



Global Shelter Cluster
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

PATHWAYS HOME

Guidance for Supporting
Shelter Self-Recovery



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PATHWAYS HOME: GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY

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Further information about self-recovery available at www.self-recovery.org

OVERVIEW

The aim of Pathways Home (referred to throughout as the Guidance) is to describe and explore the concept of supporting shelter self-recovery, and provide practical guidance on how to accompany and support the process in post-disaster and post-conflict contexts. It represents the first attempt to outline the rationale, building blocks and key concepts of self-recovery. Drawing from shelter programming experience and suggested best practice, the Guidance aims to inform the design of programmes that support shelter self-recovery to help build a common body of knowledge.

While the overarching principles of a self-recovery approach have value in most contexts, not all aspects of this guidance will be applicable in protracted displacement contexts, for example, due to factors that influence people's ability to drive and manage their own recovery - such as the legal right to work, access to services and security of tenure.

The Guidance aims to explain a vision of shelter assistance that goes beyond the 'participation revolution' called for in the 2016 Grand Bargain. This vision suggests a genuine people-led approach to supporting recovery where power and control remain in the hands of affected populations. A supporting shelter self-recovery approach gives humanitarian organisations the potential to do more with less.

A disconnect exists between discussions about supporting self-recovery at a global level and the reality of what organisations are currently doing and can reasonably do in practice. Past shelter projects show that components of a 'self-recovery approach' are often apparent in larger holistic programmes or combined with more conventional shelter interventions, but are rarely an explicit focus. The Guidance attempts to capture good programming practice for supporting shelter self-recovery with an emphasis on those key elements that need close attention or that differ from conventional shelter programming

Part A provides theoretical underpinnings and lays out the building blocks, general principles and rationale for approaches to support shelter self-recovery. It describes factors influencing self-recovery, highlights potential benefits and challenges, and shows the value of supporting shelter self-recovery to increase reach and impact.

Part B outlines the elements required for successful support to shelter self-recovery and offers practical guidance to those implementing a shelter self-recovery approach.

WHO IS THIS GUIDANCE FOR?

This Guidance is primarily intended for shelter practitioners, including field staff and those involved in direct implementation, as well as programme managers and shelter coordinators. Given that self-recovery is not a phenomenon limited to shelter, professionals from other sectors such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), livelihoods, physical and mental health, and camp management and protection, might also find these guidelines useful.

[Part A](#) is directed primarily at decision-makers from humanitarian organisations, policymakers, donors and academics.

[Part B](#) is directed primarily at practitioners, programme and project managers and other field personnel.

Furthermore, the Guidance may also serve as inspiration for national governments, policymakers and donors to better understand how they can support self-recovery and create an enabling environment to build resilient communities.

METHODOLOGY

The process to develop the Guidance was initiated at three workshops of the Promoting Safer Building Working Group: [Context Analysis](#) on 1 April 2020, [Implementation](#) on 24 September 2020 and [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning](#) (MEAL) on 21 January 2021. During these workshops approximately 28 participants, including shelter practitioners, policymakers and academics, provided input, which together with best practice programming experience, forms the foundation of the Guidance. The workshops included breakout groups to discuss different aspects of self-recovery, and notes from these sessions have been incorporated into the Guidance. A separate report has been produced for each of the three workshops. Case studies, practical tools, interviews with shelter practitioners, guidelines, and findings from fieldwork research also inform the Guidance.

The case studies included in the Guidance are drawn in part from published documents and also incorporate experiences and observations shared by shelter practitioners through key interviews and grey literature.

The draft text was reviewed by practitioners and academics and their comments and observations have been incorporated.

The authors are aware that supporting shelter self-recovery is a relatively recent development and welcome the engagement of practitioners and policymakers to strengthen the ideas, principles and practice introduced in the Guidance.

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ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
CGI	Corrugated Galvanised Iron
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICHA	International Centre for Humanitarian Affairs
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRP	International Recovery Platform
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice

KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MDF	Multi-Donor Fund
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NFIs	Non-Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
ODR	Owner-Driven Reconstruction
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASSA	Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMS	Short Message Service
UCL	University College London
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNHCR	The UN Refugee Agency
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Associations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

KEY TERMS

Key terms used in the main text are explained briefly below. While many of these terms can be defined and understood differently according to context, here we set out the meanings as used in the Guidance.

Adaptive programming recognises that people's priorities and plans are fluid. Monitoring mechanisms are included in programming activities to identify and respond to changes in a timely manner. Multiple factors external to the programme may influence implementation and outputs.

Agency is the capacity of individuals and communities to exercise control over decision-making and to act independently to determine their own priorities.

Community is a group of people united by common characteristics or interests, such as location, norms, a shared sense of identity, culture, nationality, and can also be used as shorthand for a geographical entity such as a village, town or neighbourhood. It is also recognised that a sense of community varies from place to place, and can be either strong or fragmented. 'A community' is not a homogenous entity and involves diverse people, perspectives and places. In this document the term community-led is synonymous with people-led.

Accompaniment is an approach that requires national and international organisations to work in solidarity with households and community structures as partners, while recognising the leadership role of affected people. The role of local and international organisations is to support and add value to people's recovery pathways. Examples of accompaniment in practice are roving teams, training and constant monitoring and adaptation.

Enabling environment refers to various factors that influence the ability to recover. These could include political, economic and socio-cultural factors such as policies and laws that provide security of tenure, availability of shelter resources, serviceability of infrastructure such as roads and water supply, literacy, equal gender participation and laws that consider the vulnerability of marginalised groups.

Homes and communities refers to a holistic approach to supporting rebuilding after disasters which recognises that there is more to recovery than the built environment of shelter and settlements, and that the social fabric of a community, the possibility to express cultural identity, and feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging are all important factors that lead to establishing homes and communities. For more of this discussion see 'All the Ways Home' in Shelter Projects 8th Edition, 2021.¹

Localisation is the process of recognising and respecting the capacity of communities and local representative organisations to lead recovery. It shifts the power from donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to the local and sub-national levels.

Participation is often used to refer to the active involvement of 'beneficiaries' of humanitarian projects and programmes, considered to be a key aspect of good humanitarian and development programming and championed in the Grand Bargain's 'participation revolution'.² While there are many 'levels' of participation, the Guidance suggests a thorough critique of how participation is commonly understood and used in humanitarian shelter programming.

Nexus is the term used to describe the relationship between humanitarian and development efforts, currently referred to as the humanitarian-development nexus.

Resilience is defined by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.”³

Shelter is a term used in the humanitarian sector to include all types of accommodation solutions in post-crisis situations, such as hazard-induced disasters and conflict. A shelter intervention can range from simple tarpaulins and non-food items (NFIs), to temporary housing, to a more permanent home. In this Guidance shelter is used to refer to temporary or transitional accommodation options while housing is used when referring to permanent solutions that the process of shelter-recovery should finally lead to.

Shelter self-recovery refers to the process whereby crisis-affected households recover a living space (including repairing or rebuilding, renting or availing of hosted accommodation) relying on their own resources and capacities, mobilising their social networks and without formal external assistance. Each household will re-establish a sense of home at different rates and in different ways, eventually moving through temporary or transitory accommodation solutions. They will do so according to their own capacities and priorities and in correlation with other aspects of their recovery (such as livelihoods, health, protection, access to basic services etc.).

Supporting shelter self-recovery is an approach to humanitarian assistance that recognises shelter self-recovery as an on-going process, and through the provision of additional resources (whether financial, material, knowledge, skills, training) increases the scale and impact of affected people’s own repairs and rebuilding processes.

Social capital is defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as “networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate cooperation within or among groups”.⁴ There are three types of social capital: bonding (within a community), bridging (between communities) and linking (with external bodies such as the government and other organisations).⁵

Social cohesion refers to the levels of bonds and solidarity among groups in society that create trust and willingness to work and live together. It identifies two main dimensions: the sense of belonging to a community and the relationships among members within the community itself.

Vulnerability is defined by UNDRR as “the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards”.⁶



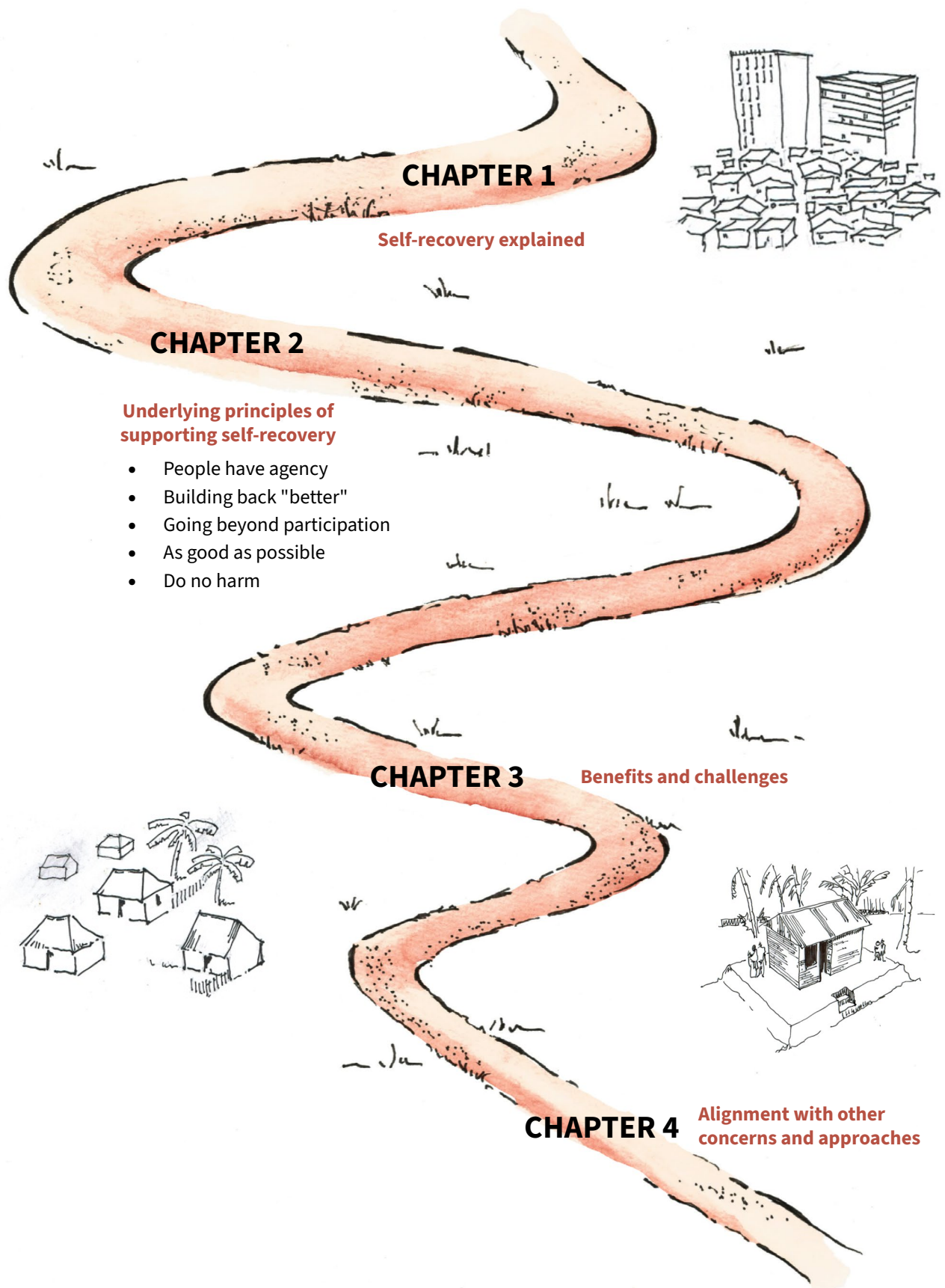
PART A

SELF-RECOVERY: THE FOUNDATIONS

Part A outlines the building blocks, general principles and rationale for supporting self-recovery. It explains why it is important for agencies to adopt this approach and the theory behind it.

- **Chapter 1** explains the foundations of a supporting shelter self-recovery approach
- **Chapter 2** describes the underlying principles for supporting shelter self-recovery
- **Chapter 3** outlines the key benefits and challenges for implementing agencies
- **Chapter 4** explores the alignment between self-recovery and other key approaches in shelter and settlements programming

PART A PATHWAY - THE ROUTE EXPLAINED



1

SELF-RECOVERY EXPLAINED



Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK

KEY MESSAGES

- Supporting self-recovery has the potential to change shelter programming in ways that benefit people recovering from crises.
- Supporting self-recovery enables humanitarian organisations to reach scale by doing more with less.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

Support for shelter self-recovery: what, why, how, where and when.

1.1 WHAT IS SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY?

“Self-recovery is what we do anyway” *Workshop Participant, Manila, Philippines, 2019.*⁷

Signs of recovery are evident in the first few days following a crisis. In the immediate aftermath of a storm, flood or earthquake, as well as following forced displacement, conflict and violence, people salvage materials and erect makeshift shelters to protect themselves, their family and their belongings. They will do whatever they can to either build a shelter themselves or seek alternative ways of sheltering, finding accommodation with host families, occupying unfinished or empty buildings in urban areas, or creating spontaneous camps.

People affected by a crisis are the first responders, initiating their recovery process immediately after the shock; and they continue to work on improving their lives regardless of external support. The vast majority of affected people, often between 80 and 90 percent, seek shelter and start to recover their homes with little or no external or formal assistance - they ‘self-recover’, relying on their own resources and knowledge.⁸

These first steps to find shelter will frequently be supplemented by whatever additional support people can access, including help from family and friends, especially remittances from abroad, government support (subsidies, grants, loans) or loans from informal money lenders. Depending on the level of loss, needs arising from specific personal circumstances and individual capacities and resources available, people rebuild their homes and lives in very different ways, within different timeframes and consequently with very different results.

This survivor-led process of recovering adequate living conditions and re-establishing a sense of home is what this Guidance refers to as shelter self-recovery.

Unfortunately, those most severely impacted by a crisis are often those with the least access to the resources needed to realise safer and better living conditions. Lack of financial resources, limited access to quality materials and poor knowledge of safer building techniques are factors that result in shelter and housing-related vulnerabilities. A lack of secure tenure, or ownership of land in a safe location, can also be obstacles to self-recovery, especially for women and marginalised groups. A lack of social and political support are additional factors that can compound existing vulnerabilities, which are then exacerbated by the crisis.

Humanitarian organisations (including United Nations agencies, the Red Cross movement, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and local NGOs) have a role to play in supporting and enhancing shelter self-recovery efforts through strategic programming that fills gaps, strengthens capacities, removes obstacles, and promotes an enabling environment for people’s recovery in ongoing and future crises. They can facilitate and enable recovery through the provision of additional resources (financial, material, knowledge, skills) that individuals and community groups may require to increase the scale and impact of their own interventions. Humanitarian organisations can also play a role in influencing other actors to create an enabling environment that enhances self-recovery by supporting connections and networks, through advocacy and by reinforcing the efforts of local and national governments.

1.2 WHY SUPPORT SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY?

Supporting shelter self-recovery promotes equitable support for all affected populations, while respecting existing efforts and agency. Supporting self-recovery aligns with the commitments of the Grand Bargain, offers a bridge between the humanitarian-development nexus and takes a radical look at ‘participation’.

Increasing the impact of humanitarian support

Conventional shelter practice tends to target a limited number of ‘beneficiaries’, frequently focusing on particularly vulnerable groups. This provides no support for the majority who recover on their own. Consequently, there is a two-fold risk: “pockets of excellence” exist for a minority with homes that are not replicable or affordable and are often difficult for people to maintain; and the majority rebuild without improving building practices that may well have contributed to the catastrophe in the first place. Supporting the process of self-recovery can avoid both of these pitfalls. Through careful programming, the most vulnerable can be reached first and the broader community can also benefit.

Humanitarian actors are partners in affected people’s recovery process

Supporting self-recovery recognises that affected populations are key actors and the driving force behind their own path towards recovery. Humanitarians should be aware that they are ‘external actors’ who play a small role in an extensive and diverse process, often arriving during an already ongoing response. They should see themselves as participants in the overall recovery process and facilitators in people’s pathways to the recovery of shelter and a home.

Going beyond the Grand Bargain

Despite continuing efforts over past decades, most humanitarian shelter interventions are still formulated from the perspective of humanitarian organisations, usually with the ‘participation’ of affected populations, and are siloed in sectoral and phase-based thinking. Progress to advance the Grand Bargain’s participation revolution, bridge the humanitarian-development nexus and fulfil localisation obligations in the sector have been slow in turning rhetoric into action.⁹ Since people in crisis do not compartmentalise their recovery efforts, a nexus approach naturally emerges when locally-led initiatives are supported and peoples’ recovery pathways respected.

At the heart of an approach that supports shelter self-recovery is the principal objective to complement and reinforce crisis-affected people’s autonomous efforts to recover shelter and settlements and build homes and communities in ways that can strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerabilities to future crises.

1.3 HOW TO SUPPORT SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY?

To support shelter self-recovery, agencies must shift their mindsets from a needs-based approach that delivers a product towards a people-led or community-led process. The programmatic needs are quite different from a conventional shelter programme. There is a need for a strong context analysis that is iterative and continuous. Budgets and proposals need to be flexible and adaptable to respond to changing circumstances, feedback and the continuous process of analysis and evaluation. The shelter team also requires additional skills and capacity.

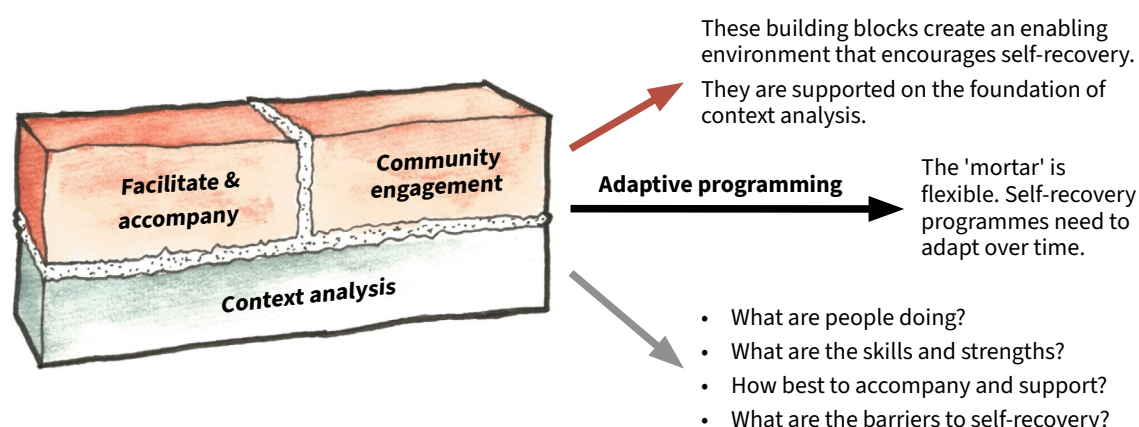
[Part B](#) is dedicated to the practicalities of facilitating a shelter self-recovery programme.

The design and implementation of a programme that supports shelter self-recovery is underpinned by **three building blocks**:

1. **A broad and holistic context analysis.**
2. **Facilitation and accompaniment to remove barriers to resources, fill gaps in capacity and foster an enabling environment.**
3. **A process of community mobilisation and engagement.**

These building blocks are embedded in a flexible process of adaptive programming.

Figure 1.1 Three building blocks of supporting shelter self-recovery



1.4 WHEN AND WHERE TO SUPPORT SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY?

Support to self-recovery will not be possible or appropriate in all contexts. To date, most of the experience and evidence has been gathered where people have access to land and at least basic construction skills are available (either affected people themselves or hired skilled labour). This is typically the case in rural areas for non-displaced populations after disasters triggered by natural hazards, despite geographical limitations such as poor accessibility. Supporting shelter self-recovery approaches with adapted modalities and focus, however, can also be applied in urban contexts, informal settlements and for displaced populations. An example is the provision of financial support for rental assistance, the refurbishment of damaged buildings or providing support to liaise and coordinate with relevant authorities and other stakeholders. Furthermore, support for secure tenure, facilitating access to markets, technical information, and training are all interventions that foster an enabling environment, and can be useful forms of support in almost any context.

Of course, the level of self-recovery and strategies to support it can differ largely from one context to another. The principle of a people-led approach needs to be adapted to the reality of political, social and cultural contexts as well as people's capacities and experience with self-help and collective community action. In cultures where there is a strong hierarchy, for example, the idea of a community-led, participatory and inclusive response might not be well understood or accepted. Participatory approaches are time-consuming, especially in the beginning, and might not be the most appropriate in situations of immediate emergency or other situations where people are struggling with day-to-day survival. It is therefore critical to continuously analyse the situation to determine the most appropriate support at different stages of the recovery process.

CASE STUDY

1.1 Shelter self-recovery as the main form of recovery, Haiti, 2010

The shelter response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti focused on the provision of T-shelters (transitional or temporary shelters) or supporting the construction of camps. At the same time large numbers of Haitian families found housing solutions of their own. These ranged from the occupation of damaged buildings in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the repair or reconstruction of their homes using their own assets and the use of rented homes where the housing market had sufficiently recovered. Many received no technical assistance and used pre-disaster reconstruction techniques.

In a review of the shelter response and housing recovery in the two years following the earthquake, it was found that **“the informal sector was the biggest player in housing recovery”** and that community capacity for urban self-recovery had been underestimated.

Adapted from GFDRR, Habitat for Humanity, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, UN-Habitat October 2016. [What did we learn? The Shelter Response and Housing Recovery in the First Two Years after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake.](#)



Source: Bill Flinn

Further reading on shelter self-recovery

Schofield H and Flinn B. 2018. [People first – Agency, choice and empowerment to support self-recovery.](#)

Twigg J, et al. 2017. [Self-recovery from disasters: an interdisciplinary perspective.](#)

Parrack C, Flinn B, Passey M. 2014. [Getting the message across for safer self-recovery in post-disaster shelter.](#)

Twigg J, 2021. [The evolution of shelter “self-recovery”: adapting thinking and practice for post-disaster resilience.](#)

2

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF SUPPORTING SELF-RECOVERY



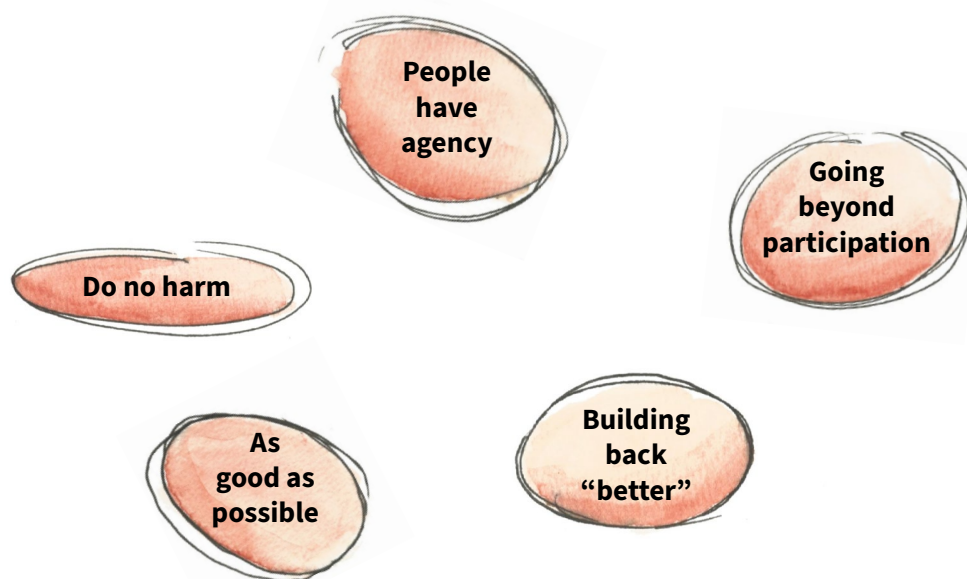
*Woman IDP and the shelter she is building at a camp in DRC.
Source: Julie Edwards/CARE*

KEY MESSAGES

- At the heart of supporting self-recovery is the recognition of the agency of people affected by crisis.
- Humanitarian organisations can complement affected people's strengths and capacities.
- The central principles that initially encouraged an exploration of self-recovery, and emerged from practice and field research, are not unique to a supporting self-recovery approach, but are valuable to all shelter programmes.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

The underlying principles that govern a supporting shelter self-recovery approach and how these are applied in practice.

Figure 2.1 Underlying principles of supporting self-recovery

2.1 PEOPLE HAVE AGENCY AND ARE LEADERS OF THEIR OWN RECOVERY PROCESS

The efforts employed by crisis-affected populations, and recognition of their priorities and choices, constitute the foundation of an approach that seeks to support self-recovery.

Significance of people's capacities and resources

People who are affected by crises are always the first to respond. They will do whatever they can to secure their basic needs and start to rebuild their lives. This includes safe shelter and starting to reconstruct their homes. The capacity and resources of affected people may seem limited in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, but are likely to be much more significant than first impressions. Support will be available from a multitude of sources: friends, neighbours, savings, loans, remittances from the diaspora community, crowd funding, but above all from the experience and motivation of the people themselves. The humanitarian community is a small player on a large playing field of action.

Respect for choice and control

People choose their own recovery pathways, prioritising their actions according to their own perceived needs, capacities and resources. Many factors influence their choice of priorities: their capacities and resources or the lack thereof; and the wider economic and socio-cultural circumstances, political and legal factors, people's health and well-being. These priorities may be at variance with those expressed in building codes or by implementing agencies and donors, but nonetheless should be respected. Importantly, humanitarians can and should support affected populations to access the information they can use and need to do what they want to do to the best of their abilities.

CASE STUDY

2.1 Rebuilding based on household priorities, Leyte, Philippines, 2013

Erica and John have a large family of 12 children. When Typhoon Yolanda hit, their bamboo and *nipa* (thatch) house was completely destroyed. They spent two weeks sheltering in the local school before making a makeshift shack out of bamboo, which is still in their backyard.

John is a carpenter and has rebuilt their new house to a beautiful level of detail, using bamboo and coconut lumber. They used the materials and financial assistance they received from an INGO, working through a local partner, to build the core of their home. They have since incrementally extended the dwelling, building additional rooms off the main house to use for sleeping, dining and cooking and verandas for outdoor sitting and eating. For John and Erica their priority was a house that was big enough for their young family. With a small amount of external support, John and Erica have been able to **recover their home according to their priorities and needs, building on their capacities and laying the foundation for a new start.**

Adapted from *'Stories of Recovery'*, CARE 2016.



Erica and John's House, 2016
Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK

Consideration of different needs and speeds

Given people's very different circumstances, needs, priorities, and capacities and resources, their self-recovery process will progress at a different pace and take different turns. The speed with which homes are rebuilt or repaired is not necessarily a reflection of the success of a programme. Some households may make do with a makeshift house for some time if they prioritise other fundamental needs such as food, livelihoods or health or if they think it is not the right time to build.

CASE STUDY

2.2 Waiting for the land to settle after the earthquake, Nepal, 2015

After the Nepal 2015 Gorkha earthquake, the government approved financial assistance for the reconstruction of affected houses if people followed specific guidelines. In addition, many humanitarian organisations actively supported the recovery process. Nevertheless, a study carried out two years later showed that 72 percent of affected households in a specific area were still living in temporary shelters or in their damaged houses. The primary reason for this was insufficient financial resources, but other important reasons reported were the **prioritisation of farming work** to make crops safe before the monsoon season and the belief that they had to **wait until the land had fully settled** after the earthquake. How long it would take to settle was an unknown.

Adapted from Manna, M. (2017). [Build Back Better? Not only a technical matter, Insights from owner-driven reconstruction in Nepal](#).

Women and girls at the centre

Sheltering is an inherently gendered process and the importance of gender equality and the voices of women, in a generally male-dominated sector, are central to good programming. In many cultures, women and girls spend more time in the home than male members of the family. They are most affected by indoor air pollution and overcrowding; they frequently run small enterprises from the home; and they are most at danger from injury or even death from the collapse of a badly built house. By contrast, they are least likely to be involved in decision-making, design and construction of the house. Women and girls need to be equally involved and heard in the recovery process and in self-recovery programmes.

CASE STUDY

2.3 Missed opportunity to empower women in the construction process, Nepal 2015

A PhD Study undertaken in the Philippines and Nepal in 2019 highlights that **only men were seen as key stakeholders during reconstruction** following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Women were rarely identified as resources for information or decision-making by actors involved in the humanitarian response. The large sample of households interviewed for the PhD research in Nepal showed that female-headed households were struggling financially as their husbands were often working abroad.

The role of women in reconstruction in Nepal was limited primarily to the transport of heavy stone blocks from the mountains to construction sites and sometimes mixing cow-dung plaster for walls. Women were largely absent from technical construction tasks, due in part to the consumption of alcohol by construction workers, which culturally excludes women. However, women were found to be responsible for households and making some construction decisions, but without a leadership role. This example shows a missed opportunity to better stimulate the leadership role of women in the construction process and encourage them to adapt their role within their cultural reality and context.

Adapted from Hendriks, E. (2020). [Assessing knowledge adoption in post-disaster reconstruction](#). Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

CASE STUDY

2.4 Women-led reconstruction – the key to resilience, Haiti

The Neighbourhood Improvement team of an INGO based in Haiti launched an emergency shelter response following the 2010 earthquake. Close to 50 percent of all structures in the capital of the country, Port-au-Prince, had been damaged or destroyed, including an estimated 250,000 homes. After the initial emergency response, damaged homes were rehabilitated, with latrines and showers included to improve housing conditions. The INGO used a gendered approach, putting women at the centre of their recovery programming and capacity building, including training them as bricklayers and carpenters, previously male-exclusive jobs.

Neldie, one of the women who joined the training programme, believes there is no such thing as men's work. In fact, along with her fellow women trainees, she is convinced everything a man can do, they can do better. "Women pay more attention to details, and they apply themselves better to the task at hand".

The training was mirrored by an educational campaign with homeowners, which addressed quality standards and risk prevention. The campaign also focused on women; local women's associations were involved with the aim of creating mobilizers for change in the community.

In Haiti, putting women at the centre of the reconstruction process has significantly contributed to reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience at the community level.

Adapted from CARE in Emergencies Newsletter, Vol. 7, Issue 2, July 2013.



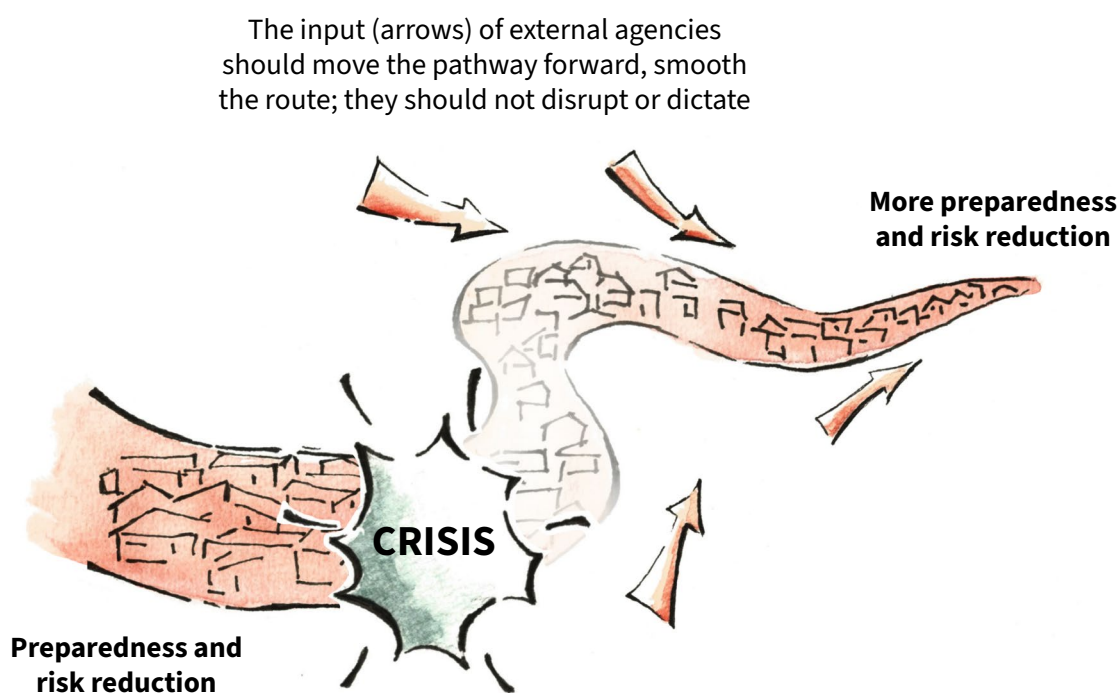
Young woman trainee, Haiti
Source: Kate Holt/CARE

2.2 GOING BEYOND PARTICIPATION: ACCOMPANIMENT

For years the international humanitarian community has sought to maximise ‘participation’. The Grand Bargain commitment, agreed at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, called for a “participation revolution: include people ... in making the decisions which affect their lives”.¹⁰ The rationale behind supporting self-recovery goes beyond this concept of participation. Humanitarian organisations themselves need to meaningfully participate in, and support, affected people’s own decisions and recovery processes rather than including people in the design and implementation of programmes orchestrated by others. The rationale behind supporting self-recovery is one of solidarity with affected populations, rather than a focus solely on needs or rights.

To better articulate this shift in mindset, we suggest the use of ‘**accompaniment**’ instead of ‘participation’ and encourage the use of the word ‘**facilitate**’ rather than ‘implement’. The practicalities of how accompaniment and facilitation can be designed into a shelter self-recovery programme are explored in [Part B](#).

Figure 2.2 The recovery pathway



Locally led responses

No disaster or context is identical and no household or individual will have the same recovery pathway. A good understanding of affected people’s knowledge, attitudes and practices, their building culture as well as the availability of resources, prevalence of hazards and shifting priorities and plans can only be gained by working in partnership with affected people, communities, local authorities, and other relevant local stakeholders and partners.

CASE STUDY

2.5 Locally led mobilization of resources and capacities, Beirut, 2020

After the explosion at the Beirut port in 2020, which affected a large area of the Lebanese capital, an estimated 10,200 buildings (77,000 housing units) were damaged, affecting close to 300,000 people,¹¹ citizens and local organisations shared information on social media and started **crowdfunding** initiatives to help affected families recover. These funds were used for different reconstruction projects and to support vulnerable families. Money sent by the Lebanese diaspora added to this financial support.

At the same time, **local volunteer groups (especially young people) and non-traditional actors, including the private sector**, immediately started repairing damage and supporting the community. Coordination was at the street and zonal levels. Volunteers established information points and organisations offered their skills and services via an organised arrangement of 'market-stalls'. The humanitarian community was one actor among many and filled in certain gaps, including providing cash for rent and minor repairs, and advice on tenure security. Well-established local universities, like the American University of Beirut, contributed to recovery and reconstruction efforts through their knowledge and understanding of the urban fabric, neighbourhood dynamics and 'heritage' building programmes.

For more information: CARE International. November 2020. [Beirut Blast: 5 lessons from CARE's Emergency Shelter Advisor](#).

[Inter-Agency Shelter Sector for Port Beirut Explosion Revised Sector Strategy Rev02](#). 7th October 2020, Global Shelter Cluster (GSC).

[American University of Beirut: Neighborhood Initiative](#).

Complementing and accompanying existing efforts

Recognising people's strengths and capacities, and finding how best to reinforce or complement them, is central to supporting self-recovery as a locally-led and locally-owned response. Accompaniment implies working with existing social networks and mechanisms to reinforce social capital while taking care to strengthen, not undermine, existing social cohesion mechanisms that are the foundation of community resilience. Supporting organisations must be prepared to re-evaluate the perceived conventional responsibilities of an 'implementing agency' and relinquish control.

CASE STUDY

2.6 Undervaluing communities' self-recovery efforts, Mozambique, 2019

Cyclone Idai (2019) caused severe damage across large regions of Mozambique. In the rural sub-district of Dombe, two months after the disaster, one community, which was relocated to a safer place, explained that they had already started to produce bricks to reconstruct their homes by organising themselves communally. They had also already calculated how many bricks they would need for one basic house and had divided the tasks between men and women from different families. Their plan included producing extra bricks in order to have a surplus for the most vulnerable families who could not participate in the process. An INGO had already distributed zinc sheets to every household during the early recovery phase to support this process. Most families decided to keep them stored until they could build their new house.

At the same time, another INGO also decided to support the relocation site by building new houses with compressed earth blocks that were produced in a nearby location. The second INGO took this decision because self-produced bricks were not promoted by the local government and because they wanted to provide better quality houses. As a result, the **community's self-recovery efforts were ignored** as they were included in the NGO compressed block house construction programme.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner



*Sun dried bricks produced by a family, Dombe, 2019
Source: Sonia Molina*

Facilitating recovery processes

The role of external organisations (local, national, international) is to support and facilitate the recovery process. It is not to 'implement' a project in the conventional sense. There are many ways in which this facilitation can be operationalised, and these are discussed further in [Part B](#), but the essential premise is that external supporting organisations respect the recovery pathway, when working to identify the most useful means of support at the community level. This requires an understanding of adaptive programming and the need for built in flexibility on timescales and outputs.

CASE STUDY

2.7 Complementing existing self-recovery efforts, Padang, Indonesia, 2009

The project supported 3,400 families to rebuild their homes after the 2009 Padang earthquake. This strongly matriarchal society was supported through **small cash grants**. There were some conditions attached to the grants; the houses had to be 'transitional' and not permanent, but otherwise **families were free to design and rebuild** their homes according to their means, needs and own timescale. It was recognised that the community had the required capacity and access to materials and labour. This strong community engagement, through a local and respected NGO that partnered with an experienced INGO, was a key to the success of this project.

With a small grant of just \$US290, homes were rebuilt within ten weeks. **Families complemented the grant with remittances** from family members living in cities or abroad, by selling assets, by sharing labour, and by using coconut and durian timber. They also **recycled elements** from previous houses, such as the windows. The term self-recovery was not in general use in 2009, but this project has all the markings of a supporting self-recovery project.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner



Transitional rebuilt house in Padang, Indonesia, using new and recycled material, 2009

Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK

Management of risk

For many built environment professionals – engineers, architects, surveyors, and also donors – a solution that is less than 'safe' or one that does not comply with building codes (which are often adapted from very different settings in the Global North), can be hard to accept.¹² Government

officials can also question the validity of promoting construction that appears to fall short of safety standards and might request humanitarian organisations to adhere to building codes. However, in contexts where adhering to building codes is neither affordable nor achievable for large parts of the population, it seems more realistic and effective to adopt a ‘good enough’, or ‘fit for purpose’ approach (see also [section 2.4](#)). Supporting a solution that covers immediate needs, suits common daily use and mitigates day-to-day risks (such as indoor pollution, intrusion of pests, mosquitoes etc.) can be equally or more important than a structure that is strong enough to resist the estimated five, ten or 25 year hazards. It has been demonstrated that building a large number of ‘safer’ houses has a greater overall beneficial effect than building a small number of ‘safe’ houses that cannot be replicated within the economic means of the population.¹³ The emphasis on supporting shelter self-recovery is more on facilitating a path to incremental, continuous improvement, rather than achieving perfection in the short term.

The understandable fear of reputational risk to an international or local humanitarian organisation being reproached for promoting construction that does not conform to codes, possibly on land without legal tenure, can be countered with the argument that respecting people’s right to forge their own recovery trajectories does, by implication, transfer this decision and risk to them. It also needs to be better understood by humanitarian organisations and their donors that the provision of support is usually for very low-cost, basic, non-engineered structures that will use local building techniques and are not covered by any building codes or standards. Although sometimes difficult to validate in conventional engineering terms, local building cultures may well have evolved solutions that withstand local hazards.

Humanitarian practitioners can, however, play an important role in mitigating risk, by supporting informed decision-making, advocating for secure tenure, encouraging good building practices and high standards, and mediating on behalf of affected people. Nonetheless, it is justifiable that the supporting organisation be relieved of perceived responsibilities and liabilities in regard to controlling and ensuring the quality of outcomes. Shelter practitioners can provide technical support and raise awareness about potential risks, but they also need to accept that their advice may not be followed, and other considerations might be prioritised.

CASE STUDY

2.8 Informing better choices in the Philippines, 2013

Following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, international organisations provided support to self-recovery efforts that were focused on **training and the dissemination of eight key messages**. These messages addressed the integration of construction techniques that mitigated the impacts of natural hazards, namely strong winds, earthquakes and floods. These techniques were improvements on local construction practices, and aimed to increase the resistance of shelters at an affordable and low cost. Training programmes were developed for different groups to disseminate information about more resilient building techniques. Other communication strategies were also put in place to ensure a sound adoption of the new construction techniques.

People had the choice whether to include this new knowledge in their reconstruction plans and practices, without specific external controls. Later observations showed that many of these solutions were adopted by families when rebuilding, others were only partially implemented or reinterpreted.

For more information: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Philippines 2014. [Infosheets Shelter Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes](#).

2.3 SUPPORT BUILDING BACK ‘BETTER’

The aspiration to ‘build back better’ emerged after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and was understood as an opportunity for disaster response to leave societies improved, not just restored. ‘Better’ should be considered in its most holistic sense.¹⁴ It does not just mean ‘safer’, as might be suggested by its sister slogan ‘build back safer’. Particularly in the context of shelter self-recovery, where people’s agency to determine their own priorities is of paramount importance, there is a need for ‘better’ to be interpreted broadly. Better can certainly mean safer; but it can also mean healthier or providing better protection; it can imply a location for home-based livelihoods; it can mean bigger for a large multi-generational family; or simply it can mean a ‘home’ with all the multi-faceted meanings attached to that concept.¹⁵ Indeed, it may not always refer to the physical dwelling, as ‘better’ can also mean enhanced capacity and ability to respond to future events; it can mean stronger community cohesion and networks; it can mean more sustainable and resilient communities.

Moreover, housing recovery does not happen in isolation. Fostering inter-sector working, cross-cluster collaboration and close collaboration with authorities and local organisations, should be explicit objectives of supporting self-recovery to achieve ‘better’ outcomes including water, sanitation, livelihoods, protection, health, and disaster risk reduction in all contexts.

Building back safer is of course critical to mitigate the impact of future disasters. Pre-crisis housing vulnerabilities can be addressed, promoting techniques and materials that people will be able to apply, afford and maintain. Strengthening and improving local building cultures against the most common hazards (or maybe new hazards, such as the increasing impacts of climate change) will build resilience. A supporting self-recovery approach must promote building back better - but it is not the role of the sector to decide what is ‘better’. It is for affected people to decide how the rebuilding of their homes best advances them along their pathway to recovery.

CASE STUDY

2.9 Youth groups help increase community resilience in flood-prone Navotas, Philippines, 2018

In the Philippines, an INGO promoted community resilience by mobilising youth groups to attend **Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter and Settlements (PASSA)** Youth activities. This increased their knowledge and skills to address shelter and settlement issues in low-income communities through alternative learning, youth engagement and community mobilisation, using available digital tools and platforms such as Facebook.

After the activities, the **group received a grant** which enabled them to pursue projects in improving shelter and settlement safety. They also ran campaigns with local government and local organisations that addressed environment and climate issues, such as community clean-ups, posting community messages and information, and holding seminars on solid waste management that were attended by more than 100 community members.

PASSA Youth aims to develop strong youth leaders, promoting resilient and responsive communities through shelter and settlements.

For further information: [About PASSA and how to get involved.](#)

[PASSA Youth Philippines Facebook Page.](#)

2.4 GOING FROM ‘GOOD ENOUGH’ TO ‘AS GOOD AS POSSIBLE’

If it is accepted that there are several different definitions of ‘better’, then the role of the shelter practitioner shifts in emphasis towards the provision of technical information and training that allows households to make informed choices. For households with limited resources, and humanitarian programmes with constrained budgets, it is probable that compromises will be made and standards missed. In most hazard-prone, resource-poor regions building codes, even if they exist, are rarely enforced or affordable. In such contexts, the concept of ‘good enough’ is arguably more constructive. Even if an improved shelter is not totally disaster-resistant, it may be repairable post-disaster instead of being completely destroyed and lost.

The [2018 Sphere Handbook](#) is the most commonly used set of humanitarian standards. It incorporates the Humanitarian Charter and the Core Humanitarian Standards that recognise the primary role and responsibilities of the affected population. In this sense, supporting shelter self-recovery is aligned with the spirit of Sphere, even if an argument may have to be made, on occasion, for a ‘good enough’ approach.

Best known as a tool for needs assessment, the concept of good enough can also be applied to programme implementation and the evaluation of outcomes. It is definitely not an invitation to accept ‘second best’; rather, it is recognition that, when making scarce resources stretch as far as possible in a humanitarian context, perfect can very easily be the enemy of good. A small number of very safe but expensive houses will have less overall benefit than a large number of affordable houses that might be safer than before the crisis, but do not measure up to an engineer’s definition of safe. A careful judgement will be needed to determine what defines ‘good enough’ in any given context.

By providing people with information and training, they can make informed choices. Using the resources at their disposal, households will most probably rebuild in a way that is stronger, more durable and healthier, and that fulfils their essential needs for space and livelihoods. Good enough should be as good as possible. [Part B](#) explores these issues and associated tools further.



*Rebuilding after Cyclone Harold, Vanuatu, 2020
Source: Valerie Fernandez*

CASE STUDY

2.10 Reconstruction with locally known and affordable practices, Panay island, Philippines, 2013

In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, an INGO developed a project based on existing local resources, building practices and coping capacities. The project paid particular attention to economic accessibility so that the duplication of proposed housing interventions would be possible for a large number of households not directly benefiting from the project, thus significantly expanding impact. The project adopted an approach based on the resilience of people/communities, rather than on the resistance of housing. An analysis of local building cultures and coping mechanisms made it possible to understand the extent to which housing affordability, the capacity to recover, accessibility to resources, the safety of users, as well as local skills and knowledge, were factors to balance against the structural resistance of housing units.

To illustrate this **resistance versus resilience** approach in the Philippines, a roof made of palm leaves is easily replaced without external assistance and without the need to spend substantial savings. Palm leaves are available locally and manufacturing doesn't usually require extrafamilial skills, which is not the case for corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheet roofing.

After typhoon Haiyan in Libacao a shortage of palm leaves was identified as an impediment to the recovery of shelters. Rather than providing beneficiaries with CGI sheets, palm leaves were given to them from less affected areas until the recovery of the local supply. This strategy ensured the **continuity of local knowledge and long-term accessibility of a relevant and affordable roofing solution**, which additionally had a good impact on the local economy.

For more information: Joffroy, T. (dir), Caudey, E., Dejeant, F., Moles, O., et al. 2018. Reconstruction with local architecture: Panay island, Philippines, 2014-2017 : *Capitalizing on experiences from two shelter projects in the aftermath of the super typhoon Haiyan*. Villefontaine: CRAterre éditions.



Training on site, Pannay, Philippines
Source: Elsa Caudey/CRAterre

2.5 DO NO HARM

“Please, please do not harm the resilience of the people” - local official to an audience of aid workers, Tanna, Vanuatu 2015.

The concept of ‘do no harm’ was pioneered in the 1990s with respect to humanitarian interventions in conflicts. Since then it has become accepted as an important principle across all humanitarian and development work. The ‘do no harm’ principle is particularly relevant for housing reconstruction programmes as they present significant investments and create physical realities that are difficult to reverse if they prove unsuccessful. Regrettably there are too many examples of reconstruction projects that remain unoccupied for socio-cultural reasons: they were rebuilt in the wrong location, they did not include basic facilities or other reasons that were not anticipated during programming.

CASE STUDY

2.11 Unoccupied post-earthquake housing, Gujarat, India, 2001

In January 2001, India suffered its worst earthquake in 50 years in the state of Gujarat. In a paper written in 2008, Sanderson and Sharma write about the unoccupied village of ‘new’ Vondh, which was built several kilometres away from the original village:

“Visiting the new Vondh today is an odd experience. From a distance, the new settlement looks much the same as the new Adhoi, with a similar grid design layout of a central spine road and row housing. Yet on arrival, it quickly becomes clear that the new Vondh is deserted; the houses are all locked up and some have cattle feed and fodder inside ... While the village was almost completely destroyed by the earthquake, in the end Vondh’s residents rebuilt their village themselves, despite the construction of the new Vondh less than three kilometres away.”¹⁶

The failure to consider sheltering as a multi-faceted and holistic discipline can also cause harm. A house should have adequate water and sanitation facilities in order to mitigate health risks related to lack of hygiene. The specific needs of women and girls must also be considered. For example, in overcrowded conditions, protection and privacy within the home are essential to mitigate the risks of domestic violence.

People are most likely to build houses that are appropriate and suited to their needs if they are the main drivers of their choices and decisions. Humanitarian organisations have an important role to play in highlighting the potentially harmful consequences of inadequate housing and in promoting affordable and appropriate solutions, while continuing to recognise that final decisions remain in the hands of people themselves.

CASE STUDY

2.12 Poor quality housing exposes vulnerable people to a double burden, Hambantota-New Town, Sri Lanka, 2005

In the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, which devastated much of Sri Lanka's east coast, organisations managed to raise a huge amount of money to support the reconstruction of the affected area. Much of the aid went into the Shelter Sector, and humanitarian organisations immediately began to rebuild houses to enable families to move out of displacement centres and start a new life.

Many of these houses were built rapidly with very little attention towards quality. Subsequently, as problems with poor quality contractor-built housing and complaints from beneficiaries increased, agencies improvised implementation methods, resulting in somewhat better quality. This resulted in a paradox that **those who were most affected by the tsunami were provided with the poorest quality houses and those who were affected less received better housing**, resulting in disparity across the same area. In a number of the initial schemes, people refused to move into the houses and many houses remain abandoned or incomplete, with vandals removing anything of worth, including asbestos roofing sheets, doors and windows and even frames.

After most donors had withdrawn, and governments were focused on other development projects, the memory of the tsunami faded in the face of other crises, leaving beneficiaries of resettlement schemes to address the problems themselves. Most have proven to be **resilient, adaptive and resourceful, seeking ways of improving their living conditions** and livelihoods through personal savings and loans to repair and complete the houses, which are now of a much better quality than many houses built by donors.

For more information: Ahmed, I. and Shaw, J. 2009. Post-Disaster New Urban Development: The Case of Siribopura New Town, Sri Lanka" in Reddy, A. (ed.) Multilayered Cities and Urban Systems. Hyderabad, India: Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority and Osmania University.



*Abandoned and vandalised houses in Hambantota-New Town, Sri Lanka
Source: Dr Iftekhar Ahmed*

Further reading on shelter self-recovery:

Anderson 1990. [*Do No Harm: How aid can support peace - or war.*](#)

Humanity & Inclusion 2018. [*Incorporating the principle of Do No Harm.*](#)

Practical Action 2014. [*Humanitarian Needs assessment. The Good Enough Guide.*](#)

Flinn, B. 2021. [*Defining a Good Home: Touching on the Intangible in Roadmap for Research, InterAction.*](#)

Flinn, B., 2020. [*Defining 'better' better. Why building back better means more than structural safety. Manchester Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, Vol 2, Issue 1.*](#)

3

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES



*Training for women and men, Vanuatu
Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK*

KEY MESSAGE

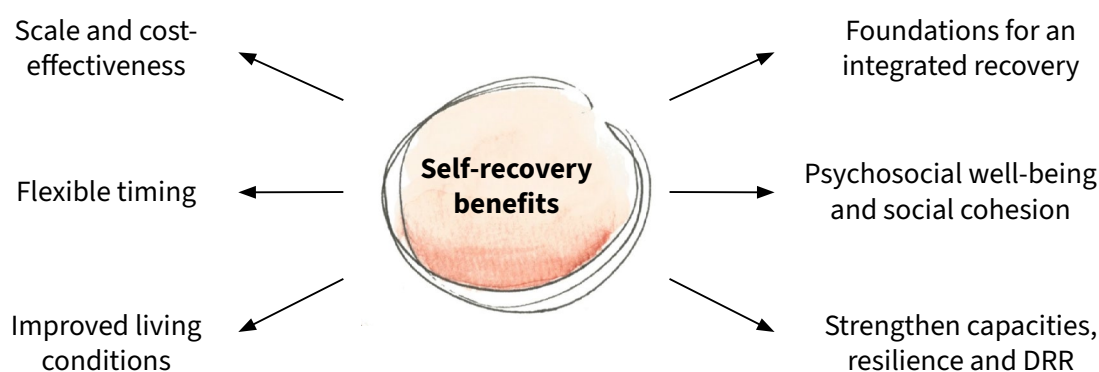
A supporting shelter self-recovery approach has the potential to benefit people affected by crisis at a greater scale, as well as implementing agencies, through maximising impact and sustainability of outcomes. This shift in mindset towards more holistic programming, however, comes with unique and common challenges for the Shelter Sector.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

- How a people-led approach to shelter recovery benefits both affected populations and implementing agencies, including cost effectiveness, reaching scale, strengthening capacities, and disaster risk reduction (DRR).
- The main challenges affecting support for shelter self-recovery, including barriers to funding, agency constraints and displacement.

3.1 POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Figure 3.1 Key benefits of successful self-recovery programming



Reaching scale and increasing cost effectiveness of humanitarian interventions

Product-based approaches, which ‘deliver’ transitional or permanent shelters, normally fail to reach a significant percentage of the affected population, due to high unit costs as well as the sheer scale of the destruction. With huge needs and limited budgets, an equitable, appropriate and cost-effective approach that benefits a large proportion of the affected population is highly desirable.

Ideally, a self-recovery approach will benefit a range of people and the broader community. Training sessions, which raise awareness of good building practices and the diverse and multi-sectoral benefits of adequate housing (sometimes referred to as co-benefits), should be available to all members of the community and actors involved in the humanitarian response. Some forms of indirect support - for example to improve an access road or lobby for tenure rights - can be advantageous to everyone as well as increasing long-term resilience.

The ability of cash transfers and training, especially in improved techniques that build on local building cultures, to reach large numbers of people is discussed in more detail in Part B. Cash in particular has been shown to complement other resources and leverage other sources of income, such as loans and remittances, and can significantly increase the potential reach of shelter interventions.

CASE STUDY

3.1 Replication of resilient design provides potential to reach scale, Malawi

The floods in Malawi in 2015 displaced around 270,000 people and destroyed thousands of houses. A well-established local NGO, with the support of an INGO, discussed plans for rebuilding homes with affected communities and households and found that the materials and tools they needed were less than the quantities that had been calculated at the time of developing the project proposal. The 'Strength Based Approach', promoted by the NGO, capitalised on community knowledge, skills and assets, through participatory and hands-on study of proven resilient design details and construction techniques. Through this process the NGO was able to directly support more than twice the number of households originally planned, and also provided a model house design and construction details that were widely replicated by self-recovering households. This process was at a low scale, but it has the potential to increase scale with a more ambitious project.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Allowing for flexibly timed support

Self-recovery begins within days of a disaster; supporting that process has to be rapid if it is to be effective. Conversely, immediate self-recovery may be of a very temporary, makeshift nature and the more recovery-oriented phase may be initiated some time later, and not everyone will start that process at the same time. A programme that supports self-recovery can be both rapid and appropriately timed. A household's basic sheltering needs may be met rapidly, but they may decide to postpone the next phase of a more permanent home as other priorities are met. A self-recovery approach will respect priorities and allow for flexible timing of programme interventions and support.

Improving living conditions by informed choices

As an important component of the self-recovery approach, technical assistance can support informed decisions, reduce vulnerabilities and incorporate risk reduction and other improvement measures, both at the housing unit and settlement levels. Improvements to living conditions can manifest themselves in a number of ways: choice of a safer location; construction of safer buildings; lower exposure to hazards due to disaster risk reduction measures; more durable shelter/housing incurring lower maintenance costs; secure tenure; healthier living spaces (e.g. improved ventilation, sanitation and flooring); improved security; and decreased fire risks. There can be further benefits such as affordability, replicability and allowing for future additions/extensions. Technical assistance that builds upon a good understanding of local building practices and people's aspirations is a critical part of this process of improvement.

CASE STUDY

3.2 'Healthy Home Kits' in Guatemala since 2010

The holistic approach of a humanitarian organisation specialising in shelter has prompted the development of Healthy Home Kits to improve housing in the Americas Region. **These kits are delivered to communities or community groups following an engagement process during which community members identify their own priorities and receive training.** This practical training enables community members to learn how to construct or install these kits, so that they can replicate the elements in their own houses. Community groups distribute kits to identified families who require specific housing improvement elements. Households then self-implement with technical support from local artisans.



Smokeless stove in El Quiché, Guatemala

Source: María Rosa Reyes Galicia, Habitat for Humanity Guatemala

Six different kits have been established for Guatemala: improved kitchens (lorena-stoves), concrete flooring, water purification filters, rainwater harvesting systems, drains, and latrines. In the case of improved kitchens, which use very simple technology and local affordable materials, it is evident that they have contributed significantly to reducing burns, respiratory diseases and vision problems. In addition, they have brought environmental benefits due to a reduction in wood consumption of up to 44 percent and reduced carbon emissions. Improved stoves also lower fire risks and shorten cooking times, which benefits women predominantly. Over several years, this project has benefitted around 300,000 marginalised and vulnerable people in Guatemala through improved health, dignity and self-empowerment and was awarded a World Habitat Award in 2019.

For further information: [Hábitat para la Humanidad Guatemala: Products.](#)

Laying the foundations for an integrated recovery

Shelter recovery is a key element in restoring a sense of normality. It is usually a first step towards overall recovery, allowing the resumption of livelihoods and fostering other fundamental aspects of recovery such as health, sanitation, education, psychosocial well-being, and a sense of home. Considering the foundational and integrated role of shelter with other aspects of recovery, an approach to support self-recovery processes allows affected households to manage their needs and priorities in a way that is appropriate to them. In particular, it is recognised that a people-led approach to shelter recovery is usually better at incorporating livelihoods, a central theme too often overlooked by reconstruction programmes.

Improvements that increase the structural durability of shelters and houses, and also create healthy environments, have an important role to play as long-term investments by households. The security of adequate housing allows reinvestment in other assets, such as livelihoods and education ('the shelter effect').¹⁷

The debate around what has been termed the ‘wider impacts of shelter programming’ has gained considerable traction among shelter practitioners. Both physical and mental health, livelihoods, protection, and an understanding of the importance of home and home-making are all now recognised as being essential to the understanding of recovery and adequate housing.

Further reading on the wider impacts of shelter and recovery of home:

Webb, S., Weinstein Sheffield, E. & Flinn, B., 2020. [Towards Healthier Homes in Humanitarian Settings](#), London: CARE International UK & Oxford Brookes University.

InterAction, 2020. [The Wider Impacts of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Assistance](#), Washington DC.

InterAction 2021. [Roadmap for Recovery.](#)

Chapter 5: Reconsidering Protection in Self-recovery Programming

Chapter 8: Adopting an Environmental Health Lens in Practice

Chapter 10: Supporting the Recovery of Home-Based Livelihoods

Chapter 11: Exploring the Role of Shelter and Livelihoods

Chapter 12: Defining a Good Home. Touching on the Intangible

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) 2015. [Extending Impact - Factors Influencing Households to Adopt Hazard-Resistant Construction Practices in Post-disaster Settings.](#)

Acting as a catalyst for psychosocial recovery, well-being and social cohesion

Supporting shelter self-recovery can have a positive impact on trauma as it promotes better mental health and psychosocial well-being. Ownership and engagement by affected people in their recovery activities, and in particular in the active process of home-making, can give purpose and hope, allowing a restoration of a sense of pride, self-worth and dignity and reducing helplessness. Recognising and complementing these activities can have positive psychosocial impacts, which may be as important as the physical outcomes of improved living conditions.

Additionally, autonomous responses for shelter and settlement recovery often rely on collective action (mutual help to rebuild individual shelters, collective initiatives to remove debris, clean roads etc.). Recognising, promoting and strengthening these collective actions has the potential to enhance social cohesion and a sense of community and belonging. The promotion of collective action, however, may not always be appropriate in every cultural context.

CASE STUDY

3.3. Aspiration and self-empowerment, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

Kakuma refugee camp, located in north-west Kenya, holds around 70,000 refugees. Many have been living in Kakuma for more than ten years. Opportunities for refugees to improve their lives are limited; they are not allowed to exit the camp or allowed to keep animals, and the semi-arid environment is not conducive to growing crops. It is possible for refugees to start small businesses, but the market is finite as Kakuma is in a geographically isolated area. Refugees do not have many **incentives**, and with no work, all the days of the week seem the same. This situation was taking a heavy toll on their mental and physical health.

Some refugees, understanding the difficulties, decided to support their fellow camp residents by identifying people with specific skills who could organise activities, including plays and festivals or constructing community elements, etc. Once they **regained a sense of pride and purpose**, refugees wanted to improve their homes, and soon became competitive with each other about decorating their living spaces and planting trees and flowers around their compound. Refugees who had never seen the possibility of a meaningful life in the camp got married and had children. Now their children are in school and there are reasons and meaning to life in the camp.

For more information: [Forced Migration Review. Riding on the back of a tortoise.](#)

Further reading about psychosocial support and well-being related to shelter:

IASC [Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.](#)

Webb, S. and Weinstein Sheffield, E. 2021. [Mindful Sheltering](#), Oxford: Oxford Brookes University & CARE International UK.

Strengthening capacities, resilience and disaster risk reduction

Supporting shelter recovery, and in particular self-recovery, is an opportunity for generating long-term capacities in adequate, durable and affordable housing which are locally-relevant, resulting in better-prepared communities. Technical assistance, including awareness-raising and capacity-building at various levels, can be planned at a reasonable cost and will leave a legacy of increased preparedness at both the community and institutional levels. Affected people, as well as relevant authorities, will be better prepared for, and more able to cope with, future crises.

In this sense, supporting shelter self-recovery is closely linked to the discourse on the humanitarian-development nexus. The experience and capacity generated among affected people in overcoming short-term needs can increase confidence for better preparedness, addressing long-term root causes of vulnerability and stimulating the local economy. Moreover, tailored support to as many people as possible according to their needs (not a one-size-fits-all approach) has the potential to promote equity and fairness and counterbalance potentially unequal power structures of gender, caste, religion, and age.

CASE STUDY

3.4 Support to build earthquake-resistant homes, Nepal, 2015

After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, an INGO, through local partners, provided social-technical support to communities in the Gorkha district. 'Packages' of assistance were designed around the self-recovery capacity of households with additional layers of support for vulnerable households, which included the construction of houses. As part of the **construction process for these houses training was provided** to masons and the community, along with the **dissemination of key messages and techniques**. The buildings served as a reference and benchmark for building code compliance, a requirement for self-recovering households to receive government funding. Households were also supported in their grant applications, with documentation, budgeting and other non-construction related assistance that was essential for their recovery

For more information: CRS. [*Technical Assistance for Recovery and Resilience, Nepal.*](#)

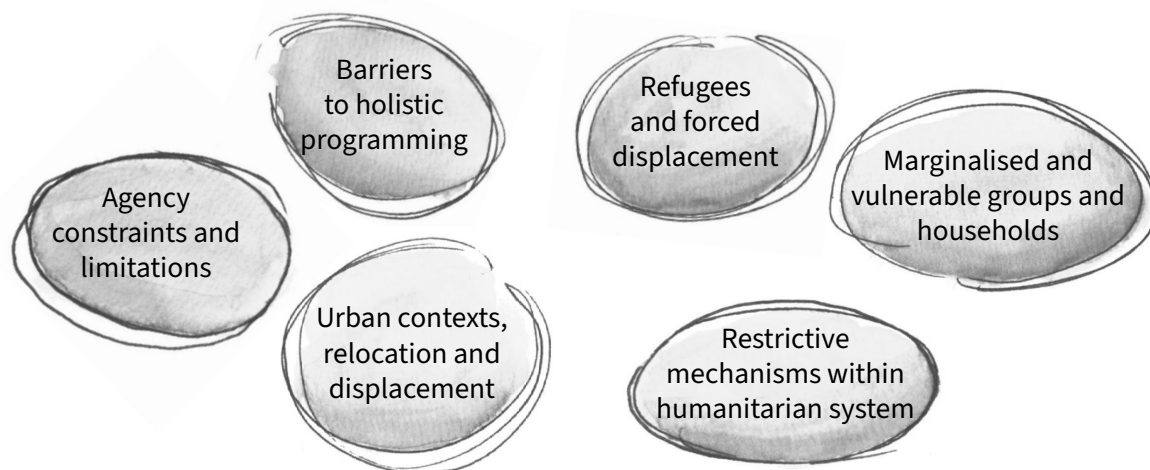


A local mason trained in earthquake resilient construction advises a householder as he reconstructs
Source: Jennifer Hardy/CRS

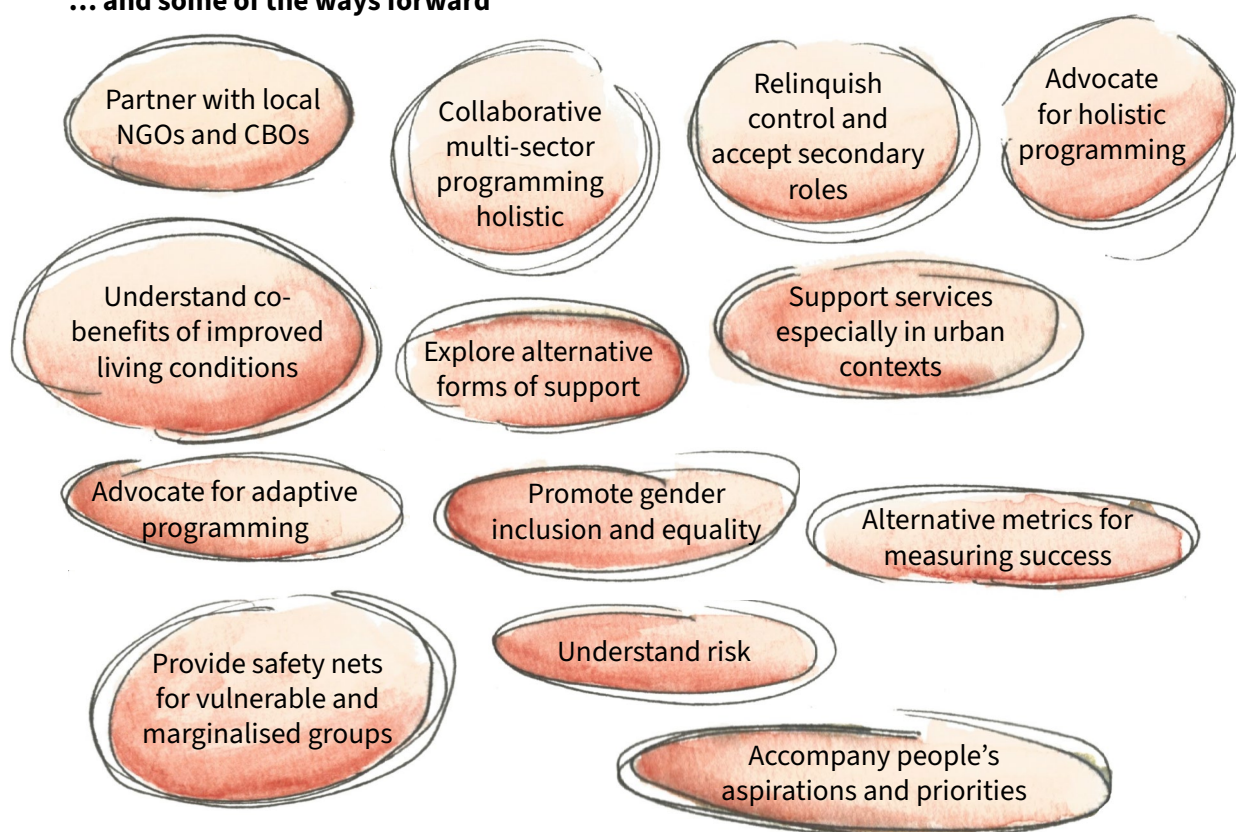
3.2 CHALLENGES

Figure 3.2 The challenges of supporting self-recovery

The challenges of supporting self-recovery programming...



... and some of the ways forward



There are various challenges to implementing a shelter self-recovery approach, and possible ways to overcome them. [Part B](#) explores the challenges and possible solutions in more detail.

Barriers to holistic humanitarian programming

Recovery is a holistic and multi-faceted process, and its definition will vary from household to household and between communities. Ideally, supporting shelter self-recovery is embedded in a holistic support strategy that includes multiple aspects of recovery: food security and livelihoods, water and sanitation, transport infrastructure, and access to basic services such as health and education, while considering environmental sustainability and other cross-cutting issues such as protection, gender, inclusion, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

A critique of many traditional responses is that sectors are too 'siloed' in their respective **clusters**. This is reflected in Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), which tend to list needs within different sectors matched with respective response strategies by sector, which in turn inform the larger humanitarian funding appeals. Consequently, holistic programming can become very complicated for humanitarian organisations who are expected to submit funding proposals, as well as report outcomes by sector, to respective clusters (in contexts where the cluster system is activated).

Another challenge is that the humanitarian response by any of the sectors requires a certain level of expertise and experience. Therefore, agencies often tend to specialise in one or two sectors in which they can build significant capacity. Consequently, knowledge and expertise in other sectors, which might be important to consider in an integrated programme, may be limited.

→ **Collaboration between and across sectors, starting with an holistic context analysis, is essential to enable multi-sectoral strategies to be translated into holistic programming at the agency level.**

Restrictive mechanisms within the humanitarian system

Funding mechanisms: emergency response funding is often limited to three to nine months, depending on funding mechanisms. While there is a recognition of the need for immediate assistance, it is commonly agreed that shelter assistance, in particular, needs to include a medium- to long-term view from the outset of the humanitarian response.

→ **Advocate for longer and more flexible commitments by humanitarian organisations and donors to support shelter self-recovery.**

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) and reporting: the success of post-crisis shelter programmes is often assessed on the basis of objectives and indicators, linked to conditions of donors or funding mechanisms (such as timelines, budget inflexibility and reporting requirements related to logframes). Common mechanisms to monitor and evaluate success tend to capture the number of houses completed, materials distributed or training delivered, not whether these activities actually provide the support people need or whether that support leads to wider beneficial impacts and longer-term outcomes.

→ **Explore alternative metrics to indicate the success of a project, such as wider impacts using proxy indicators.**

Agency constraints and limitations

International organisations may not always have expertise and experience in sheltering or housing reconstruction and may often be unfamiliar with the country and specific context in which they are operating. Building context specific shelter and construction expertise ad hoc is clearly a challenge. Furthermore, engaging in construction may come with legal liabilities (depending on the countries' legislation) that might be difficult for humanitarian organisations to take on. Therefore, many perceive humanitarian shelter and settlement responses as too complex, costly and high-risk. If agencies understand that adequate sheltering will provide multiple co-benefits and wider impacts, and that

professional capacity in sheltering is essential to realise holistic programming, then perceptions of sheltering as too complex and risky could change towards appreciating and supporting shelter self-recovery as core to rebuilding homes and communities.

- **An approach that accompanies the activities of affected people and accepts that some risk and liability remain with the survivors, will overcome concerns around engaging in shelter and reconstruction support.**
- **Partnering with local actors, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) or the private sector, who can provide capacity, experience and local knowledge that an INGO may lack, is key**

For some humanitarian actors, challenges around supporting self-recovery may lie in the need to relinquish control of the results; homes may turn out to be of a variable quality or fall short of the expected ideal. Such results may not be considered suitable for a donor report or may pose risks to the brand and reputation of an agency or donor.

- **The mindset for supporting self-recovery appreciates the shift from the transactional concept of providing a solution to a need, to one of supporting and enabling people's aspirations and leaving households to make legitimate priority decisions.**
- **Relinquishing control and accepting a role that is secondary to that of the affected people and local actors need not be seen as a limitation, but as a necessity to facilitate 'localisation' and achieve the Grand Bargain aspirations.**

Marginalised and vulnerable groups and households cannot self-recover

The most vulnerable groups in a society, sometimes excluded from social networks, are often those who are marginalised because of their gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, age, literacy, illness, or disability. In addition, such marginalised groups are more likely to be living in hazardous locations, in precarious conditions, without security of tenure, and highly exposed to future hazards. Although a self-recovery approach emphasises the right of survivors to choose, it does not ignore that the poorest and most vulnerable people often do not really have any choices. People with compound vulnerabilities may not be able to recover on their own using self-recovery support and may indeed need more conventional shelter support.

- **Alternative forms of support can always be integrated or added to a self-recovery programme. For example, 'model houses' serve a dual purpose of training builders and members of a community on safer building practices as well as providing housing for groups or families with compound vulnerabilities.**
- **Similarly, the addition of targeted 'top-up' grants can support more marginalised households. This is an example of a safety net that may be appropriate to ensure that no one is left behind. In many contexts, women do not have ownership of land or housing, which makes them, and particularly single women heads of households, vulnerable or dependent.**
- **Advocating for women's right to own land, and including them in decision-making processes about the household's self-recovery (where traditionally such decisions would be taken by the male head of household alone), are ways to support self-recovery and promote gender equality. As this may be contrary to local cultural and social norms, an incremental and gradual social transformation process may need to be supported.**

CASE STUDY

3.5 Minorities discriminated by government aid processes, Myanmar, 2008

Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in May 2008 severely affecting nearly 2.4 million people living in the Ayeyarwady and Yangon Regions.¹⁸ Over 150,000 people were made homeless as whole villages and homes were swept away. The military government strongly resisted external aid during the first weeks, worsening the situation of the affected population. When aid was finally allowed into the country, government relief efforts were mainly directed at the majority Buddhist population, side-lining other religious minorities including the Muslim Rohingyas. This already very marginalised group could only access limited support from humanitarian aid organizations, which was conditioned and controlled by the government, making recovery very difficult for them.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Further reading on gender and inclusion:

CARE 2016. [Gender & Shelter Good Programming Guidelines.](#)

IFRC, Handicap International, CBM 2015. [All Under One Roof.](#)

UNHCR 2011. [Working with National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Forced Displacement.](#)

IFRC 2018. [Minimum Standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies.](#)

Urban contexts, relocation and displacement

Over half the world's population, an estimated 56 percent,¹⁹ live in cities and urban areas. And about one quarter of these urban dwellers live in slums or informal settlements – a total of 1 billion people²⁰ living in the most hazardous, unhealthy conditions with fragile security of tenure.

While there are many positives to supporting recovery in an urban context, such as better linkages to the private sector, most urban contexts are more complex than rural settings and more challenging for any kind of shelter or reconstruction intervention. Common challenges include: complex land tenure; informal settlements without legal tenure; access in some informal areas; multi-family, multi-storey housing; high population density; a large proportion of rented accommodation; higher dependency on basic service providers; and weaker social fabric. Housing in urban areas will sometimes require more sophisticated construction techniques and enforcement of building codes. By contrast, informal settlements in urban contexts are usually built using very basic construction techniques, and, more often than not, have no security of tenure.

There may also be complex social structures and governance mechanisms in urban settings, as well as challenges with accessing services, such as water supply, sewage and electricity networks, which may be damaged or not fully functioning. These factors are likely to adversely affect people's ability to self-recover, especially in more formal areas of cities, and can also make supporting self-recovery in a meaningful way more challenging than in rural settings.

→ **Recovery of public services, including debris removal, is a vital first step and requires multi-stakeholder collaboration.**

- **Specific expertise may be required such as governance, urban planning, infrastructure, and tenure rights and experience of collaboration with the private sector. Supporting people to navigate these complexities, especially to obtain legal tenure, can be the most useful approach.**

Refugees and forced displacement

Finding shelter is always a priority for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), and often their interests are perceived to be in conflict with those of the host community. There have been few, if any, refugee programmes where self-recovery has been the explicit objective. However, given that only a minority of refugees and IDPs are provided shelter by international agencies or governments, the majority fall into the category of needing self-recovery support. They may be sheltering in abandoned buildings, renting, squatting in informal settlements, or sleeping rough, or meeting their immediate needs as far as possible with their own means, but very often far from what could be considered adequate. The concept of supporting self-recovery could be usefully applied to find ways to support this majority group, and include facilitating good relations between host and IDP/refugee populations.

- **Actions taken to support access to better shelter and settlement should create an enabling environment for better living conditions for the broader community, such as promoting housing, land and property regulations, increasing the rental market stock, improving community infrastructures, upgrading public spaces, and increasing work opportunities in the construction sector.**

CASE STUDY

3.6 Legalisation of urban settlements, Colombia, 2018

Prolonged forced displacement is one of the major negative impacts of the armed conflict in Colombia, exposing displaced populations to precarious and marginalised living conditions. Many of them have settled in informal urban areas, expanding existing slum areas and buildings made from low-cost materials. In this context **it is difficult to identify and separate the displaced population from the local population.**

A comprehensive range of solutions has been promoted by strengthening Colombia's national strategy in urban areas, thereby strengthening self-recovery efforts of displaced people. This policy includes the legalisation of settlements with high concentrations of displaced populations and the promotion of institutional presence in these areas, with the aim of reducing risks faced by both IDPs and host communities. The legalisation process allows for the promotion of durable solutions at a relatively low cost.

In Cúcuta Municipality, 700 individual land titles have been granted (300 for IDPs), community infrastructures (sport centres and community centres) have been constructed and access roads have been improved. At the national level a methodology for settlement legalisation and the creation of an exchange platform for all involved actors to coordinate actions throughout the process, has been established.

For more information: Urban Settlements Working Group May 2019. [Case N7 – Colombia: Area-Based Approaches in Urban Settings - Compendium of Case Studies.](#)

Further reading about forced displacement:

Forced Migration Review 2017. [Shelter in Displacement. Issue 55.](#)

4

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER CONCERNS AND APPROACHES



Source: Brendan Bannon/CARE Denmark

KEY MESSAGES

- Many of the activities in a supporting self-recovery programme, such as training, awareness- raising, legal support, cash support, are also active ingredients of many other approaches to shelter and other humanitarian assistance. The significant and innovative difference is in the change of mindset and rationale.
- In conventional approaches key decisions are made by the implementing organisation and their standards and conditions are applied. In contrast, a shelter self-recovery programme aims to support people as the active decision-makers on their pathway towards recovery.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

How current humanitarian concerns, and other approaches to humanitarian shelter support, influence and align with a supporting shelter self-recovery approach, and where synergies and differences exist.

Alignment with current humanitarian concerns

An approach that supports self-recovery contributes to many of the current concerns of humanitarian and development actors including bridging the humanitarian-development nexus and contributing towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aligns well with the current concerns for a more people-centred and participatory, flexible approach and an increase in 'localisation' laid out in the Grand Bargain.²¹ It also calls for a 'participation revolution'.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction²² was endorsed in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly in recognition of the need to reduce disaster risk. One of its four priority areas of action is to enhance disaster preparedness for effective response, and to 'Build Back Better'.

These strategic approaches, now being promoted by international bodies, all point to the need for increased flexibility. 'Adaptive programming' addresses the fact that needs and priorities change over time in a way that is impossible to predict at the outset of a humanitarian response.

Climate change and the degradation of the environment is now universally accepted as a defining crisis of our time. The inevitable impact on the vulnerability of people across the world is a further strain on an already stressed humanitarian system. The already increasing humanitarian needs and fewer available resources will be further exacerbated. An approach that maximises the strengths and capacities of affected people can deliver value for money at scale, as well as adapting to and mitigating climate change.

Owner-driven reconstruction

The development of research into self-recovery has built on the concept of owner-driven reconstruction (ODR) that puts people at the centre of the decision-making process. Implicit in an ODR programme is the premise that people have control over building design and construction, with donors providing financial and technical support. In reality, ODR programmes may have reduced opportunities for choice and the population may not be fully in charge of many aspects of the initiative.²³ Although ODR does include beneficiaries in decision-making and provides options, some conditions and processes may still be set by the implementing agency. The management of construction does not guarantee full empowerment, as people may have to accept options presented to them.

Shelter self-recovery is essentially different in that the assisting agency and other external actors are accompanying and facilitating an already existing recovery pathway. Conditions should not be enforced to ensure structural safety or any other standard, with the focus on providing information and training on the importance of structural safety, location and adequate healthy housing. The prioritising of recovery needs is ultimately in the hands of the householder.

Owner-driven reconstruction programmes tend to support only a selected number of affected people, while supporting shelter self-recovery aims to reach as many people as possible with at least one of the different types of assistance offered.

Settlements approach

The settlements approach is a framework for aid agencies and local stakeholders to plan and deliver more efficient, targeted and localised humanitarian and recovery interventions to increase impact at the local level. It adopts human settlement as the geographical and spatial delineation to design and coordinate a meaningful holistic response, including all relevant sectors and population groups. The settlements approach is a coordination mechanism that relies on the strong multi-sector capacity of participating agencies, local stakeholders and other actors, to deliver high-impact interventions during and beyond the emergency. A supporting self-recovery programme fits perfectly into the

rationale of holistic programming that creates synergies with other sectors. Furthermore, the self-recovery focus on the scale of community rather than individual support is very much in line with settlements approach objectives.

Further reading

GSC 2019. [Settlements Approach in Urban Areas Working Group.](#)

Build Change 2021. [The Build Change Guide to Resilient Housing: An Essential Handbook for Governments and Practitioners.](#) Denver, CO.



*Rebuilding after Cyclone Harold, Vanuatu, 2020
Source: Valerie Fernandez*



PART B

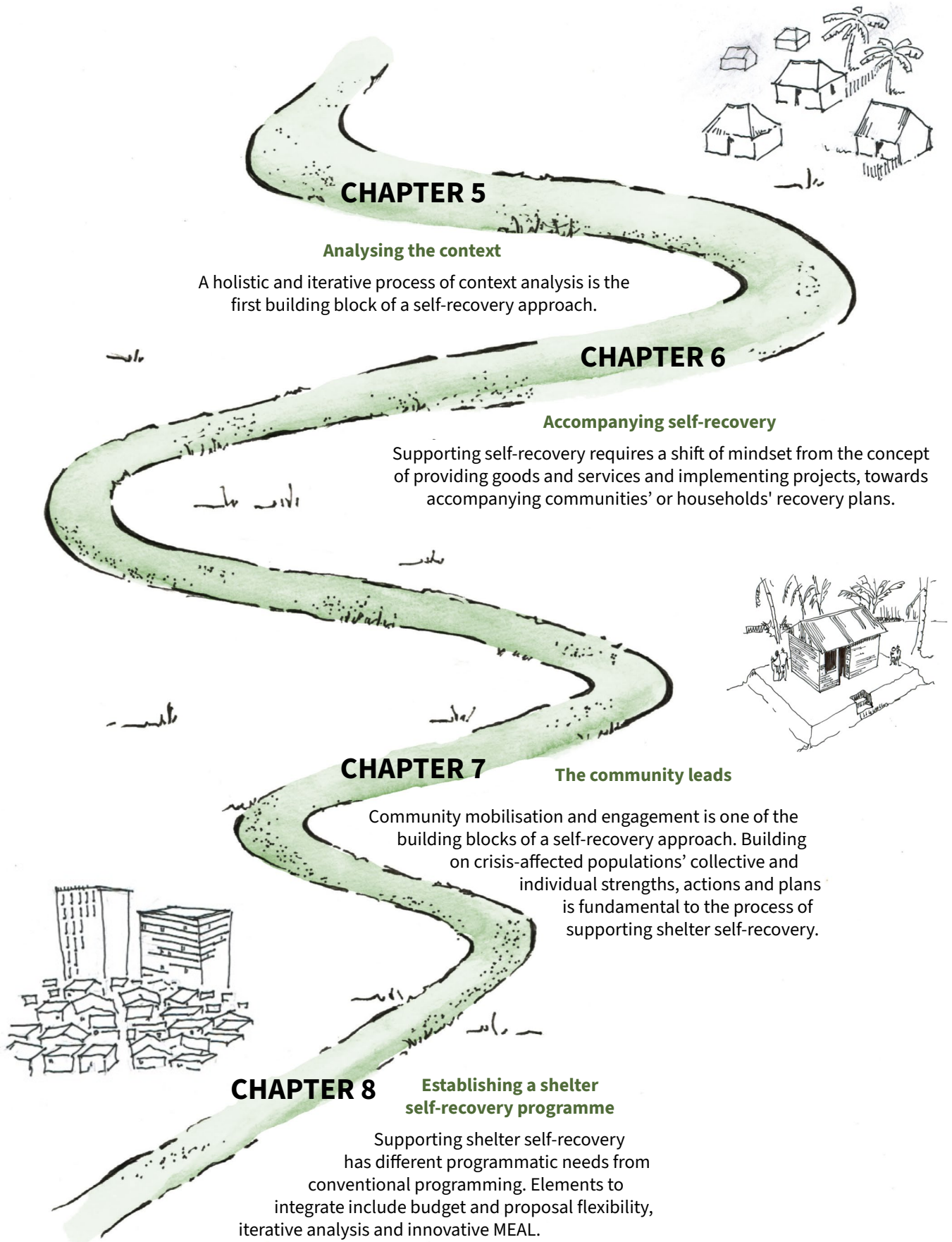
SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY PROGRAMMING

Part B is a practical guide for supporting shelter self-recovery and attempts to capture good programming practice that emphasises those elements of shelter self-recovery support that differ from conventional shelter programming. It is acknowledged throughout that people's self-recovery does not follow the common programme cycle, but is rather a continuum, with different phases that all contribute to the recovery process.

The chapters of Part B are structured to elaborate on the three building blocks for supporting shelter self-recovery in Part A:

- **Chapter 5** explains the importance of a holistic and iterative context analysis as the foundation for self-recovery programming.
- **Chapter 6** outlines facilitation and accompaniment support options to fill identified gaps, strengthen capacities to overcome barriers and promote an enabling environment for shelter self-recovery.
- **Chapter 7** explores strategies for effective community mobilisation and engagement.
- **Chapter 8** sets out practical considerations for agencies supporting self-recovery.

PART B PATHWAY - THE ROUTE EXPLAINED



5

ANALYSING THE CONTEXT: A CONTINUOUS AND HOLISTIC PROCESS



Source: Chiara Jasna Vaccaro

KEY MESSAGES

- A thorough understanding of the context is a prerequisite for any humanitarian activity and a must for self-recovery support to be meaningful and effective.
- A holistic and iterative process of context analysis is the first building block of a self-recovery approach.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

- Why it is important to understand the context.
- How to conduct a context analysis: The process and key assessment criteria.
- The main factors influencing shelter self-recovery: people's plans and strengths as well as any shortfall in capacity or resources that impedes recovery.

5.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS: IN SUMMARY

While conventional needs assessments gather mostly quantitative data to find out, for example, how many people have lost their houses and therefore the number of houses that need to be rebuilt, the objective of a context analysis is to understand what people are doing now and what they plan to do next, and why people are doing (or not doing) certain things and not others. This requires the collection of qualitative in addition to quantitative data. The results of a context analysis will not be limited to the number of houses to be rebuilt but rather **how to support a community as a whole to build back better**.

The context analysis also leads to a different monitoring and evaluation process. See sections 7.2.4 and 8.3. The goal is not to track the number of houses rebuilt, but whether the support provided has facilitated a faster and better recovery through adequate shelter for a significant number of affected people.

The following subsections outline different stages of analysis, suggesting the scale and detail of data that can realistically be collected and how this data informs programming. Given the complex and rapidly changing environments that humanitarian organisations operate in, completing all stages rigorously can be difficult to achieve in practice.

5.1.1 Initial orientation

Objective: To gain a background understanding of the context and initial orientation about the scale, main barriers and gaps for self-recovery; to explore possible funding options and understand whether a supporting self-recovery approach is feasible.

When: Immediately after the crisis.

How: Through a review of existing resources, secondary data analysis, news, observation, key informant interviews (KIIs). Ideally some assessments and studies will have already been conducted in preparedness activities (e.g. markets, policy, local building techniques). If any initial assessments have already been undertaken by UN agencies or the government, these are a good resource.

Further resources

The Global Shelter Cluster, through the [Recovery Community of Practice](#), is supporting the compilation of 'shelter response profiles' for hazard-prone countries. [Shelter response profiles](#) have been prepared for Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Haiti, Malawi, and Tonga.

Programme activities informed by initial orientation:

- **Assess the implementing agency's capacity and the capacity of potential implementing partners.**
- **Hold a strategy discussion with agency headquarters to decide whether support to self-recovery is adequate (perhaps in combination with other more conventional approaches) and what type of programme is envisaged (e.g. community-based programme activities or more indirect/higher level support such as market-based interventions, advocacy, coordination, and/or capacity building).**
- **Engage donors, draft concept note/first proposal, discuss possibility of flexible funding modalities.**
- **Select areas of intervention.**

5.1.2 Rapid context analysis

Objective: To validate initial assumptions about skills, capacities, barriers and gaps, and how best to address these to inform fundraising proposals.

When: As soon as possible, in order to make first contact with the affected population, scoping potential collaboration and support options.

How: Through focus group discussions (FGDs), KIIs, transect walks, knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) surveys. Any initial assessments conducted by the government, UN-OCHA or other agencies can provide useful information.

Programme activities informed by rapid context analysis:

- **First outline/concept note for funding suggesting a feasible strategy, what tools to use, what modalities to apply (cash, training, material, etc.). See Chapter 6.**
- **Outline team structure, capacities needed to facilitate envisaged activities (see Chapter 8), start recruitment.**
- **Establish first monitoring baseline.**

Often the initial orientation and rapid analysis will happen simultaneously.

5.1.3 Detailed context analysis

Objective: To complete the details of the programme strategy and confirm activities.

When: Once funding is confirmed (at least informally).

How: Through working with the affected population (see [Chapter 7](#) for more detail on community engagement). There are various tools (see below) to facilitate partnerships with affected populations and to clearly identify critical barriers and gaps that block or hinder their self-recovery; this will form the basis for further action planning.

Programme activities informed by detailed context analysis

- **Detailed, adaptive operational strategy (including time line, milestones etc.), recruitment and capacity building.**
- **Elaborate the baseline for iterative analysis, monitoring and evaluation of activities.**

Further resources

CRATERre 2021. [Context analysis of local building cultures.](#)

CARE. [Rapid Gender Analysis Approach. External Evaluation.](#)

British Red Cross. [Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment.](#)

GSC. [Shelter KAP Questionnaire.](#)

GSC. [3.0 Methodology Guide for Stakeholders and Audience Analysis](#) and [3.1 Stakeholder mapping Analysis Template.](#)

intrac for civil society. [Participatory learning and action.](#)

Global Protection Cluster. [Key Resources.](#)

IFRC. PASSA. [Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness.](#)

ALNAP 2020. [More relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need.](#)

World Bank 2017. [Post-disaster needs assessment guidelines: housing.](#)

5.1.4 Specific assessments

Objective: To provide necessary evidence and detail for the most critical aspects identified in the context analysis to inform programme interventions, community and household action planning, market interventions, and provide details for strategic advocacy.

When: At the beginning or during the programme, as needed.

How: By conducting specific assessments on a particular topic of interest such as a market assessment for certain materials, an assessment of building failure mechanisms, environmental assessments, and a study of relevant housing, land and property (HLP) rights. Certain assessments can be conducted in collaboration with the affected population.

Programme activities informed by specific assessments:

- **Confirm programme strategy, resolve outstanding issues and provide detail for further action.**
- **Inform first adaptation and changes to programming.**

For market assessment tools go to [page 66](#).

For environmental assessment tools go to [page 73](#).

Further resources

University of Bath. [Shelter Assessment Matrix](#).

Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework. [A people-centred needs analysis for effective humanitarian action](#).

Shelter and settlements programming should be closely linked and coordinated with other sectors, such as food, WASH, health, livelihoods, and protection.

5.1.5 Iterative analysis and monitoring and evaluation

Objective: To ensure that the programme adapts to changing circumstances and priorities, corrects erroneous assumptions and monitors quality.

When: From the completion of the initial orientation and continuously throughout the programme. The different analyses should also be considered as first steps towards establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework.

How: For example, the KAP survey can be used as a baseline to measure changes in people's knowledge, attitudes and practices that result from the project. Assessments undertaken by affected populations as part of their action planning can be used to establish criteria for community-led monitoring. This continuous iterative approach will establish how people's plans and priorities change over time. Iterative analysis should also consider previous barriers to self-recovery, whether issues have been resolved and if there are any new challenges.

Note that different monitoring and evaluation processes will be needed for agency and community or household use. Agency monitoring will be used internally to evaluate the overall programme and report to donors. Affected people may need support to establish their own monitoring process, using their own criteria.

Programme activities informed by iterative analysis and monitoring:

- People that self-recover follow different, and perhaps unexpected, recovery pathways. Agencies must monitor and evaluate regularly to assess whether the support provided is having the intended outcome or whether further or different support is needed. In which case, the programme must adapt accordingly.

Further resources

For further reading on **monitoring and evaluation**, see sections 7.2.4 and 8.3 and the [report of the MEAL workshop](#) run by the Promoting Safer Building Working Group in January 2021.

5.1.6 Impact evaluation

Objective: Understand the short and longer-term impacts of the various project activities.

When: After completing the project, even several years later.

How: Some of the community monitoring and evaluation; such as “most significant change”, will give an indication of the ‘impact’ achieved; ideally an external evaluation is undertaken years later to provide the longitudinal analysis and learning.

Programme activities informed by impact evaluation:

- Consider allocating a budget line for an impact study.
- Reach out to donors and universities to support longer-term impact and longitudinal studies.
- Identify a proposed methodology from the outset to help inform what data may need to be collected.

Further resources

InterAction April 2019. [Impact Evaluation Guidance Note and Webinar Series.](#)

5.2 CONTEXT ANALYSIS: IN PRACTICE

Recovery is influenced by the interplay between a number of external factors (such as access to finance, land, policies and legislation, materials, skills) that need to be understood well to identify key barriers and opportunities for supporting shelter self-recovery. The topics for analysis below overlap slightly; in different contexts, different factors may be of more or lesser importance. The context analysis process will identify how these factors influence decisions and how responses can adapt over time to reflect people’s changes in circumstance. Additional topics might need to be included, though this is dependent on time, capacity and resources.

When conducting a context analysis, a gendered approach is essential, taking into account the aspirations and plans of all members of the affected population. Women and young women/girls should be at the centre of the process. Their traditional role in the home and community in some societies - however undesirable or stereotypical

this may be - means that they are most affected by the adverse impacts of inadequate, unhealthy or unsafe housing. Their participation, opinions and voices are essential to the success of good shelter programmes.

5.2.1 Understanding existing self-recovery

A critical aspect of supporting self-recovery is to focus on people's strengths and capacities first, while also analysing the barriers to their recovery. Shelter actors must understand how people have been affected, and the dynamics of what they are doing, and plan to do, to cope with immediate and long-term needs and priorities. The questions that need to be asked will differ following disasters caused by natural hazards and those by conflict and mass displacement, and whether it was a slow-onset or rapid crisis. Questions to consider include:

- Has housing been fully destroyed or rendered uninhabitable? How urgent is it to establish adequate shelter conditions (e.g. is the rainy season or winter approaching)?
- What is the damage on the settlement scale and are people still at the site (or have they relocated)?
- If affected populations are seeking shelter with host families or in collective centres, for how long can this be sustained?
- What are affected populations doing or planning to do, to recover their houses or accommodation?
 - Do they want to remain in their area of origin or relocate?
 - How are they planning to gather resources and financial means?
- What plans or strategies do local authorities or governments have to support people's recovery processes? Are these aligned with people's plans? Do the strategies consider everyone affected or only a specific group?
- Are there particularly vulnerable or marginalised individuals, households or groups that face additional challenges to self-recovery or to access support systems?

CASE STUDY

5.1 Self-recovery happens faster than official aid, Chile, 2014

A forest fire in April 2014 spread very quickly into the urban area of Valparaíso, Chile, destroying over 3,000 homes in informal areas known as *quebradas* (ravines). These areas are very steep, largely unconnected to urban infrastructure and have limited vehicle access that hampered fire-fighting operations.

Many inhabitants of the neighbourhoods work in the construction industry and traditionally self-build their houses. Most residents returned to their homes hours after the fire was extinguished to rescue belongings, salvage materials and clean up their plots. Fearing resettlement, they started the self-building process immediately with materials available, despite living in such a hazardous location.

The government developed subsidies for affected families and established a basic legal framework for an informal settlement, but it came too late. **Six months after the fire, the ravines were nearly completely rebuilt, and in many cases this reconstruction process was led by women.** Local NGOs supported households' rebuilding by informing people about subsidy options and providing technical advice on safer construction.

Adapted from [Shelter Projects 2015-2016, Case Study A.38 Chile 2014-2016](#).

5.2.2 Economic factors

Economic factors may have the greatest direct impact on shelter self-recovery, both at the macro-level of the national and sub-national economy (supply chains and markets) as well as the micro-level of households' livelihoods and their access to finance and other resources. Understanding economic dynamics at different scales will help identify bottlenecks, gaps and priorities in accessing markets, labour and financial resources for self-recovery, and how these can be addressed through good programming.

At the market-level consider:

- How did markets and supply chains function prior to the crisis and how have they been disrupted? What was the market ecosystem prior to and immediately after the disaster/crisis? Has disruption affected services (labour, retail) as well as commodities?
- How is the small scale construction sector organised and how has it been affected?
- What is the state of the rental market?
- What strategic interventions could help re-establish critical supply chains and markets and build resilience of markets towards future shocks?
- What is the expected demand on materials, labour, accommodation, and other resources and how could this affect people's shelter-recovery? For example, in terms of potential materials shortage and price escalation, high demand on temporary accommodation, and also in terms of market opportunities for local material producers and skilled labour.

At the household and community level consider:

- What were the livelihoods of the affected population prior to the crisis? What markets did they access and what financial mechanisms are they familiar with?
- What damage has been caused to people's livelihoods by the crisis and how might that affect their capacity to recover in the short and longer-term?
- What are people's competing priorities when reconstructing their homes and regaining their livelihoods while also catering for other basic needs? Where will they focus attention and resources?
- What financial resources can people access for their recovery?
 - Can they access credit on fair and appropriate terms; are there Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA); is there access to microfinance?
 - Are households relying on informal and exploitative loan providers?
 - Do they have financial support from diaspora or overseas workers? Are there (or will there be) government subsidies or grants for housing recovery (e.g. rental support) and reconstruction?
- What other means and resources for reconstruction can people access? Can they salvage materials from their destroyed houses or do they have the means to harvest or produce construction materials?
- Can people access markets easily (distance and transport) and are relevant resources (materials, labour, rental or other accommodation) available and affordable?
- What existing support systems/safety nets are in place at the national or community level (such as social security, insurance, grants, or subsidies for recovery) or have sprung into existence (traditional community mutual-help structures, spontaneous self-help groups, self-organized fundraising, support from the private sector, or not-affected groups of civil society)?

Further resources

CaLP and IRC 2018. [Comparative Table of Humanitarian Market Analysis Tools.](#)

Livelihoods Centre: [Resources and tools related to market assessments and livelihoods.](#)

ICRC. Rapid Assessment for Markets. [Guidelines for an Initial Emergency Market Assessment.](#)

CALP Network 2018. [Minimum standard for market analysis \(MISMA\).](#)

EMMA. [Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit.](#)

Mike Albu 2010. [Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit.](#)

Livelihoods Centre. [Household Economic Security \(HES\) Assessment Tool.](#)

Habitat for Humanity. [Shelter Pre-Crisis Market Analysis \(S-PCMA\) tool.](#)

Humanitarian Standards Partnership. [Minimum Economic Recovery Standards \(MERS\) \(3rd edition\).](#)

CASE STUDY

5.2 Household priorities, the Philippines, 2013

The northern part of Cebu island was only partially affected by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Most of the men from this area earn their living in Cebu City. In the aftermath of the typhoon, they returned to their homes to support their families and to recover and repair their homes. Their plan was to stay there until they could leave their families under a safe roof, giving up their income during this time.

Some international organisations provided unconditional cash during the first two months after the typhoon. This grant was intended for food, but many households used this money to buy building materials so that they could rebuild as soon as possible, taking advantage of the fact that local markets were up and running only two weeks after the event.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Further resources

Habitat for Humanity Terwilliger Center November 2018. Bahay, Buhay. [A survey of owner-driven housing construction practices, financing modalities and aspirations for a resilient home in disaster-prone areas in Cebu Province, Philippines.](#)

CASE STUDY

5.3 Housing finance and affordability, Nepal, 2015

After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed. Reconstruction resources included salvaged materials, household and community labour, household savings, income from employment, and remittances from family members overseas. Reconstruction costs, for both materials and labour, varied widely across affected areas, underlining the importance of understanding markets as part of context analyses.

While the government provided reconstruction grants, for many these were insufficient to reconstruct and to replace all the possessions they had lost in the earthquake.

To finance reconstruction, the majority of the population, who did not have access to formal credit, had to borrow money informally from friends or family or at exorbitant rates from money lenders. People owed, in some cases, vast sums of money that will take years to repay.

Any self-recovery approach involving cash should take into account that the provision of cash is only one part of a wider financial landscape, which includes **affordable access to finance for all groups**.

Adapted from Stephenson M, Habitat for Humanity Nepal 2020. 4 lessons from the 2015 Nepal earthquake housing recovery.

5.2.3 Political, legal and institutional factors

Political and legal factors have a significant influence on shelter self-recovery and often present systemic barriers that can be difficult to overcome. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for humanitarian actors to promote empowering and enabling environments. It is therefore important to have a good understanding of these factors at the national, sub-national, local, and informal levels of governance:

- What are the political aspirations of government for post-disaster recovery as well as governments' long-term development plans related to housing and rural/urban development? Is there political will to consider change? What are the specific restrictions or conditions authorities may impose during the recovery process?
- What is the political situation? Does possible instability create uncertainty about tenure security and about the reliability of laws and other institutional arrangements? In such conditions self-recovery might be put on hold while people wait to see how things develop.
- What are the institutional responsibilities of different ministries and relevant authorities related to disaster management, housing and construction? There are often different ministries (e.g. Ministry of Land and Urban Development, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Social Affairs) with conflicting or overlapping responsibilities and a consequent lack of coordination.
- What are the national and local level legislation and policies around land use, land ownership and tenure? Legislative processes to obtain land ownership or legal tenure can often be complicated and costly. Particular attention should be given to understanding the rights of women as well as ethnic minorities or other groups who might be excluded from owning land or unable to access equal recovery support.
- Do building codes and guidance exist for different contexts and building typologies and if so, how are these enforced? It is usually not possible to apply building codes to non-engineered traditional structures and temporary shelters. This may lead to a disparity between national policy and the realities on-the-ground.

- In urban settings, where demand for land is higher and there are more stakeholders and interests at play, how are land use, ownership and security of tenure addressed? There will be additional layers of complexity such as urban infrastructure and services.

It is critical to understand the layers of political and institutional complexity, power structures and interested stakeholders and interdependencies to find viable methodologies for supporting self-recovery and to advocate for support from relevant authorities or other influential stakeholders. Further sources of information to enable a broad overview of the political, institutional and legal setting include:

- Development plans, land use and zoning regulations, building codes and policies, are often publicly available at relevant ministries or municipal offices.
- UN-Habitat, if it has a country office, can be a valuable source of information on housing-related plans and policies.
- Local colleges, NGOs and universities related to the construction/housing sector may have maps and data relevant for particular areas.
- The Global Shelter Cluster has established a HLP focal point that can advise on legal matters. Furthermore HLP profiles summarising relevant legislation and policies have been created for a number of countries.

Further reading about housing, land and property rights

Housing land and property rights profiles have been compiled for: Burundi, Cook Islands, Ethiopia, Fiji, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

Land Portal – an online resource of **land rights and governance issues for 60+ countries**.

Suelo Urbano - an online platform sharing **knowledge and information on land rights and governance** for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Implementing the **Pinheiro Principles 2007** – A set of **human rights principles relating to HLP** and how to practically apply them in a range of contexts.



Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
Source: Sahat Zia Hero

CASE STUDY

5.4 Establishing land tenure, Haiti, 2010

In Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, one United Nations agency implemented a project to clear rubble from the entire neighbourhood of Pacot. However, in order to remove the remains of a collapsed house the approval of the owner had to be obtained. This proved to be difficult as many households had lost their documentation in the earthquake or never had any formal tenure.

A process was established where two neighbours (with no family ties to the house owner) as well as a representative of the local authority testified that this person had been living in the house or owned the plot. This testimony was then processed by the mayor's office to provide a certificate that stated the person's legitimate ownership. Although this was not a full legal document like a land deed, for many informal settlers it was the first time they had been officially recognized as residents in that neighbourhood and not labelled "illegal".

The lack of clarity about land tenure, and the 'emergency' regularisation process used in many areas affected by the earthquake, led to the subsequent creation of the 'Haiti Property Law Working Group' led by a local NGO, with the support of the Haitian Government, to improve security of tenure by establishing and informing legal procedures. Several guidelines on HLP issues have been published since then.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

For more information:

Habitat pour l'humanité Haïti: Advocacy and [Facebook page of Land Law Working Group in Haiti](#).

Habitat pour l'humanité Haïti 2012. [Haiti Land Transaction Manual Vol 1, A How-to Guide for the Legal Sale of Property in Haiti](#).

Habitat pour l'humanité Haïti 2014. [Haiti Land Transaction Manual Vol 2, Securing Land Rights in Haiti: A Practical Guide](#).

CASE STUDY

5.5 Security of tenure, Mozambique, 2019

In Mozambique after Cyclone Idai in 2019, the government wanted to resettle affected communities in safer locations and allocated designated resettlement sites. However, people who were resettled on these new sites did not automatically receive legal tenure for their allocated plots. Apart from concerns around forced relocation, several humanitarian organisations were reluctant to provide longer-term shelter support, even to people who voluntarily settled on relocation plots, because they lacked security of tenure.

The Mozambique Shelter Cluster consulted the Global Shelter Cluster's HLP advisor to help clarify the legal conditions and the process to obtain legal tenure. In Mozambique all land is officially owned by the state's land users' such as farmers or settlers who can obtain time-limited land use rights called *Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra* (DUATs) for a minimal fee to local authorities. In rural areas people rely more on traditional land use rights established within their communities and do not have officially established rights. Therefore the government could legally allocate land for resettlement sites regardless of traditional tenure systems.

The process to obtain the DUAT lacked transparency and was complicated, involving different ministries and authorities. The advice from the HLP Advisor helped humanitarian organisations to understand the process and support people who wanted to build in resettlement sites to obtain legal tenure for their plots.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

For more information:

Global Shelter Cluster 2019. [*Mozambique HLP Quick Reference Guide*](#).

Global Shelter Cluster 2019. [*Field Review Report – HLP Scoping Mission*](#).

5.2.4 Socio-cultural and knowledge factors

Understanding cultural norms and existing social structures, especially in relation to vulnerable groups and key stakeholders, within a community can promote stronger advocacy to remove barriers, encourage equity and establish an enabling environment that supports recovery and social cohesion.

Social structures and cultural factors have a significant influence on people's behaviour and the choices available to them. Gender, wealth and social status, disability, literacy, as well as belonging to a certain ethnic or religious minority or caste, can have significant implications for people's ability to self-recover. Questions to consider within the context analysis process are:

- What types of options are available to people to access finance and other resources?
- Who has the ability or right to own land and security of tenure?
- Do all members of the household or community have access to, and can understand, information that is relevant to their recovery (for example applications for reconstruction grants, technical messages for safer construction) and the capacity to obtain important knowledge and skills for reconstruction? Where do different people get different types of information?

- Who has access to social capital, remittances from diaspora and various kinds of community support?
- Who is included in decision-making about shelter design, construction and related expenditures and who is excluded?
- What is the level of trust between different social groups and what is the history of and potential for social cohesion?
- What are the cultural and social norms around collective action? How are leadership structures designed?

Understanding people's **knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP)** towards housing, their strengths, weaknesses and ambitions, is critical to understanding what type of support will be most beneficial and to what extent awareness-raising and capacity-building is needed. The sooner key influencing factors can be identified, the more strategically the response can be tailored to needs. A KAP assessment during the early days of interaction with the affected population can provide a better understanding and serve as a baseline to measure change throughout the project.

- To what extent are people aware of the different hazards they are facing and the risks presented by certain weaknesses in their shelter construction practices or community infrastructure?
- Are people aware of what they can do to address vulnerabilities related to shelter, settlement and land use?
- To what extent do people feel empowered and that they have agency over decision-making?
- Are there social support mechanisms related to construction and how are individuals and communities connected with support structures?
- What level of skills, knowledge and attitudes towards materials and safe construction practices exist?
- What are people prioritising and how do they set their priorities?
- To what extent does indigenous knowledge influence construction practices? How does this impact different social groups?

How to find this information?

FGDs and KIIs with community members

Source anthropological or social expertise

Speak with local staff and partners

PASSA workshops with community members

KAP survey (and evaluation template linked with KAP survey)

Further resources

Global Shelter Cluster 2021. [Shelter KAP Questionnaire.](#)

Global Shelter Cluster 2021. [Shelter KAP Evaluation-Questionnaire.](#)

Merrill et al. Enterprise Development & Microfinance. Vol. 32 Issue 3. [Beyond building: how social norms and networks shape mason construction practices in incremental homebuilding.](#)

CASE STUDY

5.6 Understanding local beliefs, Nepal, 2015

Research evaluating how remote communities have recovered after the Nepal 2015 Gorkha earthquake highlights how the reconstruction process is not only a technical matter, but also involves issues such as communities' perceptions of seismic risk. This influenced people's prioritization and decision-making processes which led to the adaptation of construction solutions based on local knowledge and practices.

A misunderstanding of site and material safety was found to directly affect structural design changes and building relocation and also caused a loss of faith in traditional materials and techniques. For example, some people believed that reinforced concrete houses were strong no matter where they stood, even if they were in a hazardous site. Others believed that placing over 5cm of mud and stones on rooftops would make their house safe in the case of another earthquake.

Adapted from Manna, M. 2017. Build Back Better? Not only a technical matter, Insights from owner-driven reconstruction in Nepal.

5.2.5 Hazards and the physical environment

Environmental factors, including changes to the physical landscape, hazard risks and access to resources can influence people's resilience and ability to recover.

Hazards

Understanding future hazard-related risks and their potential impact on shelter and settlements is critical to reducing vulnerabilities and supporting informed choices. In order to address risks appropriately, and allocate resources proportionally, it is important to consider these questions:

- What are the main natural hazards in a given area, such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, tropical storms? How frequently do these different hazards occur and how big is their estimated impact? How are natural hazards and their potential impacts identified?
- What human-made hazards exist, such as fire and indoor air pollution linked to use of solid fuels, building materials and inadequate ventilation? Health risks associated with unhygienic and overcrowded living conditions can be more harmful to physical and mental well-being on a daily basis than sporadic and seasonal natural hazards.
- Particularly for some urban areas, how relevant is the risk of crime and gang violence?
- How likely is it that a hazard will displace people or communities/sites receive new arrivals? What impact can this have on the affected population and/or the host population? In humanitarian emergencies it is important to consider the implications for social relationships and/or tensions between different groups.
- What shelter and settlement intervention, or support, could mitigate the impact of the hazards identified?
- How aware are people of the risks that different hazards pose and are they aware of measures they can take to mitigate these risks?
- Can shelter recovery activities have a negative impact that could exacerbate exposure to hazards, such as poor site selection or deforestation increasing flood risk?

Existing information on prevailing hazard risk is available from various sources and will differ in accuracy, scale and quality. This information will ideally be complemented by community-led hazard mapping and risk assessments. Key resources are:

- Geological and meteorological data and hazard maps.
- Health data, such as prevalence of vector-borne diseases like malaria, and statistics on physical injuries that can be linked with environmental hazards and living conditions.
- People will have memories of previous disasters and their own perception of local hazards in their area; this should be an integral part of locally-led assessments and analysis, which are already a first step to raising awareness.
- Universities and other resource centres may be able to provide useful additional information on hazards and risk.
- Civil protection and other public authorities.

The physical environment

The ability to self-recover can be influenced by the physical environment in various ways, so is it important to consider these questions:

- How has the landscape changed as a result of a hazard? For example, has an earthquake, landslide or flooding made it dangerous or impossible to rebuild in areas that were previously inhabited? Have landmines or environmental pollution made areas uninhabitable? Do people have usable land?
- Have changes in weather patterns, due to climate change, such as heavier seasonal rainfall or increased occurrence of drought, placed additional stress on people trying to recover after a crisis? Could these changes render areas of land uninhabitable over time?
- Are critical infrastructure and transport routes still functioning? To what extent are these damaged or blocked? Restricted access to markets, supplies and services makes it very difficult for affected populations to get resources and for agencies to provide support. The reliance of city populations on infrastructure and public services and transport make these considerations especially important in urban contexts.
- What is the availability of natural construction materials and has this been affected by increased demand as large-scale recovery and reconstruction efforts are undertaken? Knowledge of local resources used for construction will identify where increased demand can lead to environmental degradation. There may be overexploitation of locally available natural resources like timber, bamboo and thatch, especially if these have also been affected by the disaster. But also exploitation of mineral resources like clay for adobe blocks and burnt bricks or sand for concrete can have a negative impact on the environment.

Further resources

BGS. [British Geological Survey.](#)

CRS. [Environmental Risk Register Tool.](#)

GSC. [Environmental Community of Practice.](#)

GSC 2019. [Bangladesh Environmental Country Profile](#) and [Vanuatu Environmental Checklist for Shelter Response](#). Profiles for additional countries to be developed in 2022.

QSAND. [Quantifying Sustainability in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters](#)

BRE Trust 2020. [Developing a lifecycle assessment calculator for the humanitarian shelter sector.](#)

IFRC. [Nature-based solutions](#)

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). [Think Hazard.](#) Web-based tool to support quick identification of possible hazards in a particular region.

Environment and Humanitarian Action (EHA) [Connect 2020.](#) A resource with numerous guidelines for supporting environmentally sustainable disaster management.

IFRC 2011. [PASSA: Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness](#).

CRS 2017. [Guide to Facilitating Community-Led Disaster Risk Management](#).

IFRC Climate Centre. [Country Climate Fact Sheets](#).

CASE STUDY

5.7 The impact of the physical environment on recovery, Philippines, 2013

Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) which hit the Philippines in 2013, was one of the most powerful typhoons to ever make landfall at the time. Over half a million homes were destroyed and thousands of people died. Immediately after the disaster, many people began to recover their homes and livelihoods themselves, building temporary shelters and clearing farmland to replant crops.

In a study related to the impact of the physical environment on recovery, communities cited several factors that were barriers. Those living in mountainside locations reported landslides, which blocked access to roads for weeks meaning they could not transport rebuilding supplies. In other locations, communities found that the landscape had changed, and they did not feel confident to reconstruct in a suggested relocation site or on changed ground that they knew nothing about. People in low-lying areas impacted by the cyclone storm surge were affected by contaminated water supplies. Many communities also experienced long-term changes in seasonal flooding and rainfall patterns, which had damaged their homes and impacted their livelihoods prior to the typhoon, increasing their vulnerability and reducing resilience to disaster.

Adapted from Sargeant S and co-authors 2020. [The influence of the physical environment on self-recovery after disasters in Nepal and the Philippines](#).

CASE STUDY

Case study 5.8 Environmental impact awareness, Mozambique, 2020

Hundreds of thousands of displaced people from northern Mozambique sought shelter in the southeast districts in 2020 as the security situation deteriorated in Cabo Delgado. After the first distributions of basic emergency shelter and non-food items (kits including one plastic sheet and basic household items), semi-permanent shelters made from traditional construction techniques (pau-e-pique houses) started to spring up in a few days. Affected populations began collecting wooden poles and bamboo using their agricultural tools, working on the mud wall construction and only used the plastic sheet for the roof. Reacting to these initiatives, the Shelter Cluster decided to include a tool kit in the distribution package, and partners also reinforced the promotion of build back better messages.

During the displacement crisis, **thousands of shelters needed to be built at the same time in the same area, and although there were plentiful natural resources available in Mozambique, deforestation and land degradation had started to increase.** For this reason, the Shelter Cluster decided to focus on environmental impact awareness activities and other strategies to ensure that construction materials were collected from sustainable sources.

Adapted from [Shelter Project Edition 8, 2021](#).

5.2.6 Local building practices

People construct their homes according to their needs, interests, preferences, ability, and environments, often making use of easily available local materials. Local building techniques have often been adapted over centuries to mitigate impacts of recurring hazards and may have been communicated across generations and between communities, or in some cases, knowledge may have been lost over time.

Observing local building cultures, traditional housing design, materials used, who is traditionally involved in construction and maintenance, and whether there are any preparedness activities undertaken when a hazard is imminent, should inform shelter self-recovery programming. Questions to consider include:

- Do local building practices have elements that are designed to counter the most common hazards? Identify weaknesses and failure mechanisms of local practices, as well as potential strengths that could be used, as an example of how to increase hazard resistance.
- To what extent do seasonal patterns impact reconstruction? For example, roofing grass or bamboo may not be available year-round, which dictates materials available and influences programme design. Maintenance should be conducted to match seasonal patterns and events.
- What is the local practice around self-build, or construction through hired artisans and labour? What are the available skills? What are the usual costs?
- What are people's perceptions of their traditional construction practices and their awareness of their potential value? Often traditional building practices and natural materials (such as earth or thatch) are considered "old-fashioned" or not resistant to certain hazards. People often prefer to build with "modern" materials like concrete or corrugated metal roofing although these might be unaffordable, and people may lack the expertise to use these materials properly. This can result in substandard housing at increased cost.
- What are people's plans and expectations in relation to their houses? Understand the traditional or most common processes of housing improvement and growth, taking into account that houses will be modified and upgraded over time.
- How do people use the space or what activities do they do indoors or outdoors? Are there aspects of the house that have cultural significance, such as thresholds, prayer spaces etc.?
- How are local building practices aligned with guidelines promoted by the authorities?

Further resources

GSC. CRAterre 2021. [Understanding the Context: Forms and Report Template.](#)

CASE STUDY

5.9 The *Lakou* System, Haiti, 2010

In rural locations in Haiti, extended families traditionally organise their homes in a cluster of buildings surrounding a central shared courtyard – termed the *Lakou* System. This layout emerged after the Haitian Revolution, which led to the end of slavery in the country. Living according to the *Lakou* System was considered to be a social protection measure and a means of collective resistance to the reintroduction of plantations after the revolution.

After the earthquake in 2010, many people were displaced into camps. Camp managers who adopted the *Lakou* System for camp layout reported an improvement in mental well-being, a reduction in gender-based violence and increased access to existing social networks and support, which all increased resilience. This example highlights the value of understanding existing social systems which extend to local building cultures, not only in shelter self-recovery programmes, but also in other approaches to shelter and camp management.

Adapted from International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2010. Assessment of the Psychosocial Needs of Haitians Affected by the January 2010 Earthquake.

CASE STUDY

5.10 Grain storage, Nepal, 2015

Traditionally people in rural areas of Nepal construct houses with local materials to create designs that are adapted to their way of living and livelihood activities. People live on the first floor, using the second floor for drying grain. Ground floors are often used for keeping livestock.

After the Ghorka earthquake in 2015 some of the affected population tried to reconstruct with ‘better’ materials, aiming to be ‘modern’. This meant in many cases using reinforced concrete for the structure and flooring. Frequently the new construction system did not meet their needs and habits. Some families continued to store grain on the upper floor of their new houses, but as it cannot dry on a concrete floor it became mouldy and some people lost their harvest.

Adapted from Manna, M. 2017. Build Back Better? Not only a technical matter, Insights from owner-driven reconstruction in Nepal.



Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK

5.2.7 Partners and other stakeholders

When analysing factors that influence shelter self-recovery, it is important to understand who are the most relevant partners and stakeholders. Mapping stakeholders, their interests and potential influences at different levels, can help identify potential support and where communications and advocacy efforts need to be targeted.

- Which actors and functions are critical in people's shelter and settlements self-recovery processes (such as artisans, vendors, building and construction professionals, material producers, landlords, the financial sector, and other private sector actors) and how can they be encouraged to actively engage?
- Which authorities (local, sub-national, national, as well as traditional leaders) and decision-makers are relevant for housing and construction, to what extent do they need to be involved (e.g. in providing approvals, permits etc.) and can their support be secured?
- Are there any other stakeholders in the community (such as ethnic or religious groups, political affiliations, livelihoods groups), or at sub-national/national levels, who are trusted and respected and who can positively influence, and bring resources or useful capacities (such as other NGOs, CSOs, academic/research networks, private sector, advocacy groups, diaspora, or kinship networks)?
- Which stakeholders might have conflicting interests, be unsupportive or hinder people's shelter self-recovery? What kind of advocacy and negotiation might be needed to help foster a more supportive mindset or at least ensure they do not impede self-recovery efforts?

People affected by crises lead the decision-making and recovery process and humanitarian organisations should act as one of their many partners. Very different interests can be at play among different stakeholders and it is important to understand these dynamics and mediate potential tensions, promoting equity and inclusion.

Further resources

Global Shelter Cluster 2021. [Methodology Guide for Stakeholders and Audience Analysis.](#)

Global Shelter Cluster Working Group on [Strengthening and Mainstreaming Diaspora Engagement in Shelter Responses.](#)

CASE STUDY

Case study 5.11 Interest and influence in housing, Lebanon, 2021

Recovery efforts after the Beirut blast in August 2020 were predominantly locally led. One international humanitarian organisation carried out an in-depth market and housing analysis to better understand and support shelter recovery. Part of the study included a stakeholder analysis 'Institutional Mapping and Building Sector', in which a total of 35 stakeholders, including public agencies as well as private, humanitarian and community-based actors linked with the housing sector, were identified. Following the study, actors were analysed according to their level of 'formal power of influence' versus their 'effective involvement in the housing sector', looking first at the formal decision-making position they had and later at the actual decision-making influence they demonstrated.

Findings showed a significant lack of interest from public actors in the housing sector, shifting the provision of housing to the open market. Banks and building developers had gained significant importance and influence in the sector to the detriment of planning agencies and other social housing investors. Although influence rested with stakeholders, such as banks and building developers, actual effective engagement in the housing sector, which focused predominantly on advocacy, rested with community-based organisations (CBOs), NGOs, advocacy groups, and academia. All these factors influenced the affordability of houses, forcing people into informal, often inadequate, living conditions.

This case study shows the importance of understanding the complexity of the housing sector through an **analysis of stakeholders' interests and existing power dynamics to make informed decisions** on how best to support communities to recover.

Adapted from [Habitat for Humanity and Oxford Brookes University 2021. Lebanon's Housing Ecosystem and Self-Recovery.](#)



*A fragile structure severely damaged after the Beirut blast. September 2021
Source: Abir Zaatari/American University of Beirut*

5.2.8 Communication channels

Various channels of communication will be appropriate when engaging with affected populations or negotiating with authorities and other stakeholders. Different platforms should be considered to diversify engagement channels and ensure reach of specific target groups. It is important to get information about preferred communication methods and what platforms stakeholders use and trust. Not everyone in the same target group will have the same access to information or use the same channels to receive and provide information. It is therefore crucial to identify the most appropriate ways to engage with all members of the affected population, including marginalised groups. [See Chapter 7](#). Key questions to consider are:

- How were people informed about issues relating to their land or houses prior to the crisis? How are the preferred methods of communication used by different stakeholders? How do they prefer to be addressed, to receive information and to provide information?
- Who are the most trusted persons? What is the level of trust between stakeholders, for example, local authorities, particular community groups and international agencies? Could trusted persons be used as ‘influencers’ to advocate for certain messages?
- What are the existing channels? What are the most effective mechanisms of communication for specific target stakeholders (different ways of verbal communication, written/print, mass media like radio, TV and increasingly important digital/social media, text messages)?
- What level of understanding and knowledge do different stakeholders possess (educational background, experience and skills, literacy, language)?
- Do all groups have access to information? Are certain groups excluded from access to information (e.g. religious and ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups, people with disabilities, women, displaced people)?
- Are there specific geographical, cultural or political barriers to the use of specific communication channels?

How to find this information?

Ask people from the affected population.

Speak with local media, sociologists, anthropologists, communication and marketing experts.

Further resources

GSC 2021. [Methodology Guide for Communication Channel Analysis.](#)

Consult the Communications with Communities (CwC) focal point.

CASE STUDY

5.12 Lessons in messaging for target audiences, Ecuador, 2016

Following the earthquake in Ecuador in 2016, the Shelter Cluster set up a communications strategy to disseminate key construction messages using different channels. The subsequent evaluation showed that messages did not reach the affected population as planned, especially people self-recovering.

A series of seven key messages had been created, which were broadcast on radio to four communities twice a day for two months. However, the medium of communicating the messages seemed to be largely ineffective. Most households either did not have a radio or did not listen to the radio. Those that did hear the radio messages had a mid-level understanding of what the messages were trying to communicate. The use of TV would have been a more effective way to share messages in this context. The distribution of calendars with key messages was also shown to be only effective as a reminder to household members who had attended training.

The evaluation shows the **importance of completing a thorough communications analysis in order to understand how people receive and share information**, adapting the strategy to suit their media habits, interests and level of understanding.

Adapted from [Shelter Cluster 2017. Assessing the Adoption, Use and Communication of the Ecuador Shelter Cluster Key Messages](#).



Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
Source: Sahat Zia Hero

6

ACCOMPANYING SELF-RECOVERY: SUPPORT OPTIONS AND MODALITIES



*Cash programming in Padang, Indonesia 2010
Source: Bill Flinn/CARE UK*

KEY MESSAGES

- Accompaniment requires a shift of mindset from the concept of providing goods and services and implementing projects, towards accompanying communities' or households' recovery plans by facilitating access to resources and other enabling factors.
- The aim is to **accelerate recovery and improve the overall outcome** with safer, better, healthier homes by identifying the most suitable and effective strategy to support self-recovery, using a combination of support options that complement existing activities and plans, fill gaps in capacity, remove barriers, and facilitate an enabling environment.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

- Institutional, physical and socio-cultural barriers to self-recovery
- What support modalities can be used to:
 - Lift barriers to recovery ([see section 6.2](#))
 - Fill gaps in capacity and build on existing strengths ([see section 6.3](#))
 - Facilitate access to resources ([see section 6.4](#))

6.1. SUPPORT OPTIONS

There are many ways to support and accompany self-recovery. The context analysis described in [Chapter 5](#) will provide the necessary understanding of people's plans and priorities to be able to identify the best approaches for agencies offering accompaniment. A humanitarian strategy that aims to 'do more with less' need not be restricted to a single support option. A diversity of options will support strengths, tackle barriers to self-recovery, enhance knowledge and skills, and reach a significant proportion of the affected population.

Support can be focused at different levels: national, sub-national or at the community and household levels. The support modalities selected will dictate the resources, staff and expertise required in specific contexts, while noting that the most effective support options may change over time.

To support self-recovery at the community and household levels, a **three-pronged approach of cash, materials and technical assistance** can be successful in many contexts. This has the advantage of simplicity while, at the same time, providing enough assistance to encourage self-recovery and promote good building practice. Other forms of accompaniment that may target community and sub-national levels are equally important and may take the form of advocacy, training, legal support, infrastructure works, and more.

6.2 HOW TO ADDRESS BARRIERS

People facing the destruction of their homes after a disaster or displacement have to surmount a range of obstacles on their route to recovery. In this Guidance, these are referred to as **barriers**. Lifting these barriers helps to create an **enabling environment**, and this facilitates the process of self-recovery, meaning people can plan their recovery. This may mean relocation, repair or rebuilding according to their own priorities and means. Therefore, support needs to be directed strategically at the principle barriers identified in order to create an enabling environment.

The role that humanitarian organisations can play in advocating for and promoting an enabling environment for self-recovery should not be underestimated. Whether it is advocacy for changes in policy at a national level, liaison between local institutions and communities, facilitation of community mobilisation, or providing legal support to households, organisations can be key influencers in removing institutional barriers, thus promoting an enabling environment and supporting self-recovery.

In the sections below, barriers are grouped into three categories: institutional, physical and socio-cultural. It is useful to conceptualise these barriers to recovery as broadly fitting under these different categories, despite the inevitable overlap.

6.2.1 Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers include complex or outdated legislation (particularly on land tenure or building codes), restrictive policies or guidelines and unclear or dysfunctional governance structures. These not only make it difficult for affected populations to get approval or support for their recovery activities, but can reduce the confidence of those affected to invest their resources. Furthermore, a

lack of coordination mechanisms, communication and information sharing between institutions, humanitarian actors and affected populations can be a key factor that hampers progress, stifles efficiency of action and prevents synergies.

Coordination

Coordination between stakeholders is often an issue across all levels of governance. Not all community leadership structures have the capacity to mobilise collective action or build social support structures; nor might they have the knowledge about what is being proposed that might affect their community. Equally, local and national authorities are not necessarily fully aware of the difficulties and problems facing the affected population, and policies that could remove obstacles and enable a faster recovery. Coordination among various actors providing support for different needs and sectors (food, water and sanitation, shelter, livelihoods, education etc.), as well as coordination between humanitarians and respective authorities, can always be improved. Humanitarian organisations can provide useful support:

- At the **community or household levels**, facilitating mobilisation and building on existing, or creating new, community support structures, if culturally appropriate, including training on participatory processes, conflict resolution, management of funds etc.
- At the **sub-national level** by liaising with local authorities, coordinating and creating links with other actors such as the private sector, CSOs and other projects supporting recovery efforts.
- At the **national level** by liaising with relevant authorities and institutions.
- Through **inter-agency and inter-cluster coordination** and by being proactive in coordinating and collaborating with other actors.
- By **sharing information** with all stakeholders, facilitating exchange of knowledge and experience.

CASE STUDY

6.1 Matching labour supply with demand, Commonwealth of Dominica, 2017 to 2020

In 2017, Hurricane Maria hit Dominica, affecting over 90 percent of the housing stock of the small Caribbean island. One important response gap was an insufficient construction labour force, causing a significant slowdown in, and increased costs of, recovery and reconstruction activities.

During the early recovery phase, one INGO addressed this gap through its regional network, coordinating needs with other shelter agencies, by offering to recruit qualified professional builders from other Caribbean islands to lead local teams. Partnerships were also established with other humanitarian organizations to set up a national carpentry training programme for unemployed men and women in specific target areas. Many qualified migrants decided to stay in the country and work as contractors with local teams, offering their professional services directly to the population.

Even though more construction workers were available in the country, and new vocational training programmes were ongoing, many trained people could still not find work during the reconstruction phase, while large government, owner-driven housing reconstruction projects could not find enough builders. The INGO identified and brought stakeholders together: government agencies (housing, livelihoods and youth), developers, construction companies, small contractors, trained individuals (men and women), and vocational training agencies. As a result of these coordination efforts, they collectively organized the first reconstruction fair in the country, focusing on matching labour, supply and demand.

For more information: [*Habitat for Humanity Trinidad and Tobago, Habitat Dominica Project with Lutheran World Relief 2020.*](#)

Legal support

People may not be able to commence self-recovery due to a lack of land ownership or secure tenure, and for many there is an ever-present fear of eviction. When displacement has led to a loss of land and community ties and social networks have broken down, people may lack the connections and support structures to navigate complex legal environments. Providing legal expertise can help to overcome these barriers to self-recovery and may include:

- Providing information about policies and legal procedures to obtain tenure or access to safe relocation sites.
- Providing local legal assistance and accompaniment to navigate the procedures needed to secure tenure at the place of origin or for relocation sites.
- Facilitating negotiations with property owners and landlords (e.g. for fair rental agreements) and providing warranties to secure long-term rental contracts.
- Setting up verification processes to formalize informal tenure or land claims where people have no official documentation.

CASE STUDY

6.2 Housing, land and property rights for women, Nepal, 2015

After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the Government of Nepal decided to implement an owner-driven reconstruction approach through a private housing reconstruction and retrofitting grant for all homeowners whose houses had been severely damaged or destroyed. To be eligible for the grant, disaster survivors had to be in possession of a land ownership certificate. This policy was problematic for women and some minorities as land in Nepal is unevenly distributed along the lines of gender, class, caste, and ethnicity, as a result of a concentration of power in the hands of elite minorities and a patrilineal property succession model still embedded in social norms.

Following strong advocacy from NGOs and civil society groups, in December 2015 the government changed the requirements of the housing reconstruction grant to allow local bodies to approve grants after a recommendation by the Municipal Secretary. However, these changes were not considered sufficient for women and vulnerable groups lacking land tenure to access the grant.

Adapted from Carbonell, L. 2021. Reframing Shelter Self-Recovery, Women's Experiences of Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Machhegaun, Nepal, after the 2015 Earthquake. University College London, London.

Access to finance and cash programming

In many contexts, access to finance is the biggest obstacle to recovery; households already saddled with debt become further indebted. Some people will be able to rely on their wider family, some may be working overseas; others will sell land or property or can fall back on savings groups or microcredit. However, many may be at the mercy of informal money lenders and loan sharks.

Facilitating access to finance through cash programming, cash-for-work and providing information and assistance on how to access government grants, microcredit and saving groups are all ways in which agencies and partners can relieve the burden of debt and accelerate recovery. This is further discussed in [6.4.4](#).

Advocacy

Where institutional barriers, such as legislation, policies or political programmes, have been identified as hampering shelter self-recovery, advocacy across all relevant levels of governance can be an effective support to self-recovery. Examples include:

- Advocacy for policies to secure tenure for informal settlers, landless people or those who have no formal documentation of their tenure status.
- Negotiation of definitions of no-build-zones.
- Campaigns against forced relocation.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising for women's rights, especially around inheritance and ownership of land.
- Campaigning for price caps, subsidies or other government support schemes.
- Negotiating alternative standards and policies for traditional local (non-engineered) construction practices.

National level advocacy might be best addressed jointly through the Shelter Cluster or other relevant clusters (such as the WASH Cluster) or through existing national housing forums. At the sub-national and local levels, INGOs, as well as national NGOs or CSOs, may be more influential.

CASE STUDY

6.3 Regularisation of local building practices, Haiti, 2010

Post-disaster analysis following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 showed that traditional timber frame construction systems had withstood the earthquake much better than recently constructed concrete buildings. This traditional construction practice was neglected during the second half of the 20th century, giving way to concrete structures, often of poor quality. This turned out to be an aggravating factor in the disaster, especially in urban areas.

A humanitarian organization, with expertise in local building cultures, initiated a research project to understand communities' construction practices and the factors that influenced their decisions, and provided scientific evidence on the value of these neglected construction approaches.

As a result of this research work, in 2012 the Ministry of Public Works officially validated the proposed 'traditional' construction system and its variants. In 2016, a new National Housing Policy of Haiti came into practice which recognised the value of different affordable and safe housing options that could be adapted to particular needs and resources – a significant achievement of this new approach.

Traditional techniques have since been promoted by other organizations following subsequent disasters in the country. An evaluation conducted in 2021 by an NGO, showed that nearly 98 percent of houses constructed after Hurricane Matthew withstood the impact of the earthquake the same year.

For further information:

[Habitat pour l'humanité Haïti. Habitat homes in Haiti earthquake zone proved to be resilient and safe.](#)

6.2.2 Physical barriers: Access to services and infrastructure

Access to services and functioning infrastructure is a basic requirement for settlement planning and will reduce health and safety hazards as well as mitigate further risks. It is also one important element

in establishing an environment that facilitates rebuilding and self-recovery. Agencies supporting self-recovery should:

- Identify poor or damaged services and infrastructure that are preventing rapid reconstruction; consider the repair of water supply, clearing of roads and debris removal and establishing access to markets.
- Facilitate mapping of communities, including the main risk zones and potential hazards, which could also include environmental factors, like deforestation, which may exacerbate certain hazards.
- Support identification of safe sites within an affected settlement or relocation after extreme events, such as a major landslide; relocation is generally seen as the option of last resort.
- Accompany people to mitigate identified risks through, for example, the implementation of community level infrastructure. Improved drainage, rainwater harvesting or environmental interventions such as reforestation and nature-based solutions, as well as safe schools and community buildings, can all reduce risk and increase resilience.
- Initiate or advocate for the implementation of larger scale hazard prevention infrastructures such as dykes, retaining walls, stabilisation of embankments and slopes, watershed management.

In urban areas people depend much more on public services and basic infrastructure, therefore re-establishing these elements and working with service providers will significantly help the recovery process. Measures such as larger scale infrastructure, including roads, drains, bridges and electricity, and development works like community centres and playgrounds, do not usually fall under the humanitarian mandate, though occasionally humanitarian organisations have expanded their mandates to allow for such activities. Humanitarians can also flag the urgency and strategic long-term importance of certain measures and advocate for support through government ministries and development agencies.

CASE STUDY

6.4 Reducing community tension through a neighbourhood approach, Tripoli, Lebanon, 2018

Tripoli hosts an estimated 72,000 refugees in its densely populated urban centre. With insufficient public services and inadequate sanitation and housing in its poorer neighbourhoods, Tripoli's living conditions pose significant problems for Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities alike.

Acknowledging the interdependent needs, and also the potential benefits of strengthening social cohesion, an INGO in Lebanon applied an area-based approach to improve the living conditions of refugees and host communities, with a focus on shelter, WASH and strengthened community governance. The INGO concentrated on specific vulnerable neighbourhoods in inner Tripoli, repairing or upgrading communal infrastructure and access to services in whole streets and buildings, alongside providing individual household support. The establishment of neighbourhood committees to raise awareness of protection issues and explore the sources of community tension and possible ways to resolution were key initiatives.



Shared kitchen and bathroom space in Mankoubin Neighbourhood, Tripoli, Lebanon, 2017.

Adapted from *CARE International 2021 Beyond Four Walls and a Roof*.

Source: Amelia Rule/CARE UK

Further resources

Schell, Hilmi and Hirano 2020. [‘Area-based approaches: An alternative in contexts of urban displacement’ Forced Migration Review 63.](#)

GSC. [Settlements Approaches in Urban Areas Working Group.](#)

Norwegian Refugee Council 2014. [Lessons from Baghdad.](#)

CASE STUDY

6.5 Community-prioritised infrastructure improvements, Bangladesh, 2017

Multiple camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, are marked by a mixed demographic of both host community members and Rohingya refugees, who settled there during or prior to the 2017 influx. When Rohingya families started settling in the area, infrastructure, facilities and services were lacking, such as drains, roads and adequate shelters.

Women’s Committees were created with members of both refugee and host communities giving women more representation in camp governance and meaningful participation in decision-making processes in camp settings. Committees also give members the opportunity to discuss matters of common importance and address them collectively.

The community shared some of their concerns with an INGO and together they prioritised ten infrastructure projects: constructing and improving drainage systems, erecting staircases and fences near water bodies, reinforcing slopes, and improving access to roads. All these activities improved the site, especially for the most vulnerable individuals, and strengthened community cohesion.

Adapted from IOM Storyteller. [Close Ties with Neighbours - Disaster Risk Reduction and Strengthened Social Cohesion in Cox’s Bazar.](#)

6.2.3 Socio-cultural barriers

Social and cultural norms are deeply embedded in society. It is generally not the task of a humanitarian programme to address related and sometimes systemic issues that may, or may not, be impeding the process of self-recovery. Nor is it the place of this Guidance to discuss the pros and cons and the rights and wrongs of programming that seeks to be transformative. However, it is important to point out that collaborating with CBOs and local partners who are working towards social justice and societal change may be effective as well as empowering.

Certain groups of people can be excluded from social support structures because of their caste or social status, gender, age, ability, or sexual orientation. All projects should, at a minimum, ensure that all marginalised and minority groups are included and that no one is left behind. These barriers to recovery can be mitigated by targeting extra resources or through building on existing community networks.

CASE STUDY

6.6. Caste-based inequality, Nepal, 2015

In many Asian countries in which the caste system is part of the social and cultural structure, many people belonging to the lowest caste or specific ethnicities have significant challenges in initiating a recovery process. Low-caste people typically have higher poverty rates, are less educated, have less access to resources, and live in more vulnerable environments and poorly constructed houses. Commonly these groups are not visible or represented in community structures, and, following a disaster, are not allowed to participate in gatherings in which information is shared. They are also frequently discriminated against in relief distribution.

These marginalised populations were significantly impacted by the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Even where lower caste people had materials to rebuild their homes, they encountered difficulties finding labour to hire or provide technical support, because artisans and technical specialists are discouraged from making contact or providing services to lower castes.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

For more information: [*Dartmouth Education 2015. Caste-based Inequality. Nepal Earthquake Case Studies.*](#)

Social cohesion

To some degree, all societies have social networks that bind them together. This may be as simple as family ties or good neighbourliness. There can be community organisations, such as savings groups, women's groups, parent-teacher associations. There can also be very hierarchical structures with village elders, mayors or other forms of elected leadership. Some forms of community mutual support run deep in the culture such as *gotong royong* in Indonesia or *bayanihan* in the Philippines. At best, these traditional structures ensure that the barriers of (for example) old age and single motherhood do not exist as the community itself makes sure that these groups are given priority.

The act of working collectively can be very strong in some cultures, but in others there is not necessarily a natural inclination to do things together. In some communities social ties are based on tribal connections or bounded by extended family or social groups; in others, society is more individualistic. To appropriately address what might be possible or desirable according to the cultural context of the affected population, it is imperative to understand these cultural inclinations.

Conflict and displacement can cause systems of social cohesion to break down. Poor humanitarian practice can also damage existing networks and create an expectation that aid will be delivered. If this cultivates a culture of dependency, then this will weaken preparedness and resilience.

CASE STUDY

6.7 Bayanihan - testimony from Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines, 2013

When an INGO started its shelter recovery programme following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, they heard the story of an elderly widow and mother of 12 who had found bamboo wreckage strewn across the street where her house once stood. She had temporarily moved into a makeshift shelter constructed by her son and neighbours, which had no walls until an agency arrived and distributed tarpaulins. The community she belonged to decided to adopt a *bayanihan* approach to reconstruction – helping one another to build their homes. As a senior citizen, she was prioritised by her *bayanihan* group, and her house was built first.

The INGO supported the reconstruction efforts of the community with technical support, but it became apparent that the programme could never have worked so well in this barangay without the strong community spirit and culture of *bayanihan*. The community believes that “the spirit of being united came back with the typhoon response”.

Adapted from CARE International UK 2016. Stories of Recovery.

Gender - women in the home, women in construction

Women, young girls and small children spend a disproportionate amount of time in the house in many cultures. They are therefore particularly vulnerable to the deficiencies of inadequate shelter: poor air quality, low lighting, overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and are more at risk of injury in the event of structural failure due to poor construction. This has a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health and well-being. Despite this, decision-making and construction often tend to be in the hands of men.

To address this gender-based barrier consider:

- Identifying specific issues that prevent women from engaging in self-recovery activities and adapt programme activities, timeframes and outputs to ensure women’s inclusion (for example, childcare support during training and/or construction activities).
- Identifying whether women already have an unrecognised, predetermined role in the construction process that can be specifically empowered and valued.
- Working with existing women’s groups to make sure their voices are heard.
- Encouraging a gender balance in all meetings and also women-only meetings.
- Insisting on a gender balance in the composition of roving teams or other mechanisms of community accompaniment.
- Directing cash assistance through women or women’s groups.
- Making training available for women in good construction practice, oversight and quality control of construction works, and also hands-on building skills. Consider forming women-only construction teams.

Further resources

CARE International UK 2016. [Gender & Shelter: Good Programming Guidelines.](#)

GFDRR, World Bank, UN Women, IRP. [Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Disaster Recovery.](#)

MDF, JRF 2012. [Lessons Learned from Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Indonesia. More Than Mainstreaming: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women through Post-Disaster Reconstruction.](#)

CASE STUDY

6.8 Overcoming cultural and religious barriers in construction, Bangladesh, 2022

Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh hosts more than 800,000 people belonging to the Muslim Rohingya minority who fled Myanmar in 2017. Many women within this community are affected by gender discrimination, making their daily subsistence difficult. Relatively well paid and respected livelihoods such as jobs in construction are traditionally denied to women. One INGO, through a cash for work initiative and its gender mainstreaming work, trained women in construction activities, helping to build their capacity for future livelihood opportunities.

An initial community sensitization campaign with the Rohingya community sought the formation of a female construction group. Male household leaders were unwilling to allow women to join, but female-headed households came forward, showing an interest in learning shelter construction techniques. Respecting the community's culture and religious beliefs, this INGO provided a separate female only workplace, with an elderly male providing technical support. After a week of training, the all-female construction group accepted the presence of male shelter practitioners. Male construction workers first doubted the quality of the women's work, however this changed after seeing their accomplishments. They were convinced that women can produce work to the same high standard.

After overcoming most of the barriers they faced, these women eventually built their own shelters and earned money using their newly acquired skills, creating their first opportunity to support themselves through paid work. This was the first ever initiative taken to form an all female construction group in the Rohingya camp.

Adapted from [Save the Children in Bangladesh](#)



Source: Forhat Chowdhury/Save the Children

CASE STUDY

6.9 Involving women in construction, Mozambique, 2019

Following Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, an INGO held a participatory shelter assessment meeting on vernacular construction with a group of men, as construction in the area was traditionally male-dominated. Initially, women were not invited to the meeting, but as time went by, it was observed that women played a key role in construction processes – they added mud render to houses, a skilled technique passed down from mother to daughter. Subsequently, women were invited to join the meeting and played a key role in the shelter programme, participating at other stages of construction as well.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner



Mozambique 2019.
Source: James Morgan/CARE UK

6.3 HOW TO FILL GAPS IN CAPACITY

The context analysis will have revealed the relative strengths and resilience of the affected population and where there may be gaps in people's capacities or awareness that hamper recovery. Strengths can be built upon and gaps addressed in a variety of ways, depending on the topic in question and the intended target group. Capacity building measures can serve to achieve different outcomes:

- Increased awareness, knowledge and understanding.
- Changed attitudes that can support advocacy, influence policies or systems.
- Improved practices and skills.
- The provision of complementary short-term expert capacity where needed.

In the sub-sections below, three aspects of capacity-building are considered:

- Information, education and communication (IEC) methods and materials (see [Section 6.3.1](#))
- Training (see [Section 6.3.2](#))
- Technical assistance (see [Section 6.3.3](#))

6.3.1 Information, education and communication: Awareness-raising and advocacy

The iterative context analysis process (see [Section 5.1](#)) should inform whether people are aware of the hazards they are exposed to, and whether they have an understanding of the extent to which the location of their plot or the quality of their house and living conditions can either increase or reduce their safety, health, well-being, and overall vulnerability. Other gaps in awareness within the affected population might be the environmental implications of their activities, the government support they can access or the rights they can claim. Affected people may not be the only target audience as advocacy, awareness-raising and technical information can also be directed towards local and national authorities.

Information can be communicated in various ways, depending on the audience:

- Short information sessions addressed to individuals, community representatives or certain target groups about specific topics (e.g. hazard risks, opportunities for support, clarification of legal issues).
- Longer-term engagement processes, like PASSA, where affected people assess their shelter and settlement-related vulnerabilities, identify the causes and develop solutions (see [Section 7.2.1](#)).
- Identification and larger scale dissemination of technical messages to promote key safer building practices. The Global Shelter Cluster Promoting Safer Building Working Group has developed a protocol that provides a step-by-step guidance for the development and dissemination of technically sound and culturally acceptable [Shelter and Settlement IEC Resources](#).
- Model houses to showcase better building practices and details; model houses can also be a vehicle for technical training and the full support package for the most vulnerable households.
- Radio information and dissemination campaigns.
- Flyers, posters, murals, videos, and animations or other visual materials to disseminate key messages on safer/healthier building practices.
- Conferences or meetings with relevant authorities and officials to raise awareness about the identified topics.

As the relevant information and key messages are always specific to the context, it is critical to the success of any awareness-raising that **appropriate communication channels are identified**. The information will also need to be adapted to the channel used, which may include:

- Face-to-face communications, such as peer-to-peer exchanges, FGDs, workshops etc.
- Audio-visual communications such as posters, flyers, theatre, songs, performances, and demonstrations.
- Mass media communication methods such as radio, TV, newspapers, SMS and social media.

This topic is further elaborated in [section 7.1.2](#).

In large-scale responses, the development and dissemination of IEC materials might be led by the Shelter Cluster. For smaller-scale interventions, active humanitarian organisations are strongly encouraged to coordinate the development of agreed IEC materials and a common dissemination strategy. Conflicting information will create confusion and have a detrimental effect.

Tools and resources

The **IEC Working Group of the Global Shelter Cluster** has collected examples of IEC materials that have been developed and used in previous responses, which can serve as inspiration or reference. These are searchable in the open-access [Shelter Compendium](#).

Tools for analysis of failure mechanisms, stakeholder and communication channel analysis and communications strategies and more can be found in the **GSC's** [Protocol for Developing Shelter and Settlement Information Education Communication Resources](#).

PASSA 2011. [Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness](#).

IFRC 2020. [Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness \(PASSA\) Manual](#).

IFRC 2017. [PASSA Youth Manual and Toolkit](#)

CASE STUDY

6.10 Locally contextualised information, education and communication campaign, East Timor, 2021

Following flooding in East Timor as a result of Tropical Cyclone Seroja, an NGO adopted a key role at the national level to develop shelter IEC materials around safer construction of homes, including a shelter manual and poster. The NGO developed the technical messages in coordination with the National Government and Technical Working Group of NGOs. The IEC project, supported by global advisors, was led by a local engineer and informed through community consultations. This ensured that community-focused communication materials were contextualised based on an understanding of practical realities.



CARE International in Timor-Leste, LAFAEK Learning Media Project

The NGO worked in collaboration with a publisher from an established community magazine to illustrate the materials in a culturally appropriate and accessible style. This enabled local artists to translate what could sometimes be viewed as alienating technical diagrams into illustrations with a style and aesthetic appropriate and familiar to communities. The magazine is printed three times a year with separate editions for different audiences: children, adults and teachers. Over 103,000 households have been reached across East Timor with safer home construction messages through the community magazine.



CARE Australia

This is a positive example of the marriage of global, national and local expertise to create a product that succeeded in reaching affected communities on their terms with important messages.

Adapted from CARE Timor-Leste 2021. Dili Flood Response Program: Evaluation Report.

CASE STUDY

6.11 Gender-responsive information systems, Central Java, 2006

After an earthquake struck Indonesia in 2006, the Java Reconstruction Fund project teams found an extraordinary, yet practical way, to get information to women who were often hard-to-reach: mobile ice cream sellers. The community leadership helped turn these vendors, present in every village, into a vital community asset offering a “barefoot texting” service.

Village leaders and project facilitators assembled the ice cream sellers when there was community news or important project information to disseminate. Once briefed, the vendors called out the messages as they walked through the villages selling ice cream. **Women and children who would not normally attend village meetings or check information boards were able to access important information about reconstruction projects** for their communities and families.

World Bank, 2012. More Than Mainstreaming: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women Through Post-Disaster Reconstruction.

6.3.2 Training

‘A hammer does not build a home. But a hammer in the hands of someone with the knowledge and motivation to build a home will.’²⁴

Self-recovery can be supported through training and a two-way exchange of knowledge. External agencies may bring technical expertise, but the vernacular domestic architecture and indigenous construction practices are equally important. There may be gaps in knowledge, however, and the potential to improve skills and training can have a positive impact, particularly in the transmission of key messages, such as the importance of hurricane strapping or cross-bracing. Participants included in training can be households, community representatives, local builders, artisans, vendors, material producers, local humanitarian staff or local government officials. The training content should be based on what the participants already know and what they want and need to learn, and may include:

- Safer construction techniques
- How to produce or treat materials to make them more durable
- How to plan construction and manage finances
- How to oversee construction work and ensure the quality is as agreed
- What are the elements of a healthy house? What are the main health issues locally? And how can they be addressed through housing features?
- How to formalise ownership of land
- How to coordinate multiple stakeholders.

In order to select the best training methodology, it is important to explore different options:

- Community assemblies to raise awareness
- Workshops with an emphasis on interactive learning
- Hands-on practical skills training delivered over several days/weeks (e.g. for builders such as masons or carpenters) for example, building model houses or through locally accredited vocational training programmes

- Short evening classes for basic skills
- Meetings or visits for knowledge exchange between communities.

For all options, the possibility of training of trainers, or cascade training, should be explored so that training can be delivered by local trainers or through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. Training alone may not result in better construction practices; community accompaniment and monitoring, however, may help reinforce messages and ensure that the training results in good practices.

Other questions to be considered for training include:

- When is the best time to conduct the training? When can people make time to attend the training to fit in with their daily activities and responsibilities? How can activities be adapted to include all groups? Does the timing of the training need to be adapted to the agricultural cycle or other seasonal circumstances?
- What certification is appropriate? Certificates for technical skills training (such as for builders) can provide added value for the participants' livelihood opportunities.
- What resources (materials, tools, etc.) are needed for demonstration or practical exercises? Consider providing the participants with basic sets of quality tools they can keep.

In most countries there are local organisations specialized in providing skills training that can be partners in the provision of training. There might also be national institutions for vocational training and skills certification that should be consulted and involved in any higher-level training programmes.

CASE STUDY

6.12 Increasing livelihood opportunities and shelter quality through trainings, Haiti, 2006 to 2010

In 2006 an NGO in Haiti addressed identified skill gaps in the construction sector by establishing 'Building and Training Centres', where they provided vocational-style training in workshop fabrication, carpentry, concrete work and masonry, arc welding, and quality control. Training in construction skills was provided to vulnerable persons, particularly women and youth, in Gonaives and Cap Haitien, and later in Cabaret, giving them sufficient skills to compete for jobs.

In 2010, the final year of the training programme, a massive 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti and the organization focused their efforts on supporting affected families and communities. The emphasis was now to direct trainees to some of the areas most affected to join agencies implementing shelter response teams and support the creation of micro-scale enterprises.

This skilled labour was well received by implementing agencies, and, at the same time, trainees were able to improve their livelihood opportunities and sense of self-respect and dignity. After Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in 2016 several humanitarian organisations requested resilient housing training support from the NGO, which has become a champion agency in providing construction training in the country.

This example shows the importance of **linking construction and livelihood outcomes**, finding ways to collaborate in boosting self-recovery and creating more resilient responses.

Adapted from Habitat for Humanity 2013. Disaster Response Shelter Catalogue, KATA project, Haiti, page 129.

6.3.3 Technical assistance

Accompaniment through technical experts and roving teams

Technical support can be provided by engineers, architects, builders, and other built environment professionals on how to rebuild or repair according to people's means and priorities. Depending on the context, this can range from providing and disseminating information on safer building practices and material quality to supporting people to access building permits or to organise bulk procurement.

Roving teams are an effective method of encouraging good construction practice. Typically they are a small mixed-gender team from the affected neighbourhood itself. They may comprise local builders as well as community mobilisers who can speak with authority with all family members, especially women who are often excluded from such conversations. The roving team regularly visits each household to ensure compliance with conditions and key messages. Roving teams are also a direct line of feedback to implementing agencies – thereby ensuring that the programme can be rapidly adapted to any changing circumstances.

Technical support can also be provided by working with local academic or training institutions so that, for example, architecture or civil engineering students can provide support for house designs or monitor construction. This can be linked with training designed to improve the skills of these future professionals.

Technical assistance can also be useful for municipal authorities. This might include capacity building in coordination, definition of policies and guidelines as well as support in mapping, zoning and information management.

CASE STUDY

6.13 Roving teams, Philippines, 2013

Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) ripped through the Philippines in November 2013. It was at the time the strongest storm ever to have made landfall. An INGO, with a strong network of local partners, supported the rebuilding of almost 16,000 homes using an explicit self-recovery approach. The communities – known as *barangays* – organised into groups of ten or more families, often one group per sitio or purok, subdivisions of the *barangay*. Roving (mixed gender) teams were established, typically two carpenters and a social mobiliser, who provided families with encouragement and technical advice. The entire process was supported by awareness training for all of the affected population, and further technical training for carpenters

Adapted from [CARE International UK \(2016\). Stories of Recovery.](#)

CASE STUDY

6.14 Community shelter focal points, Vanuatu, 2020

Following Tropical Cyclone Harold in April 2020, which hit the Vanuatu archipelago severely, an INGO supported shelter self-recovery efforts on the affected island of Pentecost – after responding to the emergency shelter needs of the affected population with tarpaulin and ropes.

The self-recovery support included the distribution of shelter kits, containing fixing kits and toolkits, and two training options. The first option created opportunities for nominations of Shelter Focal Points to sit on each community's Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee, and the second option was training for chainsaw operators.

Shelter Focal Points developed local capacity and awareness in safer building practices and supported other community members with their reconstruction processes, providing relevant advice. They knew the challenges on the ground as they represented their own communities, and included women.

The nomination of Shelter Focal Points in Pentecost had numerous benefits: women were empowered in the community as they became involved in the traditionally male-dominated construction sector; and a level of improvement was achieved towards building back better across the community, including using dry wood to prevent insect attacks or rot, the use of cross-bracing, digging foundations and more secure nailing of timber connections.

For further information: [*CARE, September 2021. Research Report: Shelter Self-Recovery in Vanuatu.*](#)



Female Shelter Focal Points advising a family on Pentecost, Vanuatu
Source: Valerie Fernandez

Model houses

Building model or demonstration houses is an efficient support option in several ways. It bridges awareness-raising, training and direct support as well as technical assistance:

- Provides practical hands-on training for builders involved in the construction of model houses.
- Provides a “live” demonstration of safer construction practices for the whole community; it is essential that the design of the model house is replicable and affordable.
- Building model houses for the most vulnerable in the community provides targeted support while demonstrating safer building practices to the whole community.
- Model houses that include ‘healthier home’ elements such as window netting, household latrines and effective ventilation and/or facilities for outdoor cooking can also address the positive wider impacts of new techniques and materials.

CASE STUDY

6.15 Model retrofitted houses, Jamaica, 2014 to 2018

The shelter project was part of a INGO-implemented disaster risk reduction programme in peri-urban informal neighbourhoods of Portmore, Jamaica, between 2014 and 2018. Based on international standards, local workers were trained in construction and retrofitting techniques and put their acquired skills into practice in existing houses that served as models for their communities.

The selection criteria of these model houses were related to the physical condition of the buildings, their location (to enable dispersed examples accessible for all) and householders’ socioeconomic vulnerability. Each model house was used to test new solutions proposed by local builders and beneficiary families themselves, resulting in a technical guide for house retrofitting contextualised to the country’s reality and context. With this project, communities’ capacity to add safe and resilient elements to their homes was increased, and vulnerable families were provided with improved living conditions.

Adapted from: Habitat for Humanity 2018. Model Houses, Shelter Repairs.

CASE STUDY

6.16 Model houses, Nepal, 2015

The 2015 Nepal earthquake caused widespread housing destruction in both rural and urban areas. A humanitarian organisation active in the early response (three to six months post-earthquake) decided to construct full-scale model houses, using traditional load bearing stone masonry, in a number of villages.

The NGO built one house per village, selecting a highly vulnerable community member/family to benefit, using a seismically-resilient design, adopting traditional construction techniques such as timber bands, corner stones and 'through stones', and taking care with the size and location of openings, among other measures. During the construction, which was implemented with local builders, community members were invited to tour the site. It was evident that households nearby who were rebuilding their own homes were copying some of the traditional seismically-resilient techniques. When asked about their replication of elements of the model house, they described how they had already known of their importance, but seeing the model house had reminded them about how to make their homes safer. The model house allowed them to observe and then to discuss with their mason what elements they wanted to include in their house.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

6.4 HOW TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Access to resources - which can be materials, labour, finance or knowledge - is essential for successful self-recovery. The context analysis, and ideally market and supply-chain assessments, should provide an overview of the situation, including any barriers, and will help identify what interventions are most strategic and effective in facilitating access to resources. Support modalities using the 'three pronged approach' - cash, materials and technical assistance - should be considered.

6.4.1 In-kind provision of resources

In contexts where physical access to markets is difficult, direct in-kind provision of materials or tools is one of the most common support options. In addition, the possibility of facilitating better quality at lower prices by organizing bulk procurement of materials or tools can be a reason for agencies to consider in-kind provision support.

Distribution of materials and tools

In this option, the agency procures the materials and organises their distribution directly to the affected population. When intended to support self-recovery, ensure people do prefer in-kind delivery over cash and support them in choosing the most appropriate materials. This should include providing information about the different characteristics, including the pros and cons of the materials, as well as their proper use. In the case of 'modern' or less familiar materials, technical support should be offered to ensure the appropriate technique is used.

Direct distribution of materials that are hard to obtain in local markets, but that might make a significant difference to construction quality, should be considered. Typically these might be tarpaulins in the immediate emergency response and hurricane strappings, nails, roofing nails, and

sometimes corrugated roofing sheets as support to repair and rebuild. Efforts to ensure that these materials are available in the local market so that they can be sourced as needed for replacement over time is recommended.

As important are construction tools suited to the local building typology. Some distributed materials, such as roofing screws or chainsaws, may need specific tools, machinery or fuel. Tool kits, and training on tool usage and maintenance, can improve construction quality and ideally can open opportunities for livelihood activities.

Further resources

Example of an analysis to a market-based approach: [Williams M, and Walters E November 2016. Relying on Markets for Shelter Response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. An Analysis of the Iron Sheeting Market in South and Grand'Anse Departments.](#)

CASE STUDY

6.17 Seasonal aspects of shelter materials, Ethiopia, 2018

Over 3 million people were displaced in Ethiopia between 2018 to 2019 as a result of conflict. With the rapid increase in displacement, Shelter Sector actors were challenged with meeting humanitarian shelter needs. For those people who began returning to their home villages, there was also limited support.

People began reconstructing their homes using local resources, but as many returned to their land in rural areas to reconstruct or repair their homes during the rainy season, commonly used roofing grass was not available. Humanitarian shelter actors and the disaster risk management offices provided people with tarpaulins and technical assistance, supporting by providing a temporary roofing solution. Many people used the tarpaulins while they repaired their homes and resumed livelihood activities and then replaced the tarpaulin with roofing grass in the dry season.

Understanding seasonal aspects related to shelter helps to identify where material items, such as tarpaulins, may facilitate shelter recovery.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

6.4.2 Identify and introduce alternative materials or techniques

In some contexts there will be a lack of accessible and affordable materials due to the crisis, seasonal scarcity, legal restrictions, or environmental considerations such as the over-exploitation of forestry. In these circumstances it may be possible to suggest alternative or innovative construction techniques that use less, or more appropriate, materials. Although it is not generally recommended to introduce new and unknown materials or techniques in a humanitarian context, it can be a solution in certain circumstances.

Support the production of construction materials and elements

Not everything has to be bought. Supporting the production of certain elements needed for house construction, repair or adaptation, such as blocks or bricks, fibre or wood panels, windows or door frames or thatch, and promoting the repurposing of debris or waste materials, including plastic, can empower people to value local building cultures and access more sustainable shelter solutions.

This activity is closely linked with new livelihoods and skills improvement. It may be possible at the community level, creating a cooperative-type enterprise, or at the household level. It may also create opportunities for women's groups and vulnerable or marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities.

CASE STUDY

6.18 Providing alternatives to devastated natural construction materials, Vanuatu, 2020

Tropical Cyclone Harold barrelled down on Vanuatu in April 2020, destroying a large number of houses and causing extensive damage to trees and other vegetation that served as sources of building materials, such as bamboo and sago palm leaves (natangora) used for the structure of houses, walls and roofs. It would be seven years before the island's plants would rejuvenate and provide enough harvest for building materials in the amounts needed.

Some people managed to salvage natangora from their damaged houses, and where possible from fallen trees, but this needed to be done almost immediately following the cyclone before the leaves rotted.

An INGO supporting shelter self-recovery agreed with the community, through the local chiefs, to provide shelter repair and rebuilding equipment, including chainsaws. Community members were trained as chainsaw operators, which allowed them to use and process fallen trees for shelter construction. The community agreed to be responsible for sourcing building materials, in addition to the processed timber they received through the chainsaw operators, and agreed to pay for additional fuel as well as pay fees and provide meals to the chainsaw operators. Chainsaw operators on their part committed to prioritising support to vulnerable people, such as the elderly, widows and women-headed households.

Adapted from: CARE, September 2021. Research Report: Shelter Self-Recovery in Vanuatu.

Video: CARE South Pentecost Shelter Recovery.



*Chainsaw workshop, Pentecost, Vanuatu, after Tropical Storm Harold,
Source: Allan Tari/CARE Vanuatu*

6.4.3 Market-based interventions

If markets, including labour markets, or supply-chains have been disrupted or markets are not functioning, self-recovery can be blocked or significantly hindered. The challenge for interventions in any context is how to gain an understanding and interpret the varying degrees of public and private interest in relation to specific roles within the market system. It is also important to be aware that in larger scale responses, humanitarian actors can overwhelm the already weakened market logistics, contribute to price escalation or push small actors out of the market by importing or buying large quantities of goods.

However, humanitarian organisations can also collaborate with suppliers as well as relevant authorities, institutions and associations (e.g. chambers of commerce, associations of vendors, trade unions) to understand how humanitarian actors can contribute to re-establishing stable markets that provide good quality local materials or to set up new supply chains for materials from non-affected regions. In contexts where price escalation due to shortages and high demand has rendered certain materials unaffordable for many of the affected population, negotiating with authorities to introduce regulatory measures, like price caps or subsidies for high-demand materials, can help control costs.

The functioning of the labour market can also be an important element that helps or hinders the ability to self-recover. Skilled local labour can be in short supply, especially in countries that provide a cheap labour force for overseas projects, creating a drain on local skills. With a sudden post-disaster demand for construction workers, small and medium contractors can be booked-up and unavailable. In some circumstances, rapid training and supervision can go some way towards mitigating these issues.

CASE STUDY

6.19 Controlling price inflation, Philippines, 2015

In the 2015 Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines, the Philippines Shelter Cluster approached the local Chamber of Commerce in Tacloban to communicate that after past typhoons (such as the Typhoon Bopha response in Mindanao in 2012) the local Chamber had worked with local hardware businesses to ensure that construction material prices were not inflated.

Following discussions, the Tacloban Chamber of Commerce also adopted this approach, working with businesses to keep their prices down. Even though there were still shortages of materials in the hardware stores for many months after the disaster, price stabilisation allowed poorer households the same opportunities to access construction materials as higher-income families.

Observation from Shelter practitioner

Re-establish physical access to markets

Where access to markets has been physically disrupted, major infrastructure works (such as repairing roads or bridges or facilitating inter-island transport) might be necessary to re-establish access. This is generally the mandate of the government (usually under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works) but might be supported by UN agencies or international development co-operations.

The role of INGOs could be to advocate to accelerate the works, and also to explore potential alternatives. Access could at least be provisionally repaired by mobilizing community action or by organizing, for example, boat shuttles in flooded areas. Perhaps markets can be temporarily moved to another location?

At the household level, barriers to access markets, especially for women, can be due to a lack of security or a lack of transport for bulk materials. The provision of safer means of transport, or financial support for certain means of transport, can be valuable options to unblock access to markets, especially for vulnerable groups.

Further resources

UNDP 2013. [Guidance Note Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation.](#)

6.4.4 Facilitate access to finance and cash programming

A thorough context analysis can identify the financial capacity and potential of the affected population (including remittances from diaspora or state programmes for grants). The better this analysis, the better the strategy can be tailored to complement these resources. Low incomes, poverty and indebtedness are key economic factors contributing to vulnerability during and after crises and are compounded by various social factors such as gender, old age or living with a disability, which further impede access to sources of fair finance. Access to finance is therefore essential to address the needs of the most vulnerable, facilitating their self-recovery. In some contexts it might be appropriate to opt for microfinance schemes for housing at the community level or schemes that are specifically directed to women or other vulnerable groups. However, organising and delivering microfinance requires particular capacities and expertise and is more often found in development programmes.

There are various ways in which humanitarian organisation can support access to finance, and it is strongly advised to seek the advice of cash programming experts.

CASE STUDY

6.20 Access to finance as a driver for shelter recovery, Nepal, 2015

“Access to finance affects when households can start rebuilding, how long they take, the choices of what they can build, and whether or not they reduce risks.”

In Nepal, almost \$US2 billion were channelled directly through government cash grants to over 800,000 earthquake-affected households. Cash grants alone, however, were found to be insufficient as a housing recovery financial strategy with additional measures needed to address affordability, as well as better communications around cash transfers in housing recovery.

Misunderstandings around cash transfers included expectations that the money was ‘compensation’ and should vary according to the value of loss; that amounts of financial assistance should determine housing standards or designs; and that assistance should be sufficient to cover the full costs of reconstruction or retrofitting, rather than a subsidy or contribution to the cost.

Habitat for Humanity. Stephenson M. 2020. 4 Lessons from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake Housing Recovery.

Cash transfer programming

Direct provision of cash, or various forms of mobile money transfers, are the most straightforward ways of providing financial assistance, where financial infrastructure allows and markets are functioning. It can also be one of the most empowering, allowing people the flexibility to manage their budget according to their priorities. A significant challenge is to identify the amount of cash needed per household in order to make a meaningful contribution towards reconstruction. It is unlikely that

organisations will be able to cover the full costs of repairs or reconstruction, however, even relatively small cash injections can ‘leverage’ other resources such as savings, loans, and in some circumstances, significant remittances from the diaspora community. When supporting shelter self-recovery the flexibility of cash assistance can be particularly useful as cash amounts can be tailored to the needs of households and top-ups can be included for the most vulnerable as they become identified through the iterative analysis.

The provision of cash can be:

- Unconditional or multipurpose in circumstances where the outcome is open and the funding is not restricted to a certain type of support such as shelter.
- Subject to a variety of conditions, when assurance of the type and quality of outcome is considered a priority. The conditionality can, for example, restrict payments until certain activities are completed or outcomes achieved, ensuring the funds are used for shelter-related activities.
- As rental assistance, either paid directly to the landlord by the organisation, so that the organisation can ensure a certain level of protection for both tenant and landlord, or to the landlord via the tenant, once steps have been taken to ensure a level of protection for both parties.

Further information and resources about cash assistance in shelter

British Red Cross. [CashHub](#).

British Red Cross. [CashHub: Rental Assistance](#).

GSC. [Rental Market Interventions](#).

GSC 2018. [Shelter Projects](#). [Shelter and Cash: 16 Case Studies](#).

Sphere. [Minimum Economic Recovery Standards \(MERS\) 2017](#).

CASE STUDY

6.21 Cash, choice and shelter recovery, Colombia, 1999

After a 6.2 magnitude earthquake damaged homes in the Colombian coffee-growing region of Eje Cafetero in 1999, the government released a fund for reconstruction. In the affected area, the existing grassroots community network of coffee growers, the Coffee Growers Organisation (CGOs), managed the fund on behalf of communities impacted by the earthquake.

The CGO had personnel and resources at different levels, from community to local government, providing easy access to the fund. A few days after the earthquake, the CGO organised assessments, including impact assessments on infrastructure and the coffee industry.

Families approached local CGO offices to receive assistance in the form of loans, subsidies and technical support, and could use the financial assistance to reconstruct using any design and materials they wanted. However, people did have to adopt safer and environmentally sustainable construction practices detailed by the government, and a range of solutions were developed, including the reconstruction of bathrooms and repairs to livelihoods infrastructure. Over 8,000 houses were built, all unique according to each household's needs.

Adapted from: Davidson C G, Johnson C, Lizarralde G, Dikmen N, Sliwinski. Habitat International, Volume 31, Issue 1, March 2007. Truths and myths about community participation in post-disaster housing projects.

Vouchers and voucher fairs

The provision of vouchers is often classified as cash-based assistance, although materials that can be redeemed with vouchers are usually predetermined and limited. Voucher assistance can be particularly useful in contexts where:

- Certain materials are not easily available, so vendors are incentivised to provide these materials as they get a guarantee of minimum sales at a fixed price through the prepaid vouchers.
- There are no markets due to remote or inaccessible communities; the same incentive can work well to persuade suppliers to deliver pre-identified materials and set up “voucher fairs”.
- There is a need to ensure quality and price stability.
- Cash assistance is not feasible, perhaps due to a lack of necessary infrastructure and systems for cash transfer distribution, or due to security issues.

CASE STUDY

6.22 Flexibility and dignity through a choice of options, Indonesia, 2009

The earthquake in West Sumatra in 2009 left over 135,000 houses severely damaged. An INGO established a programme to provide assistance to the greatest number of affected households as quickly as possible. After in-depth market research, construction materials were identified that were available in local markets. The organisation implemented a cash-based intervention providing vouchers to construction groups that were cashed at post offices. Construction groups were made up of ten households, formed by their own communities following a set of agreed criteria, to prioritise the most vulnerable.

Voucher payments were given in tranches when all ten households had completed the different, defined phases of the construction process. This encouraged community responsibility to ensure the most vulnerable were looked after. The response stimulated the recovery of the local market and also offered families flexibility and dignity of choice to purchase materials that they specifically needed for their shelter recovery.

Adapted from [CRS, Indonesia. Cash-Based Solutions in Shelter and Settlements](#).

Further resources

IFRC, SRU, Luxembourg Aid and Development 2019. [Shelters, Settlements and Cash A manual on Cash and Voucher Assistance](#).

CASE STUDY

6.23 The 'Shopping List' approach, Solomon Islands

The Solomon's Tool or 'Shopping List' approach was developed by an INGO to provide a robust methodology for bottom-up distribution of goods and services to disaster-affected communities in the Solomon Islands. The premise of the approach is that activities authored by those that have been affected, achieve better results, and that one size does not fit all.

The method encourages the target group or community to self-select suitable resources from a drop-down menu (often called a shopping list). The menu of available resources and services can include any item and is pre-approved by donor organisations. A simple and transparent method determines what value of resources will be allocated to individuals, households and communities.

The step-by-step guide to this approach is

1. Identify and grade the extent of damage/loss/impact.
2. Assign differential monetary values to the impacts identified above. Greater values should be assigned to high impacts, lower values to low impacts.
3. Communicate the menu of available resources and services that are in common use, as developed and approved by donor organisation/s.
4. Affected individuals, households and communities select the goods and services that most suit their own recovery plans.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Access to grants, loans, subsidies and microfinance

Enabling people to access finance can take many forms:

- Facilitating the creation of construction cooperatives and savings groups that provide people with the opportunity to access certain resources or credit through participation in the group.
- Supporting people to access government loans or subsidies that might exist. People may not be aware of these opportunities or may find it difficult to fulfil all the requirements of the application by failing, for example, to provide all the necessary documents.
- Community-managed funds, such as Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) can also be a source of funding for people's recovery. Providing support on financial management and reporting can help ensure transparency and accountability.
- Crowdfunding may become a new possibility especially as a means of raising funds among diaspora communities.

CASE STUDY

6.24 Flood response using a revolving fund, Senegal, 2014 to 2017

A local NGO, specialising in addressing urban issues, implemented a project in hazard-prone urban areas of Dakar, enabling the reconstruction of more than 200 houses previously damaged by floods. The project aimed to be a support component to civil society in the reconstruction of modest and sustainable houses by the population themselves, according to their financial capacity. Established savings groups, formed mainly by women, were given the opportunity to apply for larger loans from a revolving fund managed by the NGO.

Affected members of the savings group asked their group members for a loan, which was validated. The savings group then asked the NGO for the loan by acting as a guarantor of the payment. The NGO's technical team verified the damage and feasibility of repairs before giving approval. The loan applicant then requested a budget for reconstruction from a local artisan/builder, which was checked by the NGO before disbursing the requested amount. The group repaid the loan over 20 months including 5 percent interest: 2 percent of the interest returned to the revolving fund, 1 percent stayed in the savings group, 1 percent went to the savings group association, and 1 percent to the NGO.

In parallel the NGO strengthened the skills of local craftsmen (capacity building) and saving groups' capacities to improve their income activities (livelihoods) as well as empowering them to take concrete action to improve their living environment (sensitization and community empowerment).

Implementation of this type of project is longer than a standard recovery project, but it can be an **opportunity to establish a revolving fund system partnering with local actors/NGOs that can continue these activities providing a basis for future local development.**

For more information: [*UrbaSEN. Let's build the city together. A city by and for the inhabitants.*](#)

6.4.5 Increase availability of existing housing

In urban contexts in particular, where renting is a significant housing option, having sufficient housing stock is essential for the recovery of affected households, including displaced people and returnees. In the aftermath of a disaster, many houses may suffer damage that renders them unsafe. However, potential landlords might not have enough resources to afford repairs and are likely to prioritise their own accommodation above preparing to host or repair rental space. Shelter programmes can in this case help to find adequate rental solutions, supporting owners to repair damaged houses/apartments or complete unfinished houses increasing the stock of safe and adequate housing available. Moreover, increasing the available housing stock can help to regulate the rental market, avoiding uncontrolled rental increases.

Other approaches to increase the housing stock include supporting the upgrading or construction of an extra room in a house, which could be rented or used to host a displaced family. In addition, it may be possible to negotiate or sign agreements with apartment landlords or hotel owners to offer a percentage of their stock for affordable rental for a certain period of time.

CASE STUDY

6.25 Increasing rental market stock and its quality, Lebanon, 2015

The 2015 influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, a highly urbanised country with its own political and structural challenges, exacerbated housing shortages and prompted a deterioration in living conditions for both refugees and already vulnerable host populations.

An international organisation focused on the **rehabilitation and upgrading of empty buildings** in the target community as alternative housing options. Landlords received the main materials through a voucher scheme they redeemed at pre-approved local suppliers, and were given control over their own renovations. The organisation monitored the distribution of materials to ensure quality. The modality also helped the organisation to overcome the issue of having limited access to construction sites.

In order to protect vulnerable populations without formal rental contracts, landlords and tenants were asked to sign a lease agreement. Sessions on hygiene promotion, and **legal advice on HLP issues**, were provided, including information on how to obtain a lease agreement, the obligations of each party and how to avoid legal issues.

For more information: GSC. [*Case Study: Lebanon 2015-2016 Refugee Crisis.*](#)

CASE STUDY

Host families as part of the self-recovery process, Guatemala, 2018

In response to the shelter needs of people internally displaced by the Fuego volcano eruption in Guatemala in July 2018, a humanitarian organisation implemented a pilot project focusing on providing shelter through a host family model as a more sustainable alternative to the government's collective shelters strategy. Support to improve the shared dwellings' habitability included household items, home improvements, cash transfers, and training.

According to the project evaluation report: "The model proved to be effective in improving housing conditions during the time that host and hosted families lived together. Each component of the model helped improve the beneficiaries' living conditions by offering a comprehensive solution to the affected families and, indirectly, to host families. It also helped reduce tensions between families who were sharing water, food, kitchen utensils, and common areas, which were insufficient for the new number of people living under the same roof". The study also found that **the people hosted by families had a faster and more robust self-recovery process**, compared to those sheltered in collective facilities.

After supporting host and hosted families for three months, the exit strategy included providing affected families access to a rental shelter solution by supporting 50 percent of rental expenses. A new home was provided to a specific number of vulnerable families.

Adapted from: 'Effectiveness of the assistance model implemented by Habitat for Humanity Guatemala for families affected by the Fuego volcano eruption - Case Study, June 2020

6.5 EXAMPLE: MATCHING ANALYSIS WITH SUPPORT OPTIONS

There will be various reasons why people do not use safe building techniques (such as strong foundations, bracing or proper fixings) or don't include features for a healthier internal environment, such as installing mosquito nets, chimneys and safe cooking stoves. There will also be motives for remaining in hazardous locations or for delaying the reconstruction process. Lack of money, awareness or knowledge might not always be the main barriers, sometimes there are also cultural, seasonal or legal reasons. It is therefore essential to understand the intentions behind people's priorities, actions and timing in order to appropriately address the gaps or barriers that hinder people in their recovery efforts.

The rapid context analysis will identify the main gaps and barriers to self-recovery. A detailed context analysis will seek to understand the reasons and root causes behind the gaps identified. Depending on the identified causes, consideration should be given to either high-level advocacy or market-based intervention in order to address the identified barriers or gaps. The community engagement process should clarify which types of self-recovery support options people consider most helpful.

Initial observations may show that the most damaged houses have been built with very low quality materials, for example poorly burnt bricks, mud blocks made with unsuitable soil, concrete blocks with the wrong mix, wood not treated against infestation, or low quality corrugated roof sheets. A significant gap identified may be a lack of higher quality materials. However, only further analysis and engagement with the affected populations will illuminate the reasons for this situation and how it can be best addressed. The table below illustrates what this could mean in practice for an organisation aiming to support shelter self-recovery.



*The International Organization for Migration's Bamboo Treatment Facility in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
Source: Nathan Webb / IOM*

Observation from preliminary analysis: “Affected houses were built with low quality materials”		
Potential gap/ barrier e.g. identified in KAP	Possible underlying reasons/causes identified in subsequent detailed analysis	Possible support options
People lack the knowledge to produce better quality materials	There are no education programmes for builders. Local knowledge of traditional techniques has been lost or they are not perceived as a viable option; the use of “modern” materials and techniques is not well understood	• Technical training on the production of materials such as mud blocks, bricks, concrete blocks, or the treatment of wood or bamboo against infestation etc. • Awareness-raising on traditional building practices
People do not have the resources or means to produce better quality materials	Suitable soil is not easily available; there is not enough fuel to burn bricks properly; the tools and equipment used for production are not ideal	• Set up supply chains • Provide tools and equipment • Support trainings on better production techniques • Explore alternative materials
Quality materials are not available in the market	Only substandard quality corrugated roofing sheets are available; thatch for roofing is only seasonally available	• Work with suppliers to set up supply chains • Explore alternative materials • Explore strategies to make supply more stable (planting grass for thatch)
Quality materials are too expensive	People's income is too low to afford materials; the increased demand or shortage of supply has led to price increases which make them unaffordable now	• Provide cash or vouchers • Negotiate with suppliers for better prices (e.g. for bulk procurement) • Advocate with government to subsidise certain materials or cap prices • Seek to develop better livelihood opportunities
People don't want to invest in their shelter in their current location	People lack security of tenure and don't want to risk losing the investment in their shelter; people want to move from the hazardous location and don't want to invest in the shelter	• Provide legal support to increase security of tenure • Advocate to change policies that make obtaining tenure difficult for certain groups • Provide support to identify secure land • Take measures to mitigate hazard risks • Advocate and provide legal support to secure tenure for relocation sites
There are legal restrictions on the use of certain materials	The use of certain materials might be restricted for environmental protection reasons or contravene building codes	• Advocate to change restrictions, e.g. allow for local materials such as earth, bamboo or thatch even if they are not covered in the building codes • Try to find alternative materials • Mitigate negative environmental impacts e.g. by supporting reforestation

7

THE COMMUNITY LEADS: COMMUNITY MOBILISATION AND ENGAGEMENT



Source Viivi Erkkila/CARE,
Caption: Bangladesh

KEY MESSAGES

- Community mobilisation and engagement are one of the building blocks of a self-recovery approach. Recognising and building upon the collective and individual strengths, actions and plans of crisis-affected populations is fundamental to the process of supporting shelter self-recovery.
- Support for shelter self-recovery focuses on supportive engagement and emphasises a shift in perspective from externally led implementation of projects to accompaniment and facilitation of community-led responses.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

- Strategies for engaging with affected populations.
- The foundations for community-led programming and why it is important.
- How to facilitate and accompany community-led planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities.

7.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES

“The community” does not refer to a homogenous group of people but involves a diversity of perspectives, motivations, desires and barriers. The act of engagement is to gain information from as broad a cross-section of a population as possible in a particular location, to reach a consensus or agreement on the path to take, to establish representation that can take collective decisions, and to support the agency of those affected to make informed decisions.

The best strategy to engage with affected people will be informed by the rapid context analysis (see [section 5.1.2](#)) and will depend greatly on:

- **The general context** and impact of the hazard or crisis such as security risks, the political context, physical and ‘cultural’ access.
- **Socio-cultural norms** - particularly in relation to social organisation and engagement. In some cultures and localities, working collectively is very engrained; in others, social ties are based on extended families or social groups, while other cultures are more individualistic. It is important to understand the relationships between power structures, social cohesion, social discrimination, and marginalisation.
- **A humanitarian organisation’s mandate, expertise, and capacities**, their local partners and their experience in the context, as well as donors’ policies and mandates.

The level of engagement achieved will vary according to people’s capacities, time or other restrictions and willingness to commit the necessary time. Ideally, programming should be people-led from assessment to implementation, including monitoring and evaluation. However, that might not be feasible in every context and other approaches where affected people take less responsibility for decision-making may be more realistic.

Supporting self-recovery should always seek to engage all members of the community to the largest extent possible. Depending on the context and cultural norms, assistance may be provided on different scales - household or community level - and the process will be different as a result. Household level support provides more tailored assistance, whereas community level support provides assistance that benefits multiple households at the same time. Community-led, in this case, refers to programmes planned and implemented by crisis-affected individuals, households and collective community structures, as opposed to organisation-led.

Working at the community level requires a broader approach to supplement existing participatory structures – committees, working groups, focal points, and community mobilizers – to ensure inclusion of the full range of voices. In certain scenarios, it may be appropriate to promote some of the benefits of working collectively, even if this deviates from cultural norms. For instance, engagement in urban contexts can be more challenging than in rural settings, as social groups are less clearly delineated and unstructured. Community organisations may be active and social cohesion might be strong in informal urban settlements, where people most often live in self-built structures, while social dynamics are likely to be very different in areas dominated by more anonymous multi-storey housing. Community structures in some settings are weak or do not exist at all. Engagement with affected populations or specifically targeted groups, as well as support options, will need to be adapted accordingly and the establishment of some community or self-help and support structures may be initiated and facilitated. These can be steering groups, focal points or champions as well as roving support teams (see [section 6.2.3](#) for more on roving teams). Working groups can be set up for specific topics or tasks. Conflict resolution strategies should be created to ensure that existing power

structures are representative of, and accountable to, the broader community and to avoid ingrained inequalities being perpetuated. This form of community mobilisation should always be facilitated through a process of consultation with the affected population and existing local organisations to ensure new structures are appropriate to the culture and context, or build on/support structures where they already exist. In other contexts, there may not be a role for the facilitation of more collective approaches to recovery.

To achieve the objectives of effective community engagement and mobilisation, a series of steps will be needed over a period of time, often alongside other support options:

1. Understand people's aspirations for recovery and the root causes of barriers they face in their process of self-recovery.
2. Collaborate with specific community groups or a range of voices to facilitate a process of self-assessment of community and household vulnerabilities as well as capacities, options and opportunities.
3. Facilitate connections with other stakeholders such as local authorities early on and regularly throughout the process to ensure the success and sustainability of community self-recovery.
4. Accompany community-led identification of support options and programming.
5. Support community and household-led implementation of projects or action plans and the realisation of other supporting activities.
6. Accompany locally-led monitoring and evaluation of outcomes as well as reflection and learning during and following programming.

Engaging affected people in programming is often perceived as too time consuming to enable the delivery of a timely shelter response, especially in emergency settings. This can be true, if the agency perceives itself as responsible for delivering within a set timeframe. However, if the process is community-led, the decision on timeframes and responsibility for achieving the chosen outcomes lies with people themselves. They can decide whether to request support for short-term emergency solutions (for example, requesting distribution of tarpaulins if wanted) and/or to invest in longer-term recovery and manage their accommodation needs in the meantime.

7.1.1 Initiating contact and identifying/establishing representative structures

Successful community collaboration is based on effective communication, respect and trust and rests on early development of a common understanding and purpose. Initial meetings with community representatives and the first steps of the context analysis mark the first contact with a community.

Being transparent about what type of support the organisation can and cannot provide, what resources are available and how a collaboration can be envisaged should be communicated as early as possible.

When basic trust is established, and interest in collaboration has been agreed during first discussions, then individuals, groups and initiatives that are best positioned to play a key role in the collaboration can be identified. Detailed discussions about the objectives, basic requirements and conditions for a collaboration between the supporting organisation and a community, specific groups or individual households can proceed. The best entry point for engagement may be via women's groups, cooperatives, faith-based groups, or respected elders, who can motivate wider engagement and be agents of change. In some cases, a relationship may already exist, particularly when working with a local organisation in a context with recurring hazards.

Initial contact with affected people will establish:

- Knowledge of community and household self-mobilisation initiatives and plans for recovery, as well as external support options from government, diaspora or private sector groups.
- Understanding of the potential for self-recovery support, including identification of potential project areas and establishment of contact with the main stakeholders.
- Engagement with and approval from necessary authorities, fostering possible synergies between local actors/communities and key national or international stakeholders, such as other INGOs, NGOs and donors.

In situations of displacement, host communities should be included in the discussions. Ideally they can be active collaborating partners in the project, but at the very least should be consulted and included in decision-making. In non-displacement contexts, communication, engagement and exchange with neighbouring communities should be encouraged.

CASE STUDY

7.1 Affected communities as part of decision-making structures, Ukraine, 2014

In 2014 the town of Sloviansk was liberated by Ukrainian forces. Many houses had been damaged during the conflict with Russia and the town had received an influx of internally displaced people (IDPs) from the neighbouring Oblast (administrative division).

The town council called an emergency meeting for response actors, which included the Shelter Cluster coordinator and NGOs involved in shelter. The meeting started with introductions. When it was the turn of a group of women to speak, it became clear that the women were IDPs as well as other affected members of the community, who had not been officially invited to the meeting. While their participation was not planned, as the meeting progressed their inputs and feedback proved to be extremely useful and directly informed and helped design the response.

This accidental participation demonstrated the benefits of having affected communities at the heart of the decision-making process.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Participatory methods and tools

Institute of Development Studies (IDS). [Participatory Methods](#).

Swithern, S. 2019. [More Relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need](#). ALNAP Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP.

Arnstein, Sherry R, 1969. [A Ladder of Citizen Participation](#) *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 35: 4, 216-224.

Collaboration agreements

Once the terms of collaboration are agreed they should be established transparently, with respective future partners, ideally in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MoU), collaboration agreement or similar document. Such agreements can be drafted with established representatives, but can include other parties such as local authorities. In contexts where written documentation is not common, other ways of formalising the agreement can be sought. Whether written or not, any collaboration agreement should clearly define:

- **Scope of the collaboration:** planned activities, expected results, resources and capacities that the different partners will provide within a specified timeframe.
- **Clear roles and responsibilities** of each partner or collaborating stakeholder and the supporting organisation. This should include agreed processes of consultation and decision-making, clear accountability standards and conflict resolution strategies, such as identifying trusted intermediaries.
- **A common understanding of terminology**, as many terms used by humanitarian organisations (such as sustainable materials, safety, transparency, inclusion, social cohesion, or resilience) may mean different things to different groups. It is important to take the time to discuss the terminology and make sure it is well understood by all partners.
- **Communication channels and strategies** for sharing information between partners and with external stakeholders. See also [Section 6.2.1](#).
- **How the promotion of equity and inclusion** of the more vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community will be incorporated in the project. Organisations might choose to base the collaboration on the condition that marginalized groups are included, as well as the most vulnerable, who may not be able to self-recover adequately and may need additional support. If not agreed from the outset, efforts should be made to raise awareness about these humanitarian principles.

The humanitarian organisation, ideally through a local partner, should provide orientation and training for the various roles required in the collaboration. For example, training on facilitation, moderation and mediation, understanding transparency and accountability mechanisms, inclusion, and protection. The local partner can also directly act as a facilitator, mediate potential power imbalances and ensure the processes are transparent and inclusive.

Further information on how to establish and coordinate participatory community structures

NRC. [Field Staff Training: Community Structures](#).

CASE STUDY

7.2 The importance of clarifying terminology, Malawi, 2021

Throughout 2021, a technical working group (TWiG) tested and refined the ‘Informing Choice for Better Shelter protocol’ (the Protocol) in Malawi. The Protocol was originally developed in 2019 by the Promoting Safer Building Working Group of the Global Shelter Cluster to guide country shelter and non-food item (NFI) clusters through a process of developing relevant technical messages to promote building back better and safer after disasters.

The TWiG was formed within the then-dormant Malawi Shelter Cluster, co-led by the Malawi Red Cross and the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development. During a meeting a government representative stressed the importance of promoting and using ‘green’ materials for reconstruction. After further discussions it transpired that when saying ‘green’ the government representative meant the promotion of concrete blocks and CGI roofing, as the use of wood in construction is discouraged in Malawi for environmental reasons due to widespread deforestation. Similarly the manufacture and use of burnt bricks has been banned as kilns are fired with charcoal made locally from wood. Earth and thatch are not considered durable sustainable materials either by the government because they are not perceived as resistant against climate-related disasters, such as floods and cyclones.

Non-governmental organisations thought that natural materials, including earth and thatch, were ‘green’ as they were locally available with lower embedded carbon, and thought these should be promoted. The government meant exactly the opposite. Clarification of different definitions allowed for more fruitful discussions and the co-development of a tool to evaluate the sustainability of materials in this setting.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

7.1.2 Communication and engagement channels

Effective two-way communication and transparency are essential ingredients for successful and meaningful engagement and for building understanding and trust between stakeholders. It can improve quality and effectiveness of programmes, facilitate inclusion and accountability toward the affected population, and help manage expectations. Additionally, a self-recovery approach relies greatly on public education and awareness-raising to promote informed choice, thus it is crucial to identify relevant communication pathways.

Communication, however, is sometimes considered as one of the greatest challenges for humanitarian organisations. Frequently, funding, changing personnel on short-term contracts, resources, and the required skills are inadequate for the appropriate development of communication strategies. Inadequate communication can lead to limited or even negative impacts on the project with low levels of commitment, engagement and trust, as well as poor understanding of technical messages.

A key point is that communication is not just about delivering information, but equally about listening to concerns, views and feedback, and asking questions. Key principles include:

- **Prioritise interactive communications channels** to create opportunities for people to contribute and be involved. Face-to-face interactions, whether informal or formal meetings, discussions, visits, workshops, training, or an information desk are the most effective and interactive approach to communications. Make time and foster an environment that is conducive for people to share their views. There are other communication channels that allow for interaction, such as social media, and these can also be useful.

- **Use multiple appropriate and inclusive communication methods and formats for people with disabilities** such as sign language, braille, easy-to-read/plain language materials, and accessible information and communication technology including radio, print, SMS and TV. Identifying a range of different, accessible communication channels, both traditional and modern, formal and informal, and working with trusted intermediaries and networks will ensure trust and reach different parts of the community, adapting messages for their understanding.
- **Share information in local languages, using appropriate terms and avoiding technical jargon,** and through channels that suit different levels of literacy, preference and access to technology.
- **Prioritise audiences and limit messages to avoid overloading people with information.** Assess the information and knowledge gaps and needs of the target audience and prioritize demand-led engagement that provides a choice of what information to transmit and where it can be found - for instance in an information centre, on-line or through house-to-house leaflets. Keep information to the minimum necessary, but be prepared to provide more when requested.
- **Skills and human resources.** Allocate adequate resources for the communications strategy and for community mobilization and collaborate with communication experts. Community mobilizers are crucial in community-based actions. Having “embedded” staff, not perceived as “outsiders”, will enhance trust and allow for effective communications.
- **Support communications between communities.** Support mechanisms that facilitate dialogue within and between affected communities, and with local and national authorities and other key stakeholders. Communication between communities will extend impact and expand the reach of messages.
- **Engage in collaboration across sectors and agencies to provide coordinated communication.** Investigate being part of a shared project or coordinate communications with other actors. Link with clusters, inter-agency consultations and other coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication or inconsistent messaging.

CASE STUDY

7.3 Understanding motivators and using innovative engagement channels, various locations, 2015

In 2015, an international humanitarian organisation carried out an impact evaluation in Bangladesh, India, Madagascar, Pakistan, and the Philippines to understand why people acted or behaved in different ways in regard to the use of hazard-resistant construction practices.

The study confirmed that people follow well-known universal motivators: having enough food, creating a better future for their children and living in a safe home, albeit with different levels of priority in each location. The evaluation also showed that demonstration or model houses were very effective at triggering action. Another determinant was a lack of resources and access to material and skilled labour. Perceived risk and awareness also proved to be a significant determinant.

People who directly associated construction practices with preventing damage to their home during hazard events, and increasing their home’s overall stability and durability, were more likely to adopt them than those who were unaware or unconvinced of such benefits.

The study shows the need for a transformation in the way reconstruction programmes are conceived and implemented if impact is to be increased. Shelter experts need to collaborate with experts in social research methods, communications, food security, and livelihoods, to ensure that programmes take into account multiple and inter-related determinants of people’s behaviour.

For further information: [CRS 2015. Extending Impact - Factors influencing households to adopt hazard-resistant construction practices in post-disaster settings.](#)

CASE STUDY

7.4 Flood response: Rebuilding rural communities through PASSA, Kenya 2018

“Even though we lost our commodities, we feel we had our friends who can help us to go back to our normal lives.” Community member

In 2018, Kenya faced large-scale flooding that damaged houses and key infrastructure. A local NGO supported communities’ recovery needs by adopting PASSA (Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness) and using a mixed modality of interventions where both cash and in-kind support were provided.

Through PASSA groups, communities led the process of identifying information on safe shelter awareness, developing model house designs, undertaking cost analysis, selecting local materials to be used, and monitoring the construction process through to completion.

The participatory shelter approach in Kenya **allowed for innovation and creativity as well as the adaptation of local building cultures** in shelter design in each district. Some communities used oil drums for walling, others used stone, gabions or earth blocks that communities produced themselves.

New ways of shelter construction were undertaken that resulted in **stronger and safer shelters** in comparison to those initially built by affected populations, resulting in a **multiplier effect in some cases where community members not targeted for the programme replicated their neighbour’s home** using safer construction practices.

Adapted from [Kenya Red Cross Society. Shelter Construction Learning Review.](#)

Further resources

[CDAC Network.](#)

GSC 2019. Scoping Review. Engagement pathways and MEAL for Promoting Safer Building and Supporting Self-Recovery.

[- Full version](#)

[- Summary](#)

The World Bank, GFDRR. [Safer Homes, Stronger Communities. A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters.](#) Chapter 3 and Annex 1 (How to Do it: Conducting a Communication-based Assessment); Chapter 12 and Annex 2 (Establishing a Community Facilitation System).

GSC 2019. [Protocol for Developing Shelter and Settlement Information Education Communication \(IEC\) Resources](#) - developed by the GSC Promoting Safer Building Working Group.

7.2 THE COMMUNITY LEADS

“Owners are almost always the best managers of their own housing reconstruction; they know how they live and what they need”. *The World Bank, GFDRR.*²⁵

Supporting self-recovery recognises that affected people lead their own recovery; the role of assisting agencies is to accompany and facilitate this pathway. This can present new and inspiring challenges for the Shelter Sector, and is central to the mindset of supporting self-recovery. In this section, there is an introduction to a community-led approach, including context analysis, programming and monitoring.

7.2.1 Community-led context analysis and assessment

In programmes where community engagement is one of the main activities (as distinct from, for example, programmes that focus on higher level advocacy or market-based interventions), locally-led assessments will be an integral part of the Context Analysis (see [Chapter 5](#)). Community representatives can also conduct detailed assessments (see [5.1.4](#)) such as an analysis of construction vulnerabilities, a market analysis for certain materials or environmental impact assessments.

Some assessments may need particular expertise, such as building damage assessments or larger scale market or environmental assessments. The supporting organisation can facilitate directly, if it has the community mobilization skills and fluency in the local language; however it is preferable to train identified community representatives to lead the assessment.

The objectives of these community-led assessments are for affected people to:

- Identify their main vulnerabilities, resources and capacities, as well as key gaps and barriers to self-recovery.
- Analyse and understand what the community or households cannot achieve through self-help and what are the initiatives and strengths on which to build strategies.
- Establish criteria for ongoing iterative analysis and monitoring to track project progress and identify those who may require additional support in the process.

Analysis of the information should be carried out by, or together with, community representatives and the conclusions and findings made accessible and validated through consultations with the wider community. Findings about people’s main vulnerabilities, strengths, needs, capacities, and self-recovery initiatives will serve as the basis for a community action plan and also inform other programming steps. Furthermore, the community-led assessments will be an integral part of subsequent monitoring and evaluation processes (see [section 7.2.4](#)).

Further resources

A number of tools exist to help facilitate community-led assessments and analysis, some are very specific to certain questions, others lead through a whole process of joint assessment and analysis:

British Red Cross. [Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment \(EVCA\).](#)

IFRC. [PASSA Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness.](#)

See [5.1.4](#) for more assessment tools

CASE STUDY

7.5 PASSA used to prioritize activities in Trinidad and Tobago, 2018

In October 2018, in response to significant flooding and landslides in Trinidad and Tobago caused by torrential rains, an NGO launched a three-year recovery project in nine severely affected peri-urban settlements located on hillsides, with a focus on building community resilience.

The PASSA methodology was used as a tool for risk analysis, community mobilization and the participatory design of self-recovery action plans. Relevant information on the settlements' vulnerabilities and primary needs were analysed by the whole community following the PASSA steps. Community representatives prioritized interventions through different working sessions, and technical solutions were discussed with specialists in civil engineering including "grey" infrastructure (such as wells, catchment-systems, water channels/pipelines, water or wastewater treatment plants, reservoirs/tanks) and nature-based solutions, such as forestry.

The programme's success was due to the availability of funds to finance the community action plans, from money allocated from the project budget, and subsequent fundraising at the local level based on the community action plans.

For more information: See video of [Habitat for Humanity Trinidad and Tobago applying PASSA in Port of Spain](#).

Further resources

IFRC. [Nature-based solutions](#).

7.2.2. Community-led programming

Although community-led programming may seem demanding for humanitarian organisations, the impacts of empowerment and strengthened social cohesion and resilience can be considerable. Community-led programming provides opportunities for affected people to engage, learn and retain ownership and responsibility. It can sow the seeds for individual and collective recovery and provides an excellent opportunity for building capacities and skills, contributing to sustainable programme outcomes.

Humanitarian organisations accompanying community-led programming should:

- **Plan for ample time;** although the process of self-recovery will often start very quickly after the disaster or displacement, the processes of accompanying and engaging with the community may start more slowly than conventional shelter programmes.
- **Allocate adequate human resources** with relevant skills in community mobilisation, technical training and monitoring and evaluation. Ideally, necessary capacity should be secured through partnerships with local organisations and, as much as possible, the recruitment and training of local staff from the community (see [Chapter 8](#)).
- As needed and requested, **provide specific training for community members** engaged in leading the programming and implementation processes, such as: project management, participatory approaches, team building, budgeting and financial management, accountability, conflict resolution, etc.
- The use of **quick impact projects** that are prioritised by the community and which can provide first early results, may enhance commitment and galvanise wider/further participation. They can also serve as 'proof of concept' for donors or other stakeholders who may need to be convinced that the investments of time and resources will have an impact.

- **Provide advice and technical assistance** as needed to support informed decision-making.
- **Recognise local authorities and CSOs** as major actors facilitating, supporting and sustaining community-based action at the national as well as at the local level.
- Discuss the benefits of supporting self-recovery with authorities and seek their approval; explain the principle of supporting the community's and households' choices at a time of conflicting priorities.
- Consider supporting engaged CSOs with material and financial resources and building their capacities to enable their active contribution and strategic importance in the project.
- Promote community-specific measures to **reduce disaster-related risk** to housing and settlements and to improve access to services that households are lacking. Examples might be infrastructure works to reduce hazard risks, for instance reforestation to reduce flooding and erosion, drainage systems, water access, measures to increase mobility, and transport among many others.
- Additionally, set up **accountability mechanisms and conflict resolution strategies**, to ensure that existing power structures are representative of, and accountable to, the broader community and to avoid the perpetuation of ingrained inequalities.

CASE STUDY

7.6 Community-led projects, Philippines, 2014

In a Philippines recovery project, communities were supported to undertake a community-led risk assessment that explored hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities in order to identify gaps that could be addressed through community-identified project proposals. These proposals were individually budgeted by engineers and this information was then fed back through a village level budgeting exercise empowering communities to make financially informed choices about which projects to spend their village level funds on. Thereafter, communities managed and implemented their own projects via a structured cash transfer approach. Every community had a different set of priorities reflecting their different contexts and this was reflected in the choice of projects they would each 'green light'.

Observation from Practitioner

Leaving no one behind and targeting support

A self-recovery approach should aim to support the majority of the affected population with the recovery of their homes. However, this is likely to be just one aspect of the programme. Other community activities may include awareness-raising, training and targeted support for securing tenure or mediating disputes. Basic information such as key messages on safer building practices and disaster risk reduction will most likely be targeted at all members of a community, while detailed training on safer construction methods will be provided to specific groups directly involved in reconstruction activities.

At the same time, organisations should seek to ensure that no one gets left behind, particularly vulnerable, disadvantaged and under-represented groups and individuals that cannot self-recover with the amount of assistance provided to the wider community. They may need additional support from others and the supporting organisation. For example, while all affected households might receive material support and technical assistance, those identified as most vulnerable could get the full support of a construction team to build their houses. This could simultaneously serve as a model house to train builders and to showcase good practices. It is important that community representatives and a range of voices are central to discussions and decisions on targeting criteria. Perceived inequities in distribution of support can lead to tensions and social division.

CASE STUDY

7.7 Inequitable damage assessments increase vulnerability, Lebanon, 2020

The Beirut Blast in August 2020 affected a vast area of the city. Many households started to repair their houses with their own means and networks. Damage assessments were identified as the vital first step to allow affected people to start this process of recovery.

Assessments were carried out by multiple actors to evaluate public risks. For occupants and owners the assessment was key to deciding whether to stay or leave in the case of structural damage; to making informed choices about the repair process and the required budget; to requesting financial compensation from the Lebanese State as eligible; and to resisting eviction threats when landlords used damage as a pretext to get rid of tenants.

Unfortunately damage assessments were not equally available to all residents and information was only shared informally to certain groups; migrant workers and refugees had less access to information about damage to their homes than other respondents involved in the assessments. In addition there were strong inequalities across geographic locations, with some neighbourhoods receiving more focus than others. This led to inequity in the repair process and left many vulnerable households behind.

Adapted from Habitat for Humanity December 2021. [Lebanon's Housing Ecosystem and Self-Recovery Pathways](#).

7.2.3 Community-led implementation

Based on an analysis of assessments, and through a consensus-based decision-making process, agreed representatives will identify the main issues they want to address and how. These could be strategic projects at the community level (such as repairing, upgrading or building critical infrastructure) or, at the household level, supporting people to rebuild through technical support, training and cash. The specific goals and activities will be laid out ideally in a 'community action plan'. The humanitarian organisation can help to facilitate the community action planning process and provide complementary support, such as creating links with other stakeholders and community groups.

The process of recovery will have already gathered its own momentum soon after the crisis - a momentum that may change as time goes by, but one that should always be led by the affected people themselves. Although there are often external factors which can influence decision-making, it is appropriate that individuals, households or community structures are responsible and in charge of implementation, with minimum interference from outside organisations. This will include the management of funds, production or procurement of building materials, hiring and supervision of builders, self-construction, and other activities. The supporting organisation will accompany the implementation and remain available for additional support if needed, such as skills training on, for example, the administration of funds, the monitoring and management of information and the resolution of conflicts. It may also provide other resources, such as cash, materials and technical assistance.

CASE STUDY

7.8 Basketball and social capital, Philippines, 2015

In the community Banuan Daan in the Philippines, people prioritised a series of social and infrastructure programmes aimed at bringing together the disparate migrant and indigenous populations living side-by-side who often found themselves in conflict. This led to a proposal for renovating a basketball court located midway between the two communities. At first the humanitarian organisation questioned the eligibility of this particular proposal. The community, however, made a strong case using their capacity gap mapping exercise and putting together a well-written justification on how a programme of basketball social events could bring the communities together, building social capital for the next disaster. Ultimately all parties agreed and the communities proceeded to rehabilitate the court and run a series of tournaments where the two communities both played each other and mixed teams.

This is an example of what a simple and low-cost shelter and settlement intervention can achieve if it embraces a truly community empowering approach.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Further resources

CARE International UK 2016. [Gender & Shelter - Good Programming Guidelines.](#)

UCL, Catalytic Action, UNICEF, UN Habitat 2021. [DeCID: Co-designing buildings with children affected by displacement.](#)

GSC. [Disability Inclusion - All Under One Roof Handbook.](#)

7.2.4 Learning together: Community-led monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

While community mobilisation and engagement is one of the building blocks of a self-recovery approach, iterative and adaptive programming is the ‘mortar’ that holds the building blocks together. (see [Part A](#))

Learning together - what does success look like?

Conventional emergency programmes tend to have a MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning) process that is led by humanitarian organisations as a reporting exercise for donors and to capture internal learnings. There is certainly a need for agency reporting to donors (and this is considered in [Chapter 8.3](#)). An approach to shelter and settlements support that recognises people’s right to have agency over their own recovery, however, requires a new MEAL process that is as far as possible community-led and that increases accountability towards affected people. Additionally, it is important to separate the different aspects of MEAL: monitoring is continuous and responds to feedback and changing circumstances to inform programming; evaluations can be iterative and phased, but generally measure and assess outputs (and ideally outcomes) as a form of reporting to donors and for internal accountability.

Ideally, monitoring and evaluation should be a collaborative venture led by community representatives, but facilitated and supported by assisting organisations and partners as necessary. Restricting the number of evaluation processes will reduce ‘evaluation fatigue’. Most importantly, monitoring and evaluation should be processes of mutual learning that will improve partnerships in the future and enhance preparedness and disaster risk reduction. It should be noted that in some cultures people are less likely or unwilling to give negative feedback to people they know or will continue to engage with, therefore having an independent team or way of providing feedback can also be important.

For the affected population, learning might be more around the processes they have followed, the capacities built and skills acquired. Learning might also include changes in attitudes and practices. Where possible, the sharing of experiences and learnings between different communities should be encouraged. This could include an exchange of ideas and techniques for building better shelters and houses, but also the processes and tools that were used and can be applied in future community projects, such as disaster risk reduction measures and preparedness activities.

Community members may decide on a process of reflection and evaluation. Alternatively, the supporting organisation might suggest a reflective workshop led by community members and supported by them to explore together how to learn and evaluate. Many 'verification sources' such as drawings, stories and narratives could be suggested to help evaluate the success of people's own activities.

Community-led monitoring and evaluation of iterative programming

Community-led processes imply that the supporting organisation relinquishes control over outputs and needs to accept a level of uncertainty. At the same time, monitoring, evaluation and learning can be hugely beneficial; affected people can keep track of which steps they have taken towards their goals, and identify gaps or challenges that require adjustments to the action process. As priorities and plans change during recovery, people will consider how best to monitor those changes. It might be necessary to explain the value of regular monitoring of project activities, which may not always occur in an organic manner or formally. In these cases, the organisation can help to establish some kind of monitoring structure. If it happens in a structured way without the support of the organisation, it is a sign that the process is owned by the community. The monitoring process and indicators, or other agreed forms of measurement, will need to be developed with regard to the type of project people are implementing and the goals and priorities they have defined.

It is well understood that humanitarian organisations and their donors need to follow accepted MEAL processes that may be rather different from those the community establishes. The supporting organisation may need to set up additional indicators to monitor the overall programme outcomes as well as the lessons learnt, in order to adequately report to donors.

Monitoring tools

The GSC Promoting Safer Building Working Group workshop on [MEAL in January 2021](#) explored ways in which tools not routinely used within the shelter and settlements humanitarian sector could be employed to facilitate community-led monitoring and evaluation processes (as well as initial and ongoing assessments). This aligns well with self-recovery approaches to shelter assistance. Examples of tools and approaches discussed include:

- **Participatory Learning and Action** is a collection of MEAL approaches that support people to analyse their own situation, rather than having it analysed by outsiders. Tools, such as community hazard mapping, daily routine diagrams and ranking exercises, can be used to determine indicators of success at the outcome level. [International Institute for Environment and Development \(IIED\). Participatory Learning and Action \(PLA\).](#)
- **The Community Score Card** is a two-way, ongoing tool for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation that aims to positively influence the quality and accountability of services provided. Community-based networks, such as a community steering committee, score services provided by an organisation or identify issues within their communities. The information can be used to identify gaps and improve services or create an enabling environment for activities.
- **Outcome Mapping** is a participatory planning method used at the start of programmes. Working with the affected population to understand their priorities, Outcome Mapping helps programme design be specific about who and what it intends to target, the changes it hopes to see and the

activities appropriate to achieve these. Outcome Mapping does not seek to show direct attribution for change from a single source, so is appropriate for programmes where there might be multiple inputs.

[Better Evaluation. Outcome Mapping.](#)

Evaluation tools

There are a variety of methods and tools for evaluations which do not need to be based on pre-established indicators and can be easily adapted according to the context. The **Most Significant Change** as well as the **Outcome Harvesting** approach can be excellent tools to capture results in a qualitative manner, and also capture wider impacts and unintended changes or outcomes that can be attributed to the process and the support provided:

- **Outcome Harvesting** makes sense of collected data beyond tracking indicators. An outcome harvesting approach asks questions and gathers evidence of what has changed or been achieved, and then aims to work backwards to identify whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change. Outcome Harvesting is a good approach when multiple factors may have contributed to changes, and change cannot easily be measured against predetermined outcomes and established indicators.

[Tools4dev. The 6 Steps of Outcomes Harvesting](#)

- **Most Significant Change** is most useful in contexts where it can be difficult to predict, with any certainty, what the outcome of a programme will be, and if outcomes vary widely across beneficiaries. This is very likely to be the case for shelter self-recovery. Significant Change gathers stories from individuals and community representatives about changes during the programme. These are then collated, and people select the most significant changes collectively. This tool is particularly useful if there are no baseline indicators established at the beginning against which success or change can be evaluated, and also to capture what the community perceives as significant change or success.

More information: [Intrac. Most Significant Change.](#)

CASE STUDY

7.9 Using ‘Most Significant Change’ to amplify community voices, Timor-Leste, 2021

Responding to flash floods and landslides in Timor-Leste, an NGO mounted a rapid emergency response and developed an integrated community-led shelter strategy to respond to those affected. The design of the end-of-project evaluation was inspired by ‘the Most Significant Change’ methodology, which follows a community-led evaluation process focusing on capturing nuanced, qualitative and disaggregated data that best describes the narrative of change through direct testimonies of community members. The processes and feedback mechanisms have an equal focus on feeding back to communities, helping them to understand the key takeaways and recommendations, and satisfying the information needs of implementing organisations and donors.

The evaluation process in Timor-Leste was conducted through a series of FGDs, mainly composed of those involved in the implementation of the project as well as local community leaders. ‘Statements of Change’ were collected and transcribed as part of a reflective, open-ended discussion session. Community members also prioritised the most significant themes/topics that emerged through these discussions. The results of this process were fed back to the implementing organisation and donors as well as the community. **Learnings from the project were documented by reading and interpreting the views of participating community members.**

Adapted from [CARE Timor-Leste January 2020. Dili Flood Response program 2021 Evaluation Report.](#)

8

ESTABLISHING A SHELTER SELF-RECOVERY PROGRAMME: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Roofing Sheets were provided to support the rebuilding of homes after Cyclone Idai, Mozambique, 2019
Josh Estey/CARE

KEY MESSAGE

Supporting shelter self-recovery requires a shift in mindset and has different programmatic needs from conventional emergency and recovery programming. Important elements that need to be integrated at different stages of the programme cycle include budget and proposal flexibility, building a good team, iterative analysis, risk mitigation, and MEAL processes.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

- Practical considerations for humanitarian shelter agencies facilitating a shelter self-recovery programme, focusing on elements of resource mobilisation, adaptive programming and programme evaluation.
- How to ensure continuity and sustainability of shelter self-recovery programmes.

8.1 RESOURCE MOBILISATION: FUNDING, SKILLS AND PERSONNEL

An initial hurdle for any programme is the mobilisation of resources and the securing of funds. After sudden onset disasters, the funding window may only be open during a very short timeframe and often with restrictive conditions about what type of activities can be supported. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis there will be little information about damage and needs and it might not as yet be possible to reach remote affected communities.

8.1.1 Preliminary negotiations with donors

Typically, when supporting self-recovery, the activities that will be undertaken cannot be precisely defined initially. An in-depth context analysis, or even a community-led action plan, may suggest potential activities, but it should be assumed that they will change as time goes by and people start to recover. However, funding proposals may need to be submitted before affected people can be properly consulted. It is important to discuss with donors at an early stage to ascertain if they will consider a proposal, and to explain the benefits of supporting self-recovery.

The following summarises some key points for negotiations with donors:

- **Advocate for budget flexibility** from the start. Explain that community engagement will shape the programme. Activities will be elaborated or revised at agreed milestones during the project process and budget lines adapted accordingly. In order to leave no one behind, budget allocations in the proposal should be made to support those who in the course of the project are struggling to recover and need additional support. This could be a dedicated budget line for supporting the most vulnerable.
- **Suggest milestone dates to review the programme and revise the budget lines.** For example after one month, three months, six months, and a year (depending on the type of programme and activities). This will be based on an iterative monitoring process.
- **Highlight affected people's contributions:** People often activate significant resources for their recovery. These can be financial resources from their own savings, diaspora support, taking loans etc., but also in-kind resources in the form of materials or labour. Even if these contributions cannot easily be quantified, it should be understood that the support funding does not need to cover the full amount estimated for community or individual household recovery, but rather serves as co-funding for already deployed resources or to leverage further resources.
- **Explain that supporting shelter self-recovery aligns with many current international humanitarian concerns,** such as those highlighted by the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2016 Grand Bargain. It is localisation and “the participation revolution” put into practice. Explain too that a self-recovery approach should lead to greater resilience in the future for climate change adaptation. With increasing need and limited international resources, a self-recovery approach does more with less.
- **Previous self-recovery programmes:** If the context is similar to previous shelter self-recovery programmes, then any experiences should be documented in the proposal to demonstrate the relevance of the approach.
- Consider including **external evaluation and long-term impact studies** in the project scope.

CASE STUDY

8.1 Programme and budget flexibility adapt to community plans of action, Haiti, 2010

As a response to the earthquake in Haiti 2010, a humanitarian organisation implemented an Integrated Neighbourhood Approach (INA) in Delmas 19 in which PASSA was an integral part. It was the first time this tool, initially designed for rural contexts, was tested in an urban area.

The implementation of the PASSA approach was intended to raise awareness of shelter safety as part of planned shelter activities. However, from the start of the process it was clear that risks to shelter safety (individual houses) were often caused by the mismanagement of other processes, such as spatial planning, waste management and drainage. The community also identified floods and insecurity as their main problems, not solely shelter-related. These issues were caused both by the behaviours of the population and poor infrastructure, such as the lack of waste management systems and poor maintenance of canals, which resulted in a blocked drainage system and subsequent flooding. The community started to understand/accept that their actions had an impact on others, and that they had a responsibility to take a leading role in their own recovery.

Based on the priorities identified by the PASSA group, **the shelter team needed to be flexible and changed its initial plans and the budget allocated to shelter recovery activities to align with the Community Plan of Action**, which included construction of new water channels, paving of streets, street lighting, and the design of squares and a marketplace. This was possible because the flexible funding and logframe allowed changes to the programme. Even though the neighbourhood received support from the organisation for some community improvements, the PASSA outcomes motivated the community to plan other low-cost projects to improve their neighbourhood by themselves.

Adapted from [British Red Cross March 2016. Haiti Urban Regeneration and Reconstruction Programme \(URRP\) - Final Evaluation \(Full\)](#).

8.1.2 Project proposal

Supporting self-recovery is appropriate at every response phase including the immediate emergency response. However, it may be most evidently applicable during the early recovery phase when building back better and building long-term resilience can describe the ambitions of the project. Whether the project proposal focuses on emergency, early recovery or reconstruction or elements of preparedness, disaster risk reduction and building resilience should be included in the community engagement process.

Considerations particularly relevant to supporting self-recovery proposals:

- If useful, refer to the current Global Shelter Cluster Strategy, which includes the theme of “supporting self-recovery” noting that it is important to **find effective ways to support the majority of households that self-recover** through improving construction quality, building safer and more resilient homes and promoting climate and disaster risk-awareness. The national Shelter Cluster may also advocate for a self-recovery approach and, if so, note this in the proposal.
- Outline the building blocks of support to self-recovery to **advocate for locally led approaches** that respect people’s choices and provide tailor-made support.
- Refer to **activities that affected people are already doing** to recover or mitigate damage to their homes and explain how supporting these efforts can **increase scale and improve quality**.
- Describe the **community engagement process and the capacities** that can be built in the community in the course of the project, such as: coordination, conflict resolution, management

of funds, good construction practices. The outcomes of the process can be higher risk awareness, better community cohesion, stronger resilience, sensitivity towards inclusion, and equity.

- Ideally **consider** a holistic project that includes additional and complementary components (such as livelihoods, WASH, health and protection). If shelter support is the main component of the proposal, aim to establish collaborations with partners that can provide support in the other most relevant areas.
- Explain the overall benefits of supporting a range of people and groups rather than only a targeted group, while at the same time ensuring that the most vulnerable are supported.
- Emphasise **community-led monitoring, evaluation and learning** as a strong mechanism to build capacity and establish mutual accountability.
- **Include coordination and communication with relevant authorities** and other stakeholders as well as advocacy to increase community connectivity and empowerment.
- Illustrate how the project will provide **continuity to sustainable reconstruction** and development and how longer impacts of the project activities will be documented.
- Include risk assessments and potential mitigation measures.
- Explain that the **project schedule has to be flexible** as timelines will be adapted to the population's dynamics, as people will often find solutions when they have the means or, alternatively, they could delay a process when other priorities arise. This might cause administrative challenges which will need advance preparation.

Logical frameworks - or logframes - are frequently a donor requirement. These are not immediately amenable to a flexible and adaptive approach, so it is important they are adapted to align with the programmatic imperatives of supporting self-recovery. It should be highlighted that the objectives and activities will be (at least partly) qualitative in nature and might be revised according to the results of the locally-led process to reflect the priorities of the community and supported households.

CASE STUDY

8.2 The community sets the strategy, Philippines, 2014

Building structural flexibility into programme design, and empowering communities with meaningful influence over an implementation strategy, is key to living up to the principles of supporting self-recovery. In a Philippines recovery project, community consultations, which took place early on in the project, allowed affected people to review proposed project implementation activities and influence the programme to pivot away from individual household shelters and shift budgets towards community settlement, infrastructure and livelihoods projects. It was only because programmatic flexibility based on community consultation was built into the project design and agreed with donors from the start, that the community had the agency to prioritise project activities.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Early project planning

A supporting shelter self-recovery programme requires a different approach to needs assessments than a conventional shelter programme. The intent is to inform programme activities through iterative and continuous context analysis, which builds on the strengths and capacities of affected people and takes into account their plans and priorities in order to identify gaps and barriers to recovery. Through this holistic process, agencies will be well equipped to adapt to changes in the environment or to people's circumstances, and responses will be more relevant and effective as a

result. A shift in mindset, the ability to capture both quantitative and qualitative data and the use of iterative monitoring processes underpin a successful context analysis process. This integral process is discussed in detail in [Chapter 5](#).

Many strategic project decisions will still need to be taken at the early stage of a response, and **every effort should be made to engage the affected population in these decisions** (see [Chapter 7](#)). Examples of questions that will require early resolution are:

- **Self-recovery support strategy.** What kind of support should the project offer to households? To respond to which priorities?
- **Self-recovery support modalities.** How should support be provided? With whom would it be strategic to collaborate to have more impact?
- **Targeting strategy.** Who will receive support and how much? Should only the affected population receive support or the most vulnerable? Is it feasible to target the entire population for some activities?
- **Community-specific measures and settlement strategy.** Are there some actions that can be taken at the community level in order to reduce shelter-related hazard risks? Or are there solutions that can improve access to those services that improve housing conditions and that households lack? How can these activities be prioritised considering the limited project resources?
- **Technical assistance and awareness-raising.** What important messages should be delivered to households and professionals? Through which methods and channels?
- **Exit strategy and fostering long-term resilience.** How to link knowledge-building efforts at both community and institutional levels to ensure sustainable availability of skills?
- **Participatory and communications strategy.** What are the structures through which decisions are made, activities implemented and monitored, feedback and complaints collected and addressed? Who should be included in these structures?
- **MEAL strategy.** For what purpose should the project be monitored and evaluated? How and by whom? What is the evidence and learning that the community or the agency wants from the process?

8.1.4 Building a good team

In all probability, the budget will need to be submitted before exact staffing needs can be confirmed so allow for ample contingency and flexibility within the staff budget line, and ensure that time and budget is allocated to train staff. Consider what new skills or responsibilities a conventional shelter team may need to acquire successful shelter self-recovery support.

- Teams should be trained in the **shelter self-recovery approach**, including the underlying principles, the benefits and challenges, and the importance of affected people owning their recovery process.
- Ideally **community mobilisation** should be provided by experienced local humanitarian organisations or by community members. Otherwise, well-trained and experienced staff will need to be recruited to facilitate the community mobilisation, accompany the implementation processes as well as support the continuous monitoring and iterative analysis.
- **Additional skills** required might include expertise in legal assistance for housing land and property rights, cash transfer programming, logistics, environmental protection, gender equity and inclusion, livelihoods, WASH, volunteer management, communications, monitoring and evaluation, and more.
- Communications play an essential role; hence the need to include interpretation and translation services as well as **professionals skilled in the development and dissemination of communication materials** accessible to all groups.

- If **technical support** is a key activity then **roving technical teams** might need to be created to provide quality assurance, training and technical support. Quality assurance is not only related to construction, but also to protection, gender etc. This has implications for staff knowledge and skills. Technical staff will need to be familiar with build back better messaging and the importance of adequate housing for improved health and protection.
- A mixed and diverse team will be able to communicate well with different groups within the community and fully understand the challenges they may face with the recovery of their homes. A balanced gender distribution is essential. The **community engagement team must include both men and women**.
- Teams need to be trained in conducting a **context analysis**, including how to identify gaps and capacities, how to capture and interpret qualitative data and iterative monitoring processes. [Chapter 5](#) contains a detailed description of how to **conduct a context analysis**.

CASE STUDY

8.3 The challenge of unfamiliar qualitative methods, Mozambique, 2019

Cyclone Idai, which affected southern Africa in 2019, caused widespread damage to homes and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. During the emergency, one agency attempted to use qualitative assessment methods, using open-ended questions to capture additional information about affected people's plans and ambitions (rather than needs) for recovery and reconstruction. However, enumerators found the answers to the open-ended questions difficult to record due, in part, to language differences and the length of the replies. Consequently, the analysis of the information was challenging and failed to provide enough solid evidence to usefully inform programming.

The agency concluded that training in qualitative assessment methods and analysis would have avoided these challenges, but it was also noted that in an emergency it is unrealistic to train staff and volunteers thoroughly in qualitative assessment methods.

These issues could be overcome by training permanent staff and volunteers (enumerators) as a preparedness activity so that they can apply their acquired skills during future emergency responses to better inform tailored programming to support people's different trajectories.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

8.2 ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING

At the heart of adaptive programming is flexibility in the face of uncertainty, and adjusting decisions based on iterative analysis to improve project outcomes. Therefore, it differs from conventional practice that is likely to fix outputs, indicators and timelines from the beginning. The project proposal can suggest milestones when programmatic and budgetary adaptation will be made. Milestones for review and programme adaptation could be phased by time (for example after one month, three months, six months, one year) or linked to certain steps, such as the completion of the context analysis or the first distribution of materials or the identification of people unable to recover and needing additional support.

8.2.1 Iterative analysis and continuous adaptation

Iterative analysis and monitoring should track how the plans and priorities of affected populations and specific target groups are changing over time, as well as the progress and success of implementing the community action plan. Furthermore, the analysis should track the identification of barriers to self-recovery, how successfully they are being overcome and if new challenges have arisen. This is a process often referred to as real-time evaluation and allows a programme to respond to changing priorities and circumstances with agility.

It is likely that there will be a need for two parallel, but linked, monitoring mechanisms. One will be community-led monitoring following their own processes, and most likely supported by local partners and humanitarian shelter organisations (as discussed in [section 7.2.4](#)); the other will be led by local or international organisations to fulfil donor requirements and for their own internal learnings. In instances when the support is for the facilitation of an enabling environment through, for example, infrastructure or market interventions, then the monitoring will probably not be led by the community.

8.2.2 Understanding programmatic risk and standards

The risk analysis and mitigation strategy developed during the programme design stage, based on the context analysis, will require progressive updating during programme implementation. This will be informed by iterative analyses and complaints and feedback mechanisms. Affected people will inevitably have to take decisions that entail a level of risk. In an environment of high risk and low resources, hard choices have to be made and the principle of 'good enough' has to be understood and accepted by all parties. **One important role of the supporting organisations is to ensure that these choices are made on the basis of the best available information.**

At a programmatic level, risks will arise that cannot necessarily be predicted from the outset - some are external factors or risks that influence the enabling environment for self-recovery and therefore project success. Some important risks might include:

- Capacity gaps or barriers to recovery are not correctly identified by the implementing agency: for example, vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as the elderly or people living with disabilities, who may not be included in social support structures and have limited capacity to recover, are at risk of being left behind and not adequately supported if these factors are unidentified.
- Cultural beliefs are unidentified or misunderstood by the agency, hindering the shelter response process.
- The agency is unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing environment or needs.
- The agency does not engage with affected people in a trusted way.
- The support options are inappropriate; for example, the conditions of a conditional cash project are unrealistic and people are unable to meet them; the amount of cash is inadequate to kick-start the reconstruction process.
- Poor construction quality; safer-construction (build back better) messages are inappropriate and not being followed. People are rebuilding with poor construction techniques and/or materials; this is related to the risk of not meeting Sphere standards - see below.
- Displaced persons are unable to rebuild, or otherwise recover their homes, due to a lack of land, limited shelter options, especially in urban environments, and many other potential reasons.
- Insecure land tenure discourages people from investing in rebuilding.
- People lack access to essential infrastructural needs such as water and transport links to markets.

How to mitigate risk - the example of poor construction techniques

Risks will vary from one context to another; they will also change with time. Similarly, their mitigation will depend on the circumstances.

Here is one possible scenario:

- Poor construction techniques: As people exercise choice, and repair or reconstruct their homes according to their own priorities and preferences, there is a risk that homes may not be completed in line with build back safer messaging. In this case, mitigation strategies could include:
- Keep reconstruction messages limited, replicable, simple, and affordable to increase the likelihood of understanding and compliance with the techniques.
- Tailor reconstruction messages to local techniques, which may have been identified during self-recovery preparedness activities.
- Roving teams and “shelter champions” or focal points within a community can promote messages through regular communication, and accompany people through reconstruction.
- With in-kind responses, consider providing materials that are otherwise difficult or expensive to obtain (e.g. hurricane straps), and provide training to ensure correct usage.
- Involve local builders from the beginning so that they also receive construction messaging and are able to support communications and influence practice.

Humanitarian standards and risk

The [2018 Sphere Handbook](#), which incorporates the Core Humanitarian Standard which places people and communities affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action, is the most commonly cited source of standards within the Shelter Sector, and provides advice and guidance on, among other topics, site planning, technical assistance, shelter items, and covered living space. Every shelter practitioner should be aware of the content and ethos of the Sphere standards and adhere to them wherever possible. In humanitarian settings, there are also other standards or criteria agencies must follow, including Country Shelter Cluster Standards and national standards, policies and procedures. However, in a programme that aims to support self-recovery, the affected population retains the right to make their own decisions and this carries the risk of divergence from such standards. In part this can be a result of circumstance, such as low income or simply not enough land, and a ‘good enough’ argument can be employed to explain and justify people’s decisions. For more on ‘good enough’ see [Part A](#).

The role of the shelter practitioner is to ensure that these difficult decisions are informed by the best possible advice. It is important to maintain adherence to standards where feasible and appropriate; it is equally important to be able to justify to donors and authorities the lowering of standards if it leads to faster and better recovery, and the co-benefits of wider impacts such as health, livelihoods and well-being.

Further resources

Sphere. [Humanitarian Standards Partnership.](#)

UNHCR Emergency Handbook. [Emergency Standards and Indicators.](#)

GSC 2021. [Construction Good Practices.](#)

Build Change. [Guide to Resilient Housing.](#)

Build Change. [Homeowner-Driven](#)

CASE STUDY

8.4 Hurricane Irma used to rewrite land laws, Barbuda, 2017

After Hurricane Irma in 2017, almost every structure was destroyed on the Caribbean island of Barbuda.

Since the end of slavery in the 1830s, Barbudans have governed the land through local systems, without private ownership. In the aftermath of the disaster, where almost all of the population was evacuated, the debate over revoking the centuries old system of communal land rights reignited.

Authorities wanted to introduce a system of freehold tenure, where people purchased their land for a nominal fee, but had to secure loans for reconstruction. Not everyone could access finance, even if they were able to purchase their land. In addition, areas of land, previously part of the communal land system, had been purchased by private developers to build tourist resorts, displacing people from their homes on neighbouring islands.

This example highlights that there are often factors external to communities and humanitarian organisations that may disrupt shelter self-recovery, such as government strategies. These factors may not be identified in context analyses or stakeholder analysis, but still exist. Support for shelter self-recovery also goes beyond reconstruction, with advocacy for secure land tenure and human rights often an important aspect of supporting communities to recover according to their plans and priorities.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Further resources

Example of adaptive programming in development: **Oxfam 2018**. [Managing to Adapt: Analysing adaptive management for planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning](#).

8.3 PROGRAMME EVALUATION

There will always be a requirement for a chain of reporting between local partners, national or international humanitarian organisations and donors. There will also be a need for internal accountability and learning for all assisting agencies. To avoid 'evaluation fatigue', this should as far as possible be integrated into a wider community-based monitoring and evaluation process. It is important to capture the successes, challenges and overall community satisfaction throughout the self-recovery project as well as the measurable outputs.

The evaluation to fulfil donor and agency requirements should be considered as an integrated and parallel activity to the progressive monitoring process led by community representatives. Ideally, the final evaluation will capture the extent to which the programme has actually changed the knowledge, attitudes and practices of affected people. Other areas that an evaluation should cover include:

- The inclusion of all sectors of society, and especially the most vulnerable and marginalised.
- Understanding the wider impacts of adequate housing and good shelter programming, especially on health, livelihoods, protection, and well-being.
- Assessment of sustainability and environmental impact.

- Assessment of community engagement and social cohesion.
- Evaluation of effectiveness and significance with respect to scale and quality.
- Assessment of the impact of disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and the learnings acquired by both community and partners.

An evaluation that reports on a shelter programme, which sets out to support a self-recovery pathway, has to emphasise its advantages and limitations. A programme that facilitates an already existing process and that encourages choice, agency and empowerment is likely to have unforeseen outcomes that may be both positive and negative. There will be wider positive impacts in terms of appropriateness, mental health and well-being as well as health and livelihood benefits. An enabling environment for self-recovery may have been encouraged through indirect support to infrastructure, access to markets or technical training. Rebuilding and repair may have been speedy, but may also have been appropriately timed to the priorities of each household. By contrast there may have been compromises to construction quality; and some people may have struggled to self-recover. These pros and cons need to be balanced in an evaluation, and a methodology employed that gives fair coverage to both the evident successes and learnings for the future.

Community-led monitoring and evaluation methodologies are discussed in [section 7.2.4](#).

CASE STUDY

8.5 Final evaluation - learnings for future projects, Myanmar, 2011

Cyclone Giri made landfall in October 2010 affecting a large part of Rakhine State. An INGO implemented a shelter self-recovery project in 15 villages, constructing model houses first followed by distributing construction materials to beneficiaries, who reconstructed their houses on their own following the model. After five months a total of 600 households had reconstructed their houses, receiving technical assistance as required.

The organisation carried out **follow-up visits three months after the end of the programme** and a **final evaluation** in May 2011 to understand the satisfaction and experience of beneficiaries, and look at the hazard-resistant features of houses. The assessment analysed the effectiveness and quality of the process used in the project and identified lessons for future shelter projects.

Twelve of the 15 villages were included in this process, and around half of the total beneficiaries were interviewed through questionnaires and KIIs. The evaluation captured information about community participation, the role of Village Development Councils under the project, features of the rebuilt/repared houses, the outcome of project activities, community coping mechanisms, impacts of the project, community satisfaction, cultural appropriateness of project activities, and communities' **suggestions for similar projects in the future**.

The findings and recommendations have fed into the organisation's subsequent intervention proposals improving support delivery to other self-recovery projects.

Adapted from CARE International UK and Swanyee Development Foundation 2011. Report of End-line Assessment – Cyclone Giri Emergency Response Project.

Capturing wider impacts and considering indicators

Within the humanitarian sector it is widely agreed that shelter is “more than four walls and a roof”. A shared monitoring and evaluation process can help to collect evidence of the wider impacts that shelter has in supporting and safeguarding other aspects of life, including health, livelihoods, education, psychosocial well-being, and access to services.

It can be challenging to establish direct causality between the results of a shelter programme and, for example, physical and mental health. There are many factors, apart from shelter, that can impact on health outcomes, such as access to clean water, hygiene facilities and practices and education. Considering interventions that have been undertaken through other sectors, especially WASH, and using proxy indicators can provide evidence of these wider shelter impacts.

Most conventional monitoring and evaluation processes require the identification of indicators, or criteria of success/achievement of objectives. However some, like the Most Significant Change model, do not, and rely on an open-ended and exploratory approach. The mindset of a self-recovery programme lends itself to MEAL methodologies that take this more qualitative approach, but some donors may also require a conventional methodology with quantitative indicators.

It is most appropriate for the affected population to establish their own indicators according to their priorities and goals, even if these might not be in line with indicators required by the donor or the humanitarian organisation. As goals may change over time, indicators will need to be adapted accordingly. It is for the supporting organisation to establish and monitor additional indicators where needed, but ideally translate and integrate the community-led project monitoring into their overall programme monitoring. Ideally a hybrid approach that adopts both donor/agency and community indicators can be agreed with households or community representatives.

For monitoring to be meaningful a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators is desirable. Proxy indicators can help to capture wider impacts and co-benefits of rebuilding activities.

- **Quantitative indicators** measure what can be counted, such as the amount of resources received, training sessions held or attended and houses built. More sophisticated monitoring could measure changes against a baseline, for example, whether the technical, financial or material support received has resulted in the intended outcomes, such as better knowledge or skills. Quantitative indicators can also monitor to what extent the goals were achieved as planned e.g. construction quality achieved within a timeframe.
- **Qualitative indicators** track what cannot be measured, but can be described. For example, do people feel safer, more empowered or more skilled? How do these factors affect different groups, for example women or those from marginalised groups? A qualitative methodology can also capture the impact on the ‘enabling environment’ for self-recovery, for example whether people can access finance, markets or local resources for construction.
- **Proxy indicators** capture wider impacts and co-benefits that can be related to the project, for example improved well-being because of better living conditions such as those induced by fuel-efficient stoves, mosquito screens or improved ventilation. Access to new livelihood opportunities, for example through the acquisition of construction skills, is a co-benefit (or could be described as a win-win). Intangible aspects of a successful project, such as pride in a new home, interaction with neighbours or an attractive street-frontage, may be very evident but can only be captured through non-conventional evaluation processes. The Most Significant Change approach might be the best methodology to monitor whether shelter reconstruction has an impact on people’s well-being, incorporating their health, security, privacy, dignity, and their sense of home.

Below are some examples of how proxy indicators can be used to identify wider impacts of shelter interventions.

Sector theme	Proxy indicator(s)
Health	• Fewer reported respiratory infections could be linked to better ventilation and installation of a chimney and/or improved cooking stove and/or change of fuel. • Fewer reported diarrhoeal diseases could be linked to access to clean water and sanitation and better hygiene practices, but also the incorporation of concrete to replace dirt floors. • Fewer reported mosquito borne diseases could be linked to mosquito screens and better management of standing water around the house. • Fewer reported eye infections or diseases could be linked to better lighting, ventilation, installation of a chimney, improved cooking stove, or dust control.
Establishing a home	• People move into their house. • Households report that shelter recovery is not a top priority anymore. • People visibly “take care” of their home by applying decoration, paint, planting flowers etc.; this can be an indicator of well-being and good mental health, and a transition from an emergency phase to a more stable phase of rebuilding their lives and establishing a home. • People report feeling comfortable to receive guests in their home. • Family or community events are celebrated in the home.
Livelihoods	• Small shops or workshops are established in the home. • Gardens for domestic or productive consumption (also urban gardens) exist. • People engage in the production of construction materials. • Household bread-winners are able to go to work because their family has an adequate or safe shelter solution.
Gender	• Women report being able to advocate for change in their neighbourhood. • Women and girls learn new construction skills to support home maintenance. • Women report having ownership or tenant rights to the land/house/accommodation, which can be the outcome of advocacy. • Fewer reported gender-based violence incidents.
Education	• Children are able to access school at a reasonable distance. • Children have a safe space with light where they can study in the evenings. • Children and young people have a safe place to play, adapted to their age.
Disaster risk reduction	• People display awareness and knowledge of shelter and settlement related to household risk reduction measures. • Risk reduction measures are applied at the household and settlement levels. • Demonstrated safe/healthy construction practices are replicated in other houses. • People have established procedures to respond to future disasters, and/or preparedness measures to protect their house and assets.
Safety and privacy	• People report feeling safe or having increased privacy due to specific shelter factors such as locks on doors or private space in the home. • The house is adapted to the specific needs of children, elderly or people living with disabilities or chronic diseases. • People report fewer security incidents such as robberies, muggings, rapes, and assaults inside the house and in their neighbourhood. • People report fewer domestic accidents and injuries due to improvements to the house or compound.
Resilience and community	• Maintenance and repair costs decrease; potentially increased savings are a good indicator of how a well-built shelter has long-term positive impacts. • Increased community cohesion is expressed through continuity or the new establishment of local committees, community groups etc. • Empowerment increases through established networks with other communities, relevant authorities and other relevant stakeholders.
Environment	• No incidents of deforestation are reported linked to the construction process. • No incidents of construction-related environmental pollution or degradation of the environment are reported linked to the construction process. • The shelter project has contributed to improving or restoring a degraded environment. • Design measures are incorporated that respond to local environments and reduce burdens e.g. rainwater harvesting, passive cooling, use of recycled/reused materials.

CASE STUDY

8.6 Community-defined shelter project indicators, Uganda, 2018

The settlements of Imvepi and Omugo camps in the north of Uganda house refugees from South Sudan.

An INGO was implementing a project to construct semi-permanent/transitional shelters, in conjunction with supporting protection and gender-based violence risk reduction activities. In order to measure the project's impact, indicators included evaluating the appropriateness, timeliness and relevance of the activities to provide 'safe shelter'. It was deemed important to understand the project participants' understanding of these ostensibly subjective terms, and what they considered as 'safe' in the local context.

A series of FGDs were held with project volunteers (local, camp-based groups of refugees), project beneficiaries and other key informants. Some key risks were presented via pictures on flashcards (e.g. mosquitos, fires, floods, thieves) and groups were asked to collectively rank the risks according to what worried them the most, and how frequently the risks occurred. This led to discussions about how the shelter activities met key criteria, not only in the finished construction, but through the process by which the shelter project was designed and implemented, including participation, accountability, communication, and beneficiary selection.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

CASE STUDY

8.7 Dignified shelter activates families' postponed life plans, Indonesia, 2005

Nearly a year after the tsunami that devastated much of Indonesia's Aceh province in 2004, many families were still displaced in emergency camps, living in deteriorating tents and overcrowded sites. As the recovery process was going to take a long time, one organisation decided to support families by distributing higher quality materials so they could build larger and better quality temporary shelters. Within days of the completion of these shelters, **weddings and other social and family events began to take place in the camp**. People commented that they now felt comfortable enough to invite guests to their homes, and to continue with the plans they had put on hold following the disaster. This unexpected outcome was used as an indicator of the programme's success.

Observation from Shelter Practitioner

Further resources

InterAction 2019. [Impact Evaluation Guidance Note and Webinar Series](#).

Intrac. [The M&E Universe](#) – an online encyclopaedia of all aspects of MEAL with links to tips and guidance.

[BetterEvaluation](#) – an online resource for participatory approaches to MEAL processes with guides on how and when to conduct different types of monitoring or evaluation.

ALNAP 2020. [More relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need](#).

OECD/DAC [Evaluation Criteria](#).

Core Humanitarian Standard on [Quality and Accountability](#).

IFRC 2018. [How to establish and manage a systematic community feedback mechanism: Special focus on migration programmes](#).

8.4 ENSURING CONTINUITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND PREPAREDNESS

Strategic support to shelter self-recovery has the potential to address systemic and structural challenges, promote an enabling environment and empower people to better transition from emergency shelter to the longer-term development of adequate housing. Collaboration with development actors and other local actors can be an opportunity to ensure continuity and achieve long-term sustainable outcomes.

If emergency and self-recovery support can be linked with ongoing long-term programmes and development plans, interventions will potentially be more sustainable and have wider beneficial impacts. Identifying and addressing systemic problems will also remove barriers for future activities. Therefore, if an INGO comes into a new context for an emergency response, these connections should be made as soon as possible, as part of the wider context analysis, highlighted in [Chapter 5](#).

CASE STUDY

8.8 Coordination and complementarity with development actors and government, Iraq, 2020

The conflict between the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014 to 2017 displaced over six million people, many of them to IDP camps. Since August 2019, the Iraqi government has begun to close many of these camps, which has led to premature returns to areas where infrastructure, livelihoods and property have been destroyed, or to informal sites that offer precarious living conditions. Displaced people cite the damage or destruction of their houses as one of the top three barriers to returning home.

In Iraq, the Shelter Cluster adopted a customized family needs approach, ensuring that solutions were appropriate to the context and aligned with other sectors' efforts towards durable solutions (including guidance on non-food items, critical shelter upgrades, sealing-off kits, and war-damaged housing rehabilitation). These efforts were also combined with advocacy towards relevant authorities and development actors to encourage more wide-scale housing reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, in conjunction with stronger governmental financial support through compensation schemes.

The Shelter Cluster focused its efforts on supporting returns to rural and peri-urban areas while development agencies focused primarily on urban centres. The cluster and development actors used the same reporting tool and interactive dashboard for war-damaged housing rehabilitation, and both adopted the common minimum shelter standards. The shared use of these tools ensured good coordination between the humanitarian and development shelter actors and facilitated the gradual handover of responsibilities from humanitarian to development/government actors. A Durable Solution Strategic Framework was also jointly developed.

Adapted from [Shelter Projects, 8th edition, A-17; IRAQ 2019–2020 / Conflict](#).

Ensuring continuity with local and national actors

Supporting shelter self-recovery programmes should boost self-recovery efforts to be more effective and faster, but should also seek to include activities to mitigate and reduce risks and build long-term resilience in the community. It is important to plan an exit strategy to ensure that what has been

achieved can be maintained and further developed by affected people through their own capacities and resources. Follow-up support and accompaniment by a development programme can help secure further progress and longer-term impact and resilience. In summary, agencies should seek to:

- Connect with long-term development actors to gain a good understanding of the complex political, legal, economic, and socio-cultural factors or other systemic barriers that might be at the root of the challenges people face when self-recovering.
- Establish good relationships with authorities such as the Ministry of Housing to understand government plans for housing and potential development schemes, related subsidies and stakeholders involved.
- If resources allow, conduct pre-crisis assessments of relevant markets (construction materials and processes, rental market, etc.). Establishing strengths and weaknesses of the prevalent local building practices, and conducting surveys of people's knowledge, attitudes and practices around housing and construction is beneficial to help inform preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities.
- Promote an understanding among local and national actors of the wider impacts of adequate housing, in particular health, livelihoods, protection, and well-being.

CASE STUDY

8.9 Self-reconstruction process led by local actors, Peru, 2007

Reconstruction efforts by the population affected by the Ica earthquake of 2007 were supported through a collaboration between a European and Peruvian university. The aim of the joint project was to support ongoing recovery efforts and to tackle households' vulnerability to earthquakes and health factors. Ensuring local actors were empowered to take the lead during the recovery process was a first step towards sustainable development.

With remote support from a European student group, civil engineering students from a university in Ica designed model houses, using local materials and construction systems to ensure that they were low cost and easily replicable, with the participation of all members of the affected community. The design of the houses and outdoor space was also informed by local culture and traditional building practices and typologies. Where there was a gap in knowledge and skills, local actors were supported with remote technical advice, enhancing housing quality in terms of health, safety and comfort.

Twenty artisans and 30 members of the community received training under the project so they were able to support skilled labour and specific tasks. Some 200 community members also attended workshops to increase risk awareness and to learn about the improvements they should introduce in their houses to reduce the impacts of hazards and have a healthier home.

A total of 29 model houses were constructed for very vulnerable families as part of capacity building activities. The Peruvian students provided technical advice to the population during the construction process. **This approach contributed to ensuring continuity in building more resilient houses as a development goal, with local actors having ownership at all levels and stages of the process.**

Adapted from Universidad San Luis Gonzaga de Ica; Asociación Casas de la Salud de Ica; Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM) 2011. Grupo de Habitabilidad Básica de la ETSAM: Apoyo a la autoconstrucción de viviendas sismo resistentes en Ica.



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