional techniques, locally available materials and a high level of involvement of the beneficiaries. The chosen design consisted of a mud tukul (traditional house) with a eucalyptus wooden structure finished with bamboo or grass-thatch matting for the mud render. The shape, as well as the thick mud layer, protected the structure from the weather conditions and helped keep the inside of the shelter cool. For more information see Shelter Projects 2015-16 (A26) p106.


© Chiara Jasna Vaccaro

K. GOOD PROJECTS REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF FUTURE SHOCKS

Shelter and settlements assistance can support people to build resilience to future shocks. Many case studies demonstrate how shelter and settlements assistance, even when conducted with emergency and lifesaving goals, can increase physical resilience to natural hazards. For example, shelter and settlements assistance can reduce crisis-affected people's vulnerability to hazards such as fire, flooding, earthquakes and storms through hazard mapping, improving infrastructure such as drainage channels, ensuring dwellings are located on less vulnerable sites, and through promoting safer construction practices.

Many case studies also show how shelter and settlements assistance can contribute to increasing crisis-affected people's resilience to future shocks through increasing community resilience, social cohesion, and tenure security. This can mean strengthening civil society and community-based groups, supporting livelihoods and economic recovery, creating a greater sense of stability and security, reducing social tensions, and improving the integration of displaced people in host communities.

Adaptation to recurring floods in Colombia

This project in Colombia supported a community who were facing increasingly long periods of seasonal flooding. Until recent years seasonal floods lasted about one month, isolating households and interrupting schools and livelihoods. The 2010 floods lasted six months. This project aimed to increase resilience without resorting to resettlement and was implemented with a focus on participation. Over the course of one year, the community created a village which serves as a model for other places. Homes were reconstructed to a new design, elevated 2.5m above the ground, and connected by elevated walkways. A school, an elevated collective garden, a community center and an elevated children's playground were also built. Disaster preparedness activities, first aid, hygiene promotion and safe construction trainings were also provided. The project is now an example, both at regional and national level, of what can be done to support riverside communities to mitigate the effects of recurrent floods. For more information see Shelter Projects 2011-12 (A3) p9.

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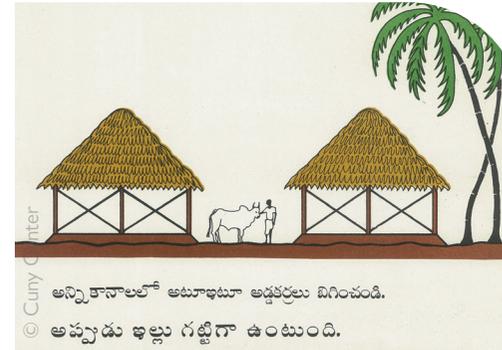
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APPENDIX II:
EMERGENCY MEASURES TO PROTECT SMALL BUILDINGS FROM HURRICANES

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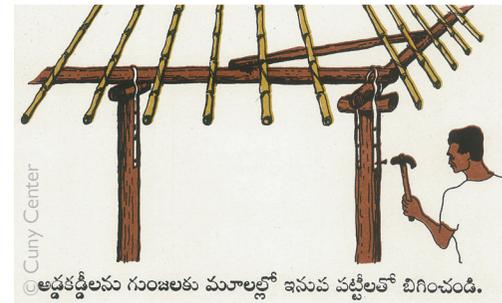
Building back safer homes in India

Following a cyclone that hit Andhra Pradesh in 1977, this project supported recovery and promoted safer construction techniques. Materials for strengthening cyclone resistance were distributed and a special center was set up to provide technical training and information. The Appropriate Reconstruction Training and Information Centre was established to give advice and conduct evaluations for the various ongoing shelter programs. The center provided technical information through direct field visits, training of local carpenters, and the development of booklets and posters. In one case a short play to share important construction messages was produced. For more information see Shelter Projects 2008 (D6) p97.

Communal projects to support recovery and resilience in Tonga

In 1982, Cyclone Isaac was declared by Tongan authorities to be the worst disaster in Tongan history. This project supported settlement-focused 'Quick Impact Projects' which were identified and implemented by beneficiary villages. The proposals were often for communal facilities in the village, or groups of structures that benefited the community recovery as a whole. These included restorations of village fences, showers, kitchens and toilets, as well as community food gardens. Other projects, not directly related to shelter, included the restoration of poultry units, water tanks and a wind tower. A parallel disaster mitigation strategy offered the technical tools to ensure that the awareness of how to 'build back safer' would be incorporated into projects. For more information see Shelter Projects 2008 (D8) p102.
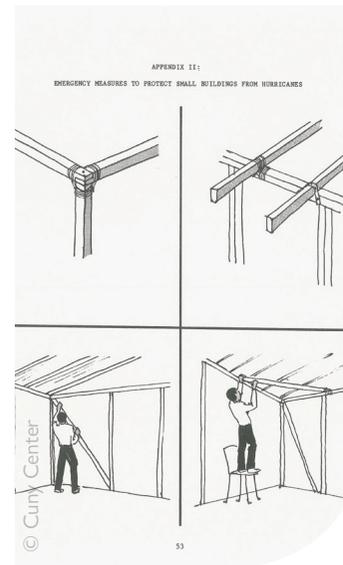
L. EFFECTIVE PROJECTS ARE COORDINATED AND PLANNED

Well-planned projects with strong monitoring are repeatedly able to deliver within timeframes and budgets, despite the challenges of working in the volatile and changing context of a humanitarian emergency. Shelter and settlements responses take time, so planning and implementation needs to begin as early as possible. Projects that are not designed to take account of the needs of affected people and changing contexts seldom deliver on anticipated objectives and are often very late. Case studies show that it is vital to consider multiple scenarios and plan for all eventualities.

As illustrated in multiple case studies, successful projects coordinate and establish partnerships between local and national government, the affected people, supporting organizations, civil society groups, and other partners throughout the project cycle. This coordination is vital to ensure that projects avoid duplication, address gaps, and maximize impact as well as effectively serving the people that they seek to assist. Coordination saves lives.

A Tri-Cluster approach to coordination in Somalia

Mogadishu has hosted people displaced by conflict since 1991. However, as drought worsened in late 2010 and famine approached in early 2011, more and more Somalis were driven away from rural areas to Mogadishu looking for assistance and safety. Upon arrival in Mogadishu, displaced people settled on areas of unoccupied land. This process of self-settlement meant that there was no site planning. Services such as water and sanitation, and access to the 100 or so settlements were sporadic. A Tri-Cluster approach was established to link up shelter, health services and water and sanitation. This involved coordination between a group of 14 organizations implementing 16 projects. The aim was to reduce the risks to displaced people by improving settlement planning and the provision of integrated services from multiple sectors. Regular coordination meetings achieved a common understanding of aims and objectives amongst all organizations involved. Integrating services meant more efficient provision of shelter, water, sanitation, and basic health services. For more information see Shelter Projects 2011-12 (A28) p89.

© Richard Evans

Timely response at scale in Iraq

To respond to mass displacement caused by military operations in Mosul, this project established two emergency sites. The sites were established following a request from the government in coordination with Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and Shelter Clusters. Working with partner organizations, the organization adopted a rapid-response settlement approach. In this approach, the sites were selected and planned in a month. After two months, the sites had an initial capacity of 1,200 households. The site was expanded incrementally, with infrastructure upgrades such as water supply, electricity and service facilities. The project eventually achieved an accommodation capacity of 17,500 households in less than six months. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A26) p128.

© Raber Aziz

Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform in Nepal

After the Nepal earthquake of April 2015 and its aftershocks, the recovery efforts needed to be coordinated. Since 2015, the coordination platform for these efforts evolved, with leadership from a series of different recovery actors. The Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP) was established in December 2015 to support the government's coordination of the post-earthquake housing reconstruction. The transition from the Nepal Shelter Cluster to the HRRP set the scene for recovery and reconstruction coordination support after the closeout of clusters. For more information see Shelter Projects 2017-18 (A17) p83.

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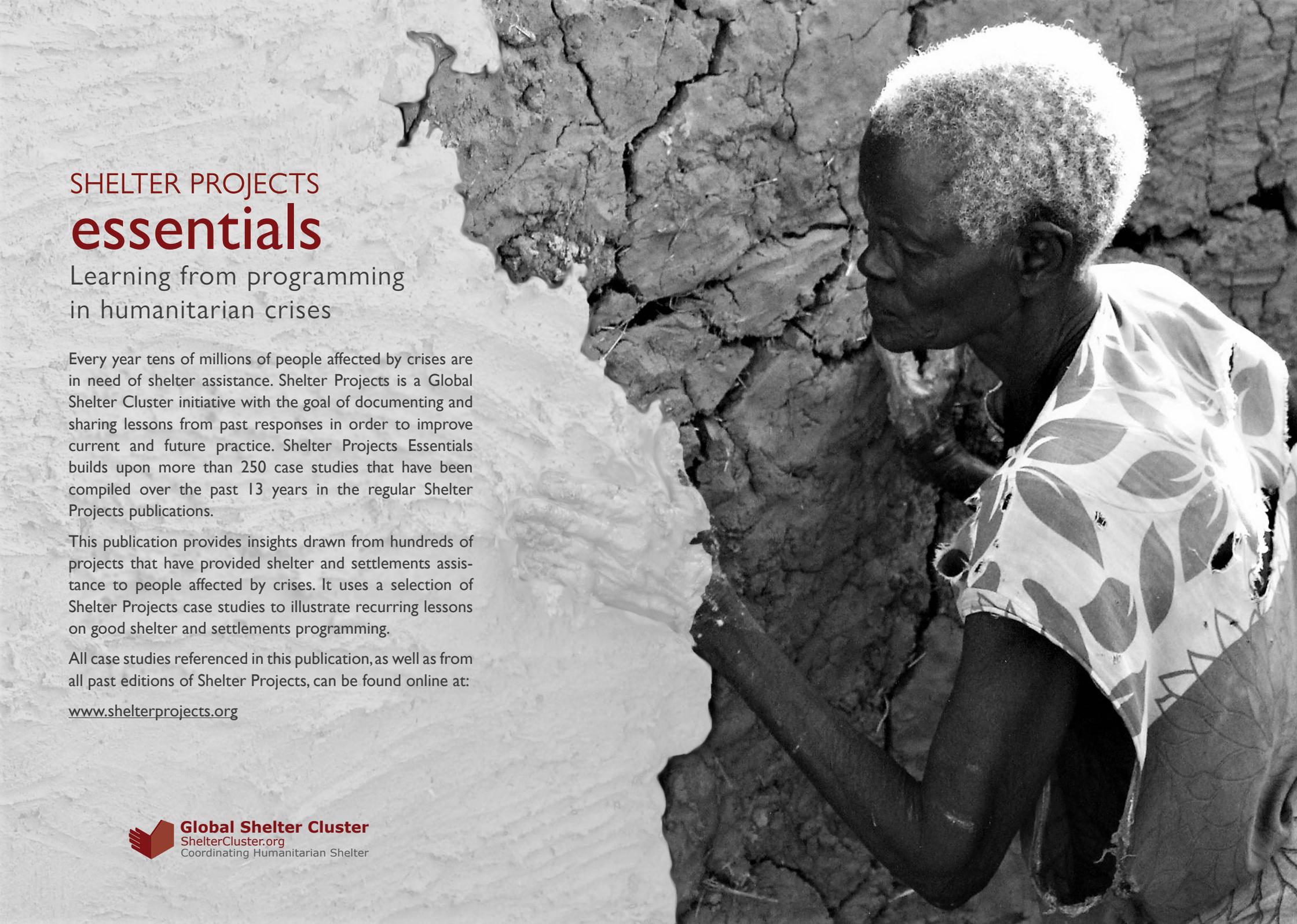
SHELTER PROJECTS
essentials
Learning from programming in humanitarian crises

Every year tens of millions of people affected by crises are in need of shelter assistance. Shelter Projects is a Global Shelter Cluster initiative with the goal of documenting and sharing lessons from past responses in order to improve current and future practice. Shelter Projects Essentials builds upon more than 250 case studies that have been compiled over the past 13 years in the regular Shelter Projects publications.

This publication provides insights drawn from hundreds of projects that have provided shelter and settlements assistance to people affected by crises. It uses a selection of Shelter Projects case studies to illustrate recurring lessons on good shelter and settlements programming.

All case studies referenced in this publication, as well as from all past editions of Shelter Projects, can be found online at:

www.shelterprojects.org

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