What does it take to operate as a development practitioner in post emergency shelter practice?

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Abstract

The frequency of disasters and the numbers of those affected in both the developed and developing world are increasing. People lose their homes, their safety, protection from the elements and their livelihoods. Access to adequate shelter after a disaster is essential for recovery for affected communities.

Shelter practitioners are employed by humanitarian and development agencies as technical specialists. In teams that include other experts, generalists and built environment professionals they implement programmes that address the shelter needs of affected people who are unable to do this without assistance.

Shelter programmes can greatly influence peoples’ vulnerability in both the short and long term. Successful programmes also contribute to strategic development whilst fulfilling immediate needs. This makes the work of providing shelter more complex, as it involves more than the sourcing materials and constructing buildings.

Through key informant interviews with specialists and analysis of current practice, this study shows that technical expertise must be supported by appropriate and extensive experience and personal attributes. Through research and analysis a coherent set of common principles for the work of effective shelter practitioners is developed and the skills and competencies they require are identified.

The role requires skill in undertaking tasks, for example site assessment and contract administration, but it also requires an overall methodology in order for the work to be successful. This methodology requires respect and recognition of all stakeholders and their capacities, holistic consideration of the consequences of decisions on development, facilitation and trust, and acknowledgment of personal limitations. Building relationships and operating effectively alongside communities, national governments and other agencies also takes the use of many skills and competencies.

The shelter practitioner must have experience and proficiency in running construction projects, experience of development projects and an understanding of the long term repercussions of shelter provision. The balance of formal, academic education and field experience is also very important. Education and training are the basis for knowledge of practice, through field experience that knowledge is augmented and the skill set required is developed.

Demand is growing around the world for further Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) measures and, in the absence of adequate DRR, appropriate external assistance in the event of disasters. There are currently a limited number of suitably qualified practitioners and they are employed on short term consultancy contracts. This results in limited opportunities for organisational learning and training of aspiring practitioners. The recommendations of the study relate to opportunities for building
the capacity of the shelter sector through developing a sustainable skills base and community of practice.

The conclusions are arranged into a job description for a shelter practitioner and recommendations for building the capacity of the sector. The job description emphasises the need for coherent holistic methodology and experience in the field. The recommendations present opportunities for making the role more accessible and for partnership between the NGO community, academia and private organisations. The aim is to attract suitable professionals to the sector and to provide opportunities for them to gain the appropriate experience.
Preface and Acknowledgements

The subject of this dissertation came about through working on the background paper for the conference *Building Relevance: post-disaster shelter and the role of the building professional*, hosted by the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) at Oxford Brookes University on the 18th September 2009. The intended audience for this study are academics, NGO workers including field practitioners and managers, and donors. In order for global level initiatives regarding the work of development and humanitarian agencies, such as the Emergency Cluster system, to be effective it is essential to understand and integrate the way practitioners currently operate.

I would like to thank the many people who have helped, encouraged and contributed to the production of this dissertation. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr David Sanderson for his extremely valuable guidance and encouragement. For their assistance in the preparation of the study I would like to thank Prof Nabeel Hamdi, Dr Mohammed Hamza and Charles Parrack.

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<td>Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance</td>
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<td>BBC</td>
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<td>CAFOD</td>
<td>Catholic Agency for Overseas Development</td>
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<td>CARE</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
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<td>ELHRA</td>
<td>Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
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<td>EWB</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
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<td>REDr</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the context

This chapter will serve as an introduction to the context of the study as well as the methodology of the research and its relevance.

More people are becoming vulnerable to hazards such as cyclones, earthquakes and floods (UN 2006 p.56). The effects of a globalisation, including urbanisation and deforestation, are increasing and colliding with weaknesses in the support of shelter and housing construction, for instance ineffective or non-existent formal planning. Statistics show that since the year 2000 the number of people affected by natural disasters has risen from around 170,000,000 to above 200,000,000, a rise of about 20% in eight years (UNISDR 2009). The number of disasters has also risen; Figure 1 shows that there is a definite rising trend in the frequency of disasters over the 30-year period of 1975 to 2005. Also Figure 2 shows that disasters from each origin have also risen in each case, however a proportion of these rises can also be attributed to higher levels of reporting of disasters.

The Sphere Project (2004 p.2008) states that:

Shelter is critical to survival. From the emergency phase until durable solutions, it is necessary to provide security and personal safety, while protection from the climate also protects from ill health and disease. Shelter and settlement support human dignity and family and community life, when populations are displaced or in their homes, maximising communal coping strategies.

Shelter is necessary and everyday it is built by communities to meet their particular needs. These needs can be to protect themselves from the extremes of weather, privacy, security, for access to employment amongst many others.

In post-disaster situations temporary shelter is constructed and provided in a multitude of ways, by the affected communities themselves, by local and national government, community based organisations and by outside relief agencies.

It must be recognised that disasters are not the only contributors to an affected community's vulnerability. Vulnerability often exists before the hazard occurs and then this hazard compounds the effects of that vulnerability and reduces a community's capacity to recover in the aftermath. These existing vulnerable conditions can include unsafe construction of housing, unplanned settlements, economic poverty and low or no political influence. In general terms vulnerabilities can be divided in to physical, political, economic, environmental and social categories. Although the subject of this study is not specifically vulnerability before a disaster it is necessary when working in development and working in a post emergency context to have an understanding of pre-existing vulnerability.

The Pressure and Release Model has been developed as a means of understanding the causes
of vulnerability. Figure 3 shows how increasing pressure from root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions combine to form vulnerability which then collides with a natural hazard to cause a disaster. The opposing situation is where vulnerability is reduced and the pressure is released, reducing the risk of a disaster. The title for this dissertation is based in the understanding that the development process is always ongoing. Development should continue throughout the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster in order to reduce the risk of future disasters, see Figure 4.

In terms of the practice of NGOs and other outside organisations, recognition has been given to the wider impacts of post emergency settlement provision, the relationship to general local development and the crossover between emergency and development practice (Corsellis and Vitale p.7). This relationship is also referred to as the relief to development continuum, as all aspects of relief and developmental assistance are inextricably linked.

Working to reduce vulnerability as a development practitioner requires many different skills and competencies and this study will investigate what those skills and competencies could be and how those working to provide shelter after emergencies use their skills and competencies.
1.2 Relevance and significance of the study

The need for shelter to keep safe, dry and warm is generally accepted as a basic human need. Maslow's hierarchy of need, which is often represented as a pyramid, describes how humans progressively satisfy their needs in stages, the previous stage must be fulfilled before the human can move on to the next stage (Maslow 1987 p17). The first stage is to satisfy physiological requirements for survival, shelter is often listed amongst these, these are followed by needs of safety, including safety of health and resources, then social needs, esteem and self-actualisation. The right to adequate housing is also protected by article 25 of the Universal Convention of Human Rights.

From the point of view of a humanitarian agency, assisting a family with shelter means they are protected from the elements and from physical vulnerability. However, the planning, design, location, construction and other factors related to shelter provision can impact on a wide range of vulnerabilities, not just physical vulnerabilities.

Shelter, for example, provides a space in which to work and rest, and to care for children and elderly people. It makes available a place to care for animals, and to store tools, water, or goods produced. Supporting appropriate transitional settlement and shelter, therefore, develops a key productive asset, and hence allows displaced persons to concentrate on other immediate livelihoods-related needs. (Corsellis and Vitale 2005 p.24)

In this context livelihoods refers to the activities people, families and communities undertake to obtain resources they need to live to meet basic needs, and to build assets to reduce vulnerability. These resources can be food, water and shelter amongst others. The 'livelihoods approach' recognises that these resources are not only accessed using money and assets earned from employment but other informal activities as well. Influencing access to resources and the accumulation of assets include circumstances such as, social status and connections, land tenure, physical assets and levels of debt (DFID 1999).

As a result of the Asian tsunami of December 2004 it is estimated up to 1.8 million people were displaced in to temporary camps (Palmer and Renton 2005) and after Hurricane Nargis in 2008 over 2 million people in Burma (BBC 2009) were left homeless without shelter. These examples of natural disasters, of which there are many others, demonstrate the large numbers of people affected every year. Figure 5 categorises the IFRC's expenditure to date on their work regarding the Asian tsunami, a great proportion, 40%, has been spent on shelter and construction.

The significance of NGOs and international humanitarian community networks are growing, especially in terms of the development of the cluster approach led by the UN. Reviews of humanitarian responses to disasters and emergencies are of great importance to ensure the most effective and the most appropriate assistance is going to be available when and where it is needed. With such large amounts of expenditure focused on providing and supporting shelter programmes, as in the example of the IFRC, it must be ensured that practitioners are able to operate effectively, efficiently and appropriately.
Figure 3. The Pressure and Release Model

Figure 4. Disaster Recovery Cycle

Figure 5. IFRC expenditure as a result of the Asian Tsunami
1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim
The aim of this research is to investigate the knowledge, skills, competencies and background required for working in the sector of shelter provision and to provide a realistic picture of what skills and competencies the ideal type of shelter practitioner needs.

1.3.2 Objectives

It is intended that this research will contribute to the understanding of how shelter practitioners operate and how they contribute to the success of a strategic development programme.

The objectives of this research are:

- To understand the nature of natural disaster and the needs of those people affected by natural disasters.
- To establish why there is a need for shelter practitioners.
- To examine the nature of the context in which shelter practitioners currently work.
- To formulate and demonstrate arguments for the role of the shelter practitioner in the process of reducing vulnerability as part of the short term response and long term strategic developmental objectives.
- To explore the current knowledge and skills base of shelter practitioners from a range of backgrounds.
- To establish a framework within which the knowledge and skills base can be analysed against the aim of vulnerability reduction.

1.3.3 Hypothesis

A well recognised gap exists in aid and development agencies in their understanding of the complex nature of shelter provision, when compared with that of water and sanitation or health and nutrition as integral to the recovery of those affected in disasters. A conference is scheduled to take place on the 18th of September 2009 hosted by the IFRC and CENDEP at Oxford Brookes University called ‘Building relevance: post-disaster shelter and the role of the building professional’ in order to develop ways of addressing this gap. It requires many types of skills including technical, logistical, developmental and anthropological skills. It is not a simple act of obtaining materials and constructing buildings.

The ideal shelter practitioner will be able to perform a supportive role, as an enabler and a facilitator to the local community in their process of recovery. The amount of intervention offered
will be carefully measured against the capacities of the people, infrastructure and systems that still exist and their ability to recover on their own. The products of this process will be culturally appropriate homes, built safely and to agreed standards that allow the livelihoods of the occupants to be resumed as soon as possible and the work of local development organisations to continue their work in the future.

The qualities the practitioner will require are a combination of technical and personal skills, competencies and knowledge. There will also be a balance between the qualities learnt through experience and those acquired through training.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Research Scope

The scope of this piece of research is restricted to the field of post emergency and post disaster shelter practice. This field of practice is the subsequent phase to immediate life saving operations in the aftermath of a disaster. This field of research was chosen as the areas of practice involving chronic poverty housing or man made disasters for instance require their own specific studies.

The methodology used touched on the vast and complex range of knowledge, skills and competencies required by development practitioners to operate in the post emergency field. The result of this research will be a formulation of an ideal set of qualities in the form a job description for a post emergency shelter practitioner and recommendations for the future.

1.4.2 Research Design

This research used of a variety of methods, including desktop study and literature research to establish the need for, the context and the approaches to post emergency shelter practice. The scope of literature comprised humanitarian practice guidelines, reports and appraisals by the humanitarian community including donors and literature about development, vulnerability and disasters. Following the analysis more in depth information gathering about current practice was performed through key informant semi-structured interviews with professionals working in shelter practice. This research was conducted in collaboration with three colleagues as this research also contributed towards the conference "Building Relevance: Post disaster shelter and the role of the building professional" to be held at Oxford Brookes University by the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) and the International Federation of the Red Cross.

The professionals are from a range of backgrounds including architecture, engineering, consulting and construction and they include three females and nine males (refer to Appendix 1).

1.4.3 Limitations of the study

The sample of practitioners interviewed provides the most limitation to my research. As well as consisting of only three women in comparison to nine men, the majority are from European and
North American backgrounds with only one practitioner from a South Asian background. This sample provides limitations in terms of the predominantly western backgrounds as opposed to people from countries that are prone to more frequent and larger scale disasters. This sample may be a reflection of the general make up of the development and aid community but it does provide a restricted perspective of the implications of shelter provision.

The main reason for this biased sample was the need for the interviewees to be available for interview either in person or over the telephone. So this resulted in interviews with people either visiting or based in the south of England and London and one person in Northern Europe.

1.4.4 Organisation of the study

The study is organised in to five chapters.

Chapter One: This chapter will introduce the justification and context of the study. The approach, aims, objectives and hypothesis are also presented.

Chapter Two: The context of the post emergency shelter practice will be examined, including past developments and the current situation.

Chapter Three: This chapter will present the results of the key informant interviews within a framework for evaluation.

Chapter Four: A discussion of the results of the interviews and key points from the review of the context, analysing both sets of information. The framework for this analysis will evaluate the approaches that shelter practitioners use. Also an evaluation of the skills and competencies it takes to work in this practice.

Chapter Five: This part is the conclusion to the study, summarising the findings and analysis in to a job description and specification for a shelter practitioner, which also summarises the current 'state of the art' in the shelter sector.
2.1 Introduction

This chapter will establish the key definitions used and background to the study. It will provide an analysis of the current context of post emergency shelter practice and how this particular humanitarian sector has come to exist and how it has evolved.

2.2 Key Definitions

**Natural Disaster**
A natural disaster occurs when a hazard such as an earthquake, cyclone, typhoon, landslide or volcano eruption affects a population and damage beyond their capacity to cope is inflicted. The lack of capacity to cope is caused by vulnerability, if a population has the capacity to cope with the occurrence of a natural hazard it does not become a disaster.

**Shelter**
A living space which provides protection from the elements, security, privacy, affording dignity and a healthy environment in which to carry out livelihoods activities to the inhabitants.

**Shelter programme**
These are programmes that provide temporary or transitional places for people affected by disasters to stay.

**Transitional Shelter**
A temporary living space providing privacy, dignity, security and a place in which to restart livelihoods activities in the interim period when people are in the process of reconstructing their permanent homes.

**Vulnerability**
The term vulnerability refers to the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard (IFRC (1999) in Corsellis and Vitale eds. (2008).

**Agencies**
These are organisations that provide aid, including financial and material resources, to people affected by a disaster.

**Response**
Actions performed to provide relief to people affected by a disaster.

**Shelter Practitioner**
A person who works for an agency in programming and implementation of projects to provide shelter.
Skills
An ability to do something well, that has been acquired through experience or training

Competencies
The ability, physically and intellectually, to perform a task

2.3 The context for post emergency shelter practice

2.3.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the current environment of shelter provision including the developments in approaches and the need for strategic planning.

2.3.2 Establishing the need for the provision of aid

A disaster occurs when a significant number of people experience a hazard and suffer severe damage and/or disruption to their livelihood system in such a way that recovery is unlikely without external aid. (Wisner B. et al 2003 p. 50)

This definition of disaster recognises the difference between a situation where a community has the ability to cope with a hazard on its own, which does not constitute a disaster, and a situation where the community's capacities become overwhelmed.

The decision whether to provide assistance is taken on the grounds of alleviation of human suffering and to provide for those in need (Anderson and Woodrow 1998). The term 'need' also requires definition, returning to the quote above, 'need' refers to the gap occurring when the affected people are unlikely to recover on their own. Many more factors will also require consideration concerning the type and scale of the assistance, including the requests of the host government, level of public awareness, available funds and political factors, particularly in terms of access to the affected area.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) describes the circumstances agencies become involved in after a disaster, recognising the host government's control of the situation.

...their governments may request help from the rest of the world. At the same time aid agencies already working in the country will quickly gather information and requests for help from local people including their staff. International aid agencies send specialist disaster assessment teams to the affected country to work with local authorities to decide how best the world can support the country. Once the initial assessment is made Governments, aid agencies across the world as well as the United Nations, European Union, and Non-Government Organisations, provide equipment, medicines, food, shelter and people to help the country cope with the disaster. (www.dfid.gov.uk)
2.3.3 Who are the organisations that work in the sector of post emergency shelter practice?

The UN (2006 p.15) asserts that the nature of assistance after disaster has changed in recent times:

*Disaster assistance after major disasters has become more international. Massive flows of resources are often now seen from both governments and private donors directly mainly to INGOs*

International agencies who currently respond to shelter needs include; UN Habitat (the UN Human Settlements Programme), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescents Societies (IFRC), Oxfam (though it is not specifically in their mandate), Habitat for Humanity, Tear Fund, World Vision, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and Islamic Relief. There are many other in country and informal organisations as well. These agencies listed previously provide support for shelter as one of many elements of their mandates but there are also some organisations such as Shelter Box that specialise in the distribution finite kits of items that include shelters or NFI's.

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 prompted a large international response and subsequently faced much criticism. Amongst a number of reports and evaluations of the international response, recommendations made by Telford et al. (2006) as part of the Tsunami Evaluation Committee concerning the quality of international actions emphasises the need for improved coordination of these various groups.

*The international aid community and disaster-prone states should strive to increase their disaster response capacity at community, national and international level. International actors need to increase the linkages and coherence between themselves and the other components of the disaster response system.* (Telford et al. 2006 p.2)

Coordination between organisations and agreed standards for shelter provision, ensuring appropriate assistance being provided consistently in all situations have been the subject of discussions for a considerable time. Until recently the only two references openly available for agencies on the subject of shelter were The Sphere Project handbook of relief response standards including guidelines for shelter and a draft version of the Shelter Standards published by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA) in relation to tents.

In 2005 UN/OCHA, after a review of humanitarian response, took the decision to introduce the cluster approach. This approach is designed to ensure predictability and accountability in international responses to emergencies through building partnerships and defining roles and responsibilities. The Emergency Shelter Cluster now exists under this initiative, other cluster include; Agriculture, Camp coordination/management, Early recovery, Education, Emergency telecommunications, Health, Logistics, Nutrition, Protection and Water Sanitation Hygiene.

Finding common support systems and resources is integral to sustaining cooperation of local,
national and international organisations. Humanitarian Information Centres and Relief Web are internet based operational tools maintained by UN/OCHA containing coordination information, geographic information, reports, training information and media resources for use by those working in shelter provision. The World Bank has also set up the ProVention Consortium in order to address the goal of disaster reduction and acts as a resource for lessons in recovery and risk management. Inter-agency organisations such as Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) are striving to improve learning, accountability and performance throughout the Humanitarian Sector.

European based training and internet resources are also provided by Engineers Without Borders (EWB) and Shelter Centre and Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief (Redr-International) are particularly prevalent and have both existed for around 30 years.

2.3.4 How has the role of shelter practitioner come to exist? How has it changed or developed?

Most agencies define in their mandates the services they provide to victims of disasters and often these services are broken down in to stages over time, for instance prevention, relief, rehabilitation and recovery. Services may include medical, water and sanitation services, food aid and shelter. A shelter unit is a physical, tangible need that can be paid for with donations and provided to directly fulfil that need. However, it has been recognised in the past 30 years that separation from the elements is not the only function of shelter and that questions of comfort, traditional patterns, privacy, psychological needs, sanitation requirements, etc are also involved (Srikanth and Young in Davis ed. 1980 p.169).

In one of the first reviews of responses to shelter in his 1978 book *Shelter After Disaster* Ian Davis described three basic forms of response by outside agencies in shelter provision in post disaster situations (p.18-20). These forms of response include houses that ignore or deliberately attempt to ignore traditional cultural habits, universal solutions that assumed human living arrangements are homogenous throughout the world or attempts to provide shelter that fully recognises cultural traditions whilst also including modifications to provide a safer home. The response that fully recognises the particular context and society is often described as a model for good practice; however, thirty years on the first two, arguably less desirable, examples are still practiced and contributing to vulnerable conditions within the affected communities. So, the spectrum of shelter practice covers the provision and delivery of shelter 'solutions' to facilitation and support through recovery and improving shelter.

The operation of shelter practice is still facing challenges and problems, for instance in funding, policy or planning depending on the project (UN 2006 p.16). The 2006 scoping study to inform the revision of the 1982 'Shelter after Disaster: Guidelines for Assistance' includes comments from contributors commenting that much of the original text remains relevant, which suggest that even some of the original problems still exist. (UN 2006 p.vii).

Although problems do persist, approaches to practice are changing in a number of ways. A more developmental response of locally appropriate or adapted solutions is occurring (UN 2006 p.29).
Approaches now consider shelter and housing in groups and settlements not just as products (UN 2006 p.vii). Development of frameworks such as the transitional settlement approach that support the many different forms of settlement options are vital for the humanitarian community to know where to direct their efforts (Corsellis and Vitale 2005 p.7).

**The Transitional Settlement Approach**

The term 'transitional settlement' was defined by Shelterproject and developed by the organisation Shelter Centre through peer review. It refers to settlement and construction of shelter resulting from conflict and natural disasters, ranging from emergency response to durable solutions (Corsellis and Vitale 2005 p.7). This approach is discussed here as it is the main focus of the current revision of the UN Transitional settlement and reconstruction after natural disasters guidelines.

The intention of the transitional settlement approach is to provide a parallel support network for a broad range of settlement options and the ongoing permanent reconstruction process. This approach is based on the fact that without outside intervention almost all settlement options would occur anyway using the capacity of the surviving community.

These settlement options are grouped in to six categories:

**Option 1: Host families**  
This settlement option involves sheltering the displaced population within the households of local families, or on land or in properties owned by them.

**Option 2: Urban self-settlement**  
Displaced populations may decide to settle in an urban settlement, or in parts of it unaffected by the disaster, occupying unclaimed properties or land, or settling informally.

**Option 3: Rural self-settlement**  
Rural self-settlement takes place when displaced families settle on rural land that is owned collectively, rather than privately.

**Option 4: Collective centres**  
Collective centres, also referred to as mass shelters, are usually transit facilities located in pre-existing structures.

**Option 5: Self-settled camps**  
A displaced community or displaced groups may settle in camps, independently of assistance from local government or the aid community.

**Option 6: Planned camps**  
Planned camps are places where displaced populations find accommodation on purpose-built sites, and a full services infrastructure is provided.  
(Corsellis and Vitale eds. 2008 p.88)

The time of completion of permanent reconstruction is also the time when the affected communities leave their respective transitional settlement options and programmes must support and adapt to these changes (UN 2006 p.4).

Supporting these changes in approach to shelter practice is the greater understanding of
livelihoods approach (Corsellis and Vitale 2005). This means that the sheltering activities of the agency should be designed around helping the family or community to restart their livelihoods activities as soon as possible. It is the intention of transitional settlements approach to provide appropriate environments for communities to re-establish their livelihoods as soon as possible.

There are also general changes occurring in the sector. Inter agency meetings and conferences following on from each other are increasing the pressure to achieve the goals being set out. These are conferences such as The World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama in 1994 and Kobe in 2005, the International Conferences - Post-disaster reconstruction (I-Rec) held in Coventry, UK, 2002 and 2004 and also the Shelter Meeting held biannually in Geneva since 2005.

Consideration for the wider impacts of post emergency settlement have resulted in a greater recognition of the continuum of emergency and development practice (Corsellis and Vitale 2005). This is affecting the role of the shelter practitioner, their role is no longer to deliver short term aid but to enable the long term recovery of those affected by a disaster.

2.3.5 Is there a real difference between emergency shelter and transitional shelter?:

Why are emergency shelter, transitional shelter and reconstruction separate phases of disaster response?

There are many terms for different types of shelter provision including; emergency, temporary, transitional and permanent reconstruction. This language also relates to the capacities of the national and international organisations for sequential implementation of the phases of relief, recovery, reconstruction or development. However in reality the affected communities often begin reconstruction the day after a disaster, before the first emergency plastic sheeting is distributed (UN 2006 p.16) so donors and agencies capacities are immediately out of step with the needs of the beneficiaries.

Generally tents are provided in the life saving phase of an operation after a disaster and transitional shelter is considered to be an interim family shelter that provides more than a tent but less than a complete house (UNDP and IFRC 2006 p.4).

Experiences of many agencies have shown that tents provided as emergency shelter can become homes for people for many months and even years, and so the line between emergency/ temporary and transitional shelter is blurred and the terminology becomes useless. Writing on behalf of Oxfam about their experience of shelter provision following the Andhra Pradesh cyclone of 1977 in Disasters and the Small Dwelling, Srikanth and Young wrote:

Only later did they realise that there really is no such thing as temporary shelter, and the constructions that they had erected were to remain as monuments to their haste!  
(Srikanth R. and Young L. in Davis ed. 1980 p.169)

The latest guidelines from the UN define the different phases after a disaster for strategy implementation whilst still recognising that in reality the phases do overlap, and therefore the
response must actually be a continuous effort by agencies to implement a strategy that covers the whole population for the full duration of their recovery (Corsellis and Vitale eds. 2008).

The work on providing transitional shelter in the gap between emergency and permanent reconstruction is beginning to show how the humanitarian community sees shelter increasingly as a process and not a product. It is recognised that it is:

*an integral part of a settlement which includes the physical and social infrastructure needed to support communities, including water, education, health and employment. The process, which should involve community decision making and create ownership, is as important as the product.* (da Silva 2007 p.26)

The transitional settlement approach was also introduced in response to the dislocation between theory and practice and confusion over the meanings of commonly used terms by redefining the post emergency phases as concurrent programmes not sequential, separately funded unrelated parts.

In summary the method donors use to allocate funding in terms of sequential phases after a disaster is not compatible with the needs of those affected, who naturally begin many different recovery processes in parallel with each other. There is need for greater flexibility of donors to facilitate the spectrum of needs of people and for a process not a product based approach.
2.3.6 What are the positive and negative impacts of shelter provision on vulnerability? What types of vulnerability can be affected and how?

In addition to the direct effects of the disaster itself on the lives of displaced populations Corsellis and Vitale (2005) argue that transitional settlement itself also has a range of impacts. Protection and security, survival and health, social needs, such as privacy and dignity, livelihoods, natural-resource management and communal service infrastructure can all be negatively as well as positively affected.

This range of impacts illustrates that relief agencies, though unintentional, can compound existing vulnerabilities of those they are trying to assist.

*Poor decision-making can result in a return to the vulnerabilities that resulted in the disaster in the first place.* (Corsellis and Vitale (eds) 2008 p.1)

The UN (2006) argues that the post-disaster situation is rare opportunity to ‘Build Back Better’, encourage sustainable improvement of building cultures and to promote awareness of safety issues but is often missed for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons are that donations towards vulnerability and risk reduction are low in comparison to emergency assistance donations, the majority of relief efforts do not undertake mitigation measures, for instance hazard mapping during site selection. Kennedy et al. (2007) also cite the lack of environmental impact assessments and consideration for long-term urban and regional planning after the Asian tsunami in settlement and shelter programmes, for the perpetuation of vulnerabilities that were exposed by the disaster. And so,

*...vulnerability is often reconstructed along with the housing.* (UN 2006 p.8)

Other specific strategic considerations include, climate change as a determining factor in decision-making about settlements as frequency and/or severity of some hazards may increase (ALNAP and ProVention 2007) and protection of assets during and after disasters as it not only makes it easier for them to recover quickly but also reduces future vulnerability and poverty (ALNAP and ProVention 2007).

Specific groups of people within the same community will also have different types of vulnerability. Vulnerable groups may include children, women, tenants, female-headed households or those in the religious minority. Gender has played a large role in the recovery of some populations where local law and culture deny claims to land or resources on the basis of gender. For example, in Aceh, Indonesia after the tsunami a number of cases of returning widows or daughters being denied legitimate land claim for reconstruction. Female claimants were denied access to land tenure unless they married (or remarried), or through threats of violence (Corsellis and Vitale (eds) 2008 p.25).

Vulnerability can also be created where previously it did not exist at all. In the example of the 2001 earthquake in the Gujurat region of India, tent distribution was criticised as it undermined the existing coping strategies of the population. This was proven by the contrast to locally produced
transitional shelter, built for a similar cost that was durable enough to last the duration of the reconstruction process where the tents distributed by the aid agencies were not.

2.3.7 How can the response to short term needs also meet long-term developmental objectives?

Agencies must ensure settlement programmes are effective through awareness of the implications of their actions on vulnerability. Planning based on existing coping mechanisms, local capacities and cultural sensitivity is fundamental. Corsellis and Vitale (2005) write that displacement itself increases vulnerability but aspects of vulnerability such as social friction between families or ethnic groups can be reduced by transitional settlements that match cultural expectations.

Following are two case studies that include examples of practice that has had positive effects on the vulnerability of the affected communities.

In May 2006 an earthquake occurred south west of Yogyakarta, Indonesia and the IFRC and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) set out to facilitate the construction of 5,300 transitional shelters. Community groups were formed and provided with training and money to purchase tools and materials. Volunteers with appropriate training supported the construction process. The urgency of shelter construction was increased by the impending onset of the heavy rains. Further information on safe construction was also shared with local organisations by the IFRC and OMI.

In the aftermath of the Asian tsunami in February 2005 Oxfam began a programme of building transitional shelter in Tangalle, Sri Lanka. The construction was done using a similar process to that in Yogyakarta. Self-help groups organised themselves and trained volunteers provided technical support. Although timber had to be imported from Australia the timber members used were designed to be reused in the permanent reconstruction along with the concrete blocks used as well.

The premise of both of these projects was based on community capacity and enablement, is fundamental to the community achieving the fulfilment of their needs. Commenting on the Oxfam project Elizabeth Babister, shelter advisor with the NGO CARE International UK, describes how transitional shelter implies something that is longer term and gives you space to carry out livelihood activities rather than just surviving (Architecture for Humanity 2006). The power is also with the community to decide who to help first and how quickly the work is done. This allows the existing economic and social relationships and systems to function and possibly even be strengthened as the organisations and volunteers are performing a supporting role not enforcing role.

The security of possessions and suitable location in both examples allowed the families to resume everyday activities including employment and education. Cash for work in the actual construction also aided the economic recovery. Reuse of materials also contributed to lower costs incurred by families for permanent reconstruction in the Oxfam and the IFRC programme. In Sri Lanka the main building materials were Timber and concrete blocks but in Indonesia they were Bamboo poles and woven matting. Consideration must be made of local knowledge and traditions of construction in order for communities to be able to understand, maintain and adapt their own
homes in the future when the materials are reused. In Yogyakarta the bamboo was locally available, this would have been the preferable but in Sri Lanka the scale of the reconstruction was too large to source all the materials locally.

The pressure of seasonal changes in weather can add more complexity between short and long-term goals. For instance, the monsoon season may arrive during construction, people will be left without protection from the elements and the actual construction will be delayed by disruption to delivery of materials and result in further vulnerability. This potential accumulation of vulnerability was taken into account by the IFRC in Yogyakarta.

The affected populations must ultimately be the judges of the work, aid and assistance of the organisation and they must have sufficient platform to do this. Continued monitoring, evaluation and development of effective partnerships will contribute to accountability of agencies to the beneficiaries.

Figure 8. Early Recovery Training Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Figure 9. Construction of Transitional Settlement, Sri Lanka
Chapter Three: Results from the Key Informant Interviews

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the context in which practitioners work was established. This chapter studies the way in which they work and with what skills and competencies they use to operate as shelter practitioners. Through direct quotation and interpretation from interviews with practitioners themselves, the skills, competencies and approaches practitioners need to work in this field will be analysed and the operational context that is conducive to successful work will also be investigated. This chapter aims to build up a picture of the requirements that are necessary for those who are working in this field. The interviewees will not be referred to by name but by their profession and their current role.

3.2 The Practitioner

3.2.1 Understanding the role

‘the success of the programme is hugely dependant on the professional and personal characteristics of that person.’ Engineer, Senior advisor

When speaking about the role many of the interviewees acknowledged the first thing a professional needs to understand is what they can offer to the role of shelter practitioner in terms of skills, competencies, abilities and personal attributes. To operate effectively a practitioner also needs to know what their limitations are.

Many shelter practitioners have moved to the humanitarian sector from the private sector. Their professions are engineering, architecture, construction, project management and planning amongst others. These professions give them a core set of skills but there is more knowledge and other skills that are necessary to operate in humanitarian and development work.

One architect who now practices permanently in the humanitarian sector describes the need for professionals to re-conceive their core skills in order to work efficiently in the humanitarian sector.

What can I actually give rather than, where do I as an architect fit in to this world? Because you don't fit, or you do not use all of your skills, or you don't necessarily use them in the same way. Architect, Senior advisor at INGO

Working in the shelter sector involves more than operating as a technician delivering a construction project. A number of those interviewed spoke about the political and social issues that have to be dealt with in the field and these issues are related to broader context of development work. Practitioners need to understand the social and political implications of their work and where a shelter programme fits in to a development strategy. Understanding of educational, health care and environmental needs and the consequences of those is crucial.
Many practitioners particularly from the private sector work within a strict remit under a professional title that is often protected by law. When transferring that profession to the humanitarian field the professional needs to allow the scope of their role to widen. Often the key competency for this work is one of project management. So, instead of a scenario where architects only want to design buildings, engineers who only design structures and builders that just want to build the competency is in being able to work in variety of roles and to move between them when required.

Practitioners in the shelter sector may be consultants on certain projects and others are coordinators of entire programmes. In either position the competency of project and resource management is required whether those resources are people or materials. A number of descriptions of how to make a successful project involved detailed planning and ensuring the right resources were available at the right time.

However it was continually emphasised that only when the practitioner is a successful technician in their own profession should they become involved in shelter as there is then another large piece of work in understanding the context of post emergency practice.

3.2.2 Practice and Professionalism

The possession of experience and qualification in a profession, including engineering, architecture and construction, is valued highly by many of the practitioners interviewed. This section will investigate further the value and the appropriate skills learnt through a professional background.

The core skills of a professional background give practitioners a base of knowledge and expertise, and in the field, in a post disaster situation the demands on those become far greater. An architect and independent shelter specialist specifically talked about the confidence their architectural background gave them in some specific skills when they then came to work in the field. These were very technical skills such as contract management, dealing with contractors and detailing. This confidence in their technical skills was vital when given the task of constructing entire villages.

The particular architectural training of another practitioner included learning a methodology that was easily transferable to their work in the development sector. Through learning not only technical skills but also methodologies of working the practitioner becomes more relevant to and prepared for humanitarian work. The architectural training of this practitioner introduced the methodology of using expertise for site and environmental assessment and cultural research and within an approach of respect and facilitation. This approach translated very well to humanitarian practice.

A practitioner described their experience and knowledge from the commercial sector as a way of working that could be paralleled in the shelter sector. As well as the same technical skills that are needed in both areas the need for financial viability is equally important. Experience of this vital aspect of project management in commercial practice is important for the practitioner to prepare for working on humanitarian programmes. In order to work to tight deadlines and stringent cost plans skills and competencies in planning, communication, coordination, logistics, financial and resource management are all essential. Many of these can be learnt through the training and
experience of the built environment professions.

However, there is also technical knowledge that is needed about the humanitarian sector but often is only learnt through experience in the field. One practitioner talked about the lack of formal training she had in disaster management and some basic tools for administering humanitarian projects such as logframes.

### 3.2.3 Personal skills and competencies

What has been established so far is that a practitioner uses professional expertise and technical knowledge in practice but there is still more to working effectively in a post emergency situation than delivering a technically proficient construction project.

> However, as with development programmes, professional skill and technique is not enough to create and sustain effective change in relief programmes. Technology and professional expertise are redundant if they do not find a fit within the social, cultural and political setting of an emergency. (Slim 1996 p.198)

The context of the aftermath of a large event that has severely affected people's lives and destabilised infrastructure presents one of the first challenges to the practitioner. The need to be adaptable and able to plan and implement contingency strategies is imperative in uncertain and changeable social, political and environmental circumstances.

One advisor describes how the role of the agency and therefore the practitioner is a shifting one over the course of a programme and the ability to be flexible is imperative. Here, flexibility is considered in terms of the practitioner's role in relation to the affected community. The various roles included 'a facilitator of change, to being a driver of change, to simply being a witness to change and sometimes in the same week.' (Construction, Advisor at INGO). This ability to work and create partnerships with the community in a number of different ways is another important skill.

One of the elements of community engagement is sharing understanding and learning, part of this is skill is being able to listen. Practitioners spoke about the need for humility, to listen, observe and engage with people. As professionals we are taught to take control, as one architecturally trained consultant said, but practitioners must do the opposite.

A major challenge for the practitioner in engaging with a community and with other professionals is the need to manage expectations of what the programme or themselves as a person can deliver. One practitioner discussed his own self-awareness, of how communities see an older westerner and how attempting to fulfil the expectations that can be raised because of that image goes against the methodology of listening and engaging.

Working as part of an outside organisation requires political awareness. As a representative of an organisation, the practitioner needs to be able to find a way to operate and partner with the existing political system and respecting that authority as they may still be in situ when the NGOs
have left. During the interviews it was stressed that respect for local authority has been lacking and it must be recognised that agencies are there as support and the government is sovereign.

Often the vulnerabilities that cause a disaster exist in part because of the adverse political environments and practitioners will be required to work with those same governments. Practitioners are challenged with working in the face of these difficulties and will require resourcefulness when acquiring information, materials or support. One independent consultant describes the lessons from working in a complex political environment. He recognised that gaining access to restricted areas for obtaining information could have been done by partnering with trained local people who were allowed access.

Experience in the field is extremely valuable in terms of testing the use of skills and competencies provided through training and learning these more personal skills discussed in this section. Slim (1996 p.197) also refers to this as 'Socially appropriate technical skill'. One advisor clearly defines the need for more than knowledge learnt through training.

Training gives you knowledge, it doesn't give you skills. What you need to develop skills is with experience in order to put what you have learnt in to practice. (Construction, Advisor at INGO)

It is difficult however for aspiring humanitarian shelter workers to gain the experiences that are needed to provide them with the appropriate skills. They require direct experience of a post emergency shelter programme but they lack enough skills to actually go and work on one. A shelter specialist talked about wanting to deploy eager but inexperienced potential practitioners, but that this should only be done with support from an experienced practitioner.

3.3 How they work: Shelter as a process not a product

3.3.1 Developmental approach: Achieving long-term development objectives through a short-term response

Many of the successes of shelter projects that practitioners spoke of were due to the fulfilment of a long term objective or that the projects were part of a commonly understood overall strategic plan. Unsuccessful programmes have been those where the support being offered is not appropriate and this has led to a situation where vulnerable people have been the subjects of one-way distribution or they have suffered through a great lack of support. This section will emphasise some of the key aspects of the approach to practice those people working in shelter need to adopt.

Many see the key to a successful developmental approach to the shelter process as recognising the affected local people are the key actors. This approach includes the use and building of local capacity, being able to provide appropriate and specific support for regaining and building livelihoods. First and foremost a development practitioner operating in shelter practice must
respect and trust the views and the wishes of the affected people.

Using this fundamental attitude the strategic planning of a shelter project involves recognising what people actually need, what their capacities are and then matching that with the support given by the organisation. As a result existing systems and resources are not undermined by the external organisation and left damaged after the agency leaves the area. However it is emphasised that this can be made difficult to achieve when donors are specific about what they want to fund. A major challenge for practitioners is that they continue to work closely with local governments in a sector where the donors do have a large amount of influence on the work.

Types of support provided by agencies may differ greatly between capacity building so communities are able to organise their own transitional shelter using agreed guidelines and the agencies becoming the contractor building to families’ designs. One practitioner with a background in construction talked about the issues around agencies providing cash for people to build their own homes and the over-estimation of the ability for people to take on this complex process in the aftermath of a disaster. Another makes the point that affected people need time to take care of their families and restart their livelihoods activities, those are their priorities and shelter programming must take this into account.

Shelter programmes can involve helping people to restart their livelihoods activities at the earliest opportunity as a short-term goal as well as affecting long-term systemic change. An example given by one practitioner described the output of a successful programme as implementing changes in the approach to safe construction. This involves ensuring the stakeholders, who are the local government, the community leaders and tradesmen have an understanding of safe, disasters resistant and adequate housing and also that they have the skills to follow this up and produce better housing. The practitioner can help to do this.

For one practitioner using an approach that integrates development objectives into his work is about finding ways, for example, to ensure issues about gender, livelihoods or national level economic strategy are addressed throughout the programme.

3.3.2 Understanding how the process works

In order to achieve development objectives through shelter programmes an approach that views post emergency shelter as a process not just a product or as a simply a construction project is necessary. There many challenges practitioners will encounter trying to implement this approach and will be discussed as well as the knowledge they will need to have.

Funding from donors is usually either for emergency relief or for permanent reconstruction which leaves a gap in the middle. In an example from one shelter specialist working for a large INGO she talked about how much a challenge this can be in practice. Practitioners need to piece together different funding streams from different donors to ensure a family is followed all the way through the process of regaining their home after it is lost. The word home was used very specifically to include livelihoods activities as well as a physical house. Practitioners need a huge amount of knowledge of how donors fund and skill in putting a continuum of funding together.
Compounding this issue is the ambiguous nature of the terminology surrounding shelter. A practitioner applying for funding must know how the programme fits in to emergency response, transitional settlement or permanent reconstruction in order to apply to the appropriate donors who fund those types of programmes. One consultant asserts that there should be 'no gaps and no overlaps' and more consistent terminology would benefit this. The terminology is not for the humanitarian sector only, it needs to be understood by governments and extremely importantly be translatable in to other languages if it is actually going to benefit the affected populations.

When applying for funding practitioners must understand the commitments. A number of interviewees spoke of instances when practitioners overcommitted themselves and their organisations. Aspects such as the availability of internal organisational capacity, capacity in the country to actually build as well as overhead costs and personnel costs have all to be taken in to account.

### 3.3.3 Organisational environment

This section is included to give an insight in to how the organisational environment contributes to the way in which practitioners operate.

The majority of the interviewees generally agreed that the shelter sector is under-resourced in terms of numbers of practitioners and practitioners with the right skills. Currently there is a small pool of the same people that are used often but they are not always available and this can lead to inexperienced people or people without the requisite training being employed.

In comparison to other technical humanitarian sectors such as the water and sanitation sector the levels of resources in terms of numbers of people on a project team is also disproportionate even when the contract values are the same. There are times when practitioners might be the only person in their organisation charged with shelter and they struggle to fulfil their remit. This issue is put down to the possibility that the level of general understanding in relief agencies and INGOs about the shelter sector is not equal to that of other sectors.

A number of practitioners spoke about their experiences of the recently formed cluster system. In those particular experiences enforced coordination, and partnership had a positive effect on the operation of NGO in relation to each other and as well as for those affected in the disaster. It was generally agreed that the cluster system would require further improvements, but initially the model of partnering with other organisations in order to provide a more co-ordinated response was an important and encouraging move for the sector.
Chapter Four: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the results from the interviews with practitioners, information gathered from the review of the context and job descriptions from humanitarian agencies. Through this discussion a greater understanding of the way development practitioners' skills and competencies fit into post emergency shelter practice will be formed.

In the previous chapter a range of requirements for a shelter practitioner was established and since it is recognised that these requirements are by no means exhaustive this discussion and analysis will include further material.

4.2 Summary of skills, competencies and qualities from the previous chapter:

Knowledge and understanding of the role
- an understanding of the role of a shelter practitioner, and how it relates to development
- understanding the broad range of roles that will need to be undertaken together with core profession/discipline
- knowledge of how donors fund projects
- understanding of appropriate support
- knowledge and understanding of agreed terminology

Technical skills and managerial competency
- ability to assess the capacities of organisations, communities and national and local authorities in order to propose realistic programmes
- project and resource management skills
- confidence in their technical skills
- ability to cost and plan

Professional training and experience
- resourcefulness
- a significant duration of experience in the humanitarian or development sectors
- awareness of one's own limitations
- ability to recognise local capacity
- knowledge of administering humanitarian or development projects

Flexible approach of facilitation and support
- respect and facilitation as core parts of their approach
- flexibility and ability to anticipate potential problems
- ability to listen
- humility
- political awareness
- cultural awareness
- recognition of own limitations
Job Description
The shelter delegate may be involved in the relief and/or recovery phase of a disaster. Work can include; identification and assessment of the shelter needs of disaster affected people, coordination of the implementation phase of shelter interventions (including shelter design, site planning, construction and coordinating with other sector clusters), site selection and planning, design and construction of shelters (immediate and/or transitional), infrastructure (sanitation, drainage, roads) and project management.

The construction delegate may be involved in reconstruction activities during the recovery phase of a Red Cross operation. Work can include: initial assessment and planning, identification and assessment of the reconstruction needs of disaster affected people, coordination of the implementation phase of reconstruction interventions (including shelter design, site planning, construction and coordinating with other sector clusters), site selection and planning, design and construction of shelters, infrastructure (sanitation, drainage, roads), project management, managing standard forms of contract with commercial contractors and sub contractors, setting up quality control and monitoring mechanisms, project management and evaluation.

Essential Criteria for Shelter/Construction specialists:
Recognised construction qualification (e.g. civil, mechanical, electrical engineering, quantity surveying, building construction)
Thorough knowledge of the technical, managerial, logistical and other aspects of the provision of disaster and emergency sheltering solutions
Knowledge of existing good practice and current issues in disaster and emergency shelter solutions
Experience in project management
Experience in coordinating with other sectors
Experience of managing and supporting staff
Experience of developing and managing budgets
Demonstrable cultural and gender sensitivity
IT literate

Emergency response team: Terms of reference - Shelter
Purpose
Responsible for assessment, design and coordination of the shelter component of the organisation's emergency response. S/he will need to co-ordinate with other emergency response team members and staff, to ensure a rapid, proportionate and effective response. S/he will need to ensure response to immediate shelter security with simultaneous consideration of longer-term shelter needs including possible scenarios. S/he may need to take a very active role in technical co-ordination, support and advocacy with other stakeholders.

Responsibilities and Tasks:
1. Assessment
   • Provide sectoral leadership and expertise in the assessment.
   • Conduct initial rapid assessment of current situation in collaboration with local specialists and affected population; determine priorities, immediate activities and resources i.e. more detailed assessment versus need to address emergency shelter security; assess the needs and possibilities for reconstruction activities.
   • Assess potential recovery activities that the organisation can be involved in.
   • Represent the organisation to stakeholders Governmental and non-Governmental agencies (and military where present) for the purposes of the shelter aspect of the assessment.
   • Assess in-country resources, human, material and financial for response with relevant staff and agencies.
   ...continued
2. Programme Design
- Define aims and objectives of the overall shelter programme.
- Select and design shelter activities
- Select and specify any additional inputs needed, such as staff, equipment, materials or funding.
- Develop letters of intent, concept papers, organograms, TORs, budgets and proposals in respect of the above.
- Collaborate effectively with other staff involved in WASH to ensure an integrated approach to construction.
- Ensure that issues of protection, gender, livelihoods, DRR and environmental impact, operation and maintenance are factored into the programme design
- Ensure Sphere standards both qualitative and quantitative are respected.
- Ensure the input of specialist technical advice where appropriate.

3. Response Management and Implementation
- Plan and manage the above in a phased and prioritised manner with full consultation and co-ordination with other staff and other stakeholders.
- Ensure gender is fully considered throughout the project cycle with women being enabled to influence decision-making around shelter issues.
- Organise with the Logistics materials and support needed for all activities.
- Ensure regular monitoring and arrange evaluation.
- Ensure legal requirements are enforced where necessary.

4. Information and Co-ordination
- Provide regular updates to Emergency Team leader and the organisation’s team on progress, priorities and constraints verbally and in writing on an agreed frequency.
- Represent the organisation to stakeholder groups as needed and agreed with the Team Leader.
- Train and brief staff and stakeholders on shelter issues

Key Internal Contacts
- ERT Team Leader and other members of the ERT team as appropriate
- CD, ACDs, sectoral advisers, programme support managers

Key External Contacts
- Other agencies and groups responding to the emergency, in particular those working in shelter, WASH and Logistics
- Governmental representatives from the ministry tasked with shelter security and recovery
- Local professional bodies and private companies for the built environment

Selection Criteria:

Core Competencies
- People Skills: Ability to work independently and as a team player who demonstrates leadership and is able to support and train local and international staff and also able to work with disaster affected communities in a sensitive and participatory manner.
- Communication Skills: Well developed written and oral communication skills. Able to communicate clearly and sensitively with internal and external stakeholders as a representative of the organisation. This includes effective negotiation and representation skills.
- Integrity: Works with trustworthiness and integrity and has a clear commitment to the organisation's core values and humanitarian principles.
- Resilience/Adaptability and flexibility: Ability to operate effectively under extreme circumstances including stress, high security risks and harsh living conditions. Works and lives with a flexible, adaptable and resilient manner.
- Awareness and sensitivity of self and others: Demonstrates awareness and sensitivity to gender and diversity. Have experience and the ability to live and work in diverse cultural contexts in a culturally appropriate manner. Has a capacity to make accurate self-assessment particularly in high stress and high security contexts.
- Work style: Is well planned and organized even within a fluid working environment and has a capacity for initiative and decision making with competent analytical and problem solving skills.
- Knowledge and skills: Knowledge of the organisation’s policies and procedures, Sphere and the Red Cross/ NGO Code of Conduct. Requires general finance, administration, information management and telecommunication skills and proficiency in information technology/ computer skills.

Technical Competencies
- Shelter in Emergencies Specialist with a suitable qualification in Architecture, Planning, Structural or Civil Engineering. Experience can substitute for qualifications but not vice versa.
- 3 - 5 years humanitarian aid experience with at least 2 years experience in emergency and transitional shelter or post disaster reconstruction
- Awareness of public health issues as applied to emergency settings, with special attention to the needs of women and children.
- Knowledge of transitional shelter and settlements options including host family support, collective centres and camps.
- Ability to prepare concept papers and project proposals in accordance with the standards required by CARE and Donors.
- Good communication skills in English and ideally local language.
- Computer and finance skills
4.3 Discussion

In this discussion a job description for a shelter specialist and the terms of reference for a shelter specialist provide material for an analysis of the results from the key informant interviews.

The job description is for specialists to be deployed on fixed term contracts and the terms of reference are those used in the recruitment of shelter specialist members of an emergency response team to an INGO. The full details are shown in Boxes 1 and 2. For the benefit of this comparison the terms of shelter, construction and reconstruction specialists will be deemed to be within the remit of shelter practice.

Job description number one is divided into a description of the responsibilities and tasks and the essential criteria for candidates. The description of work lists tasks that will need to be performed for instance, ‘identification and assessment of the shelter needs of disaster affected people’ and ‘site selection and planning’. Initially the technical and professional skills and activities are very similar to the practitioner's descriptions about the very broad range of activities that have to be undertaken as a shelter practitioner. It also supports the results from the interviews that the basis of practice is good technical knowledge and professional skill.

The terms of reference provide much more detailed information about the actual role that must be fulfilled as well as the tasks to be carried out and selection criteria for candidates. The selection criteria are divided into core competencies, relating to personal skills, and technical competencies, which relate to qualifications and knowledge.

4.3.1 Training versus field experience

As described in the previous chapter gaining academic qualifications as the basis of building a professional background through a combination of experience in industry and then subsequently in humanitarian work was a commonly recommended route into the sector. The job description acknowledges the need for knowledge and recognised qualifications and emphasises the need for experience in project management, co-ordinating with and managing people, experience of the shelter sector and other sectors and the use of standards.

In the job description the essential criteria are mainly technical and professional skills and knowledge for instance, a ‘recognised construction qualification’ and ‘knowledge of existing good practice and current issues in disaster and emergency shelter solutions’, with the exception of ‘demonstrable cultural and gender sensitivity’. As with the skills and competencies described by practitioners these criteria are also developed through a combination of formal academic training and professional and field experience.

In the terms of reference selection criteria also requires a ‘suitable qualification’ but narrows the range down to architecture, planning, structural or civil engineering. In addition to this, 3-5 years of humanitarian aid experience is required. However the dichotomy between formal training and field experience is recognised and the value of experience is shown to be far greater as ‘experience can substitute for qualifications but not vice versa.’
‘Good practice derives from good practice, where principles, methods and ideas can be tested, documented, and constantly modified.’ (Hamdi 1996 p.9)

There is much debate around the optimum levels of education, professionalism and experience needed for a practitioner to operate effectively. As one practitioner said ‘formal education is often a barrier’ to effective shelter practice. One reason, Hamdi writes, ‘must be that many professionals are ill prepared in their education to deal with the realities confronting the low-income majority, and see what is going on as being outside of their professional and disciplinary responsibilities’ (1996 p.1).

Architects were specifically criticised in the interviews for their sometimes perceived arrogant approach. Hamdi (1996) describes how they have been taught to be the experts and take the lead, whereas they must realise that in a development context, indigenous knowledge must be valued above that of the 'expert'. Practitioners from all backgrounds stressed that affected people are the key stakeholders in shelter programmes. To ensure this, practitioners must act with respect and humility.

Slim (1996 p.204) writes about developing practical wisdom using both experience and education, as long as that training or education allows the practitioner to critically reflect on his or her work. In general the interviewees placed great importance on learning in the field as it gives the practitioner the confidence to make informed decisions and incisive contributions. Moreover, Slim describes the great limitations of the educational environment for the development of the practitioner's judgement, attitude and understanding (1996 p.199). So the emphasis applied to a significant level of field experience combined with knowledge, is justified in many respects.

4.3.2 Complexity and contrasts in shelter

These extensive lists of responsibilities are supported by evidence in the report *Quality and standards in post-disaster shelter* written by the shelter specialist Jo da Silva (2007). However in her description the complexity and interconnectedness of all of the elements of shelter programming are recognised and described as follows.

*The role of design in interpreting and optimising the contribution from each shelter component is essential and must reflect but not be subsumed by cost, programme and logistical considerations. Equally, consideration must be given to the way in which quality is influenced by other stages of the project cycle: consultation, training, workmanship, as well as future maintenance, repair and adaptation.* (da Silva 2007 p.32)

The job description is a very comprehensive list of the requirements of a development practitioner however the job requires more than performing just these tasks. There is a need for these tasks to be carried out within the appropriate methodology. It may be too specific to be covered in an advertisement such as this but according to the interviews the approach with which a practitioner operates is fundamental and tasks cannot be performed in isolation from each other. The terms of reference describe the requirements to ‘ensure response to immediate shelter security with
simultaneous consideration of longer-term shelter needs’ and ‘ensure that issues of protection, gender, livelihoods, DRR, and environmental impact, operation and maintenance are factored into the programme design.’ The heading of ‘work style’ in the core competencies section does relate to a method of working. However, the interconnectedness of all of the aspects of a shelter programme are not presented. The quote above from da Silva describes the interconnectedness of the stages of a shelter programme and the need for a holistic methodology extremely well.

The role of the development practitioner in shelter practice is to plan and act in a holistic way. Shelter practitioners gave emphasis to the need for more planning in terms of future disaster risk reduction. Beresford and Flinn (2009) describe some of these aspects from their work in Bangladesh. They write about the need for consideration of the effects of the practical parts of the project such as skills training, labour, procurement method, environmental impact and innovation and improved building technique and water and sanitation, on the local economy as well as livelihoods and the community's sense of ownership of the work.

There is a diverse range of aspects within the work of practitioners. Design is carried out on detailed and strategic levels, programming is needed for the immediate and distant future, consideration of individuals and communities must be made and communication must be carried out with international organisations and families. In addition to this as practitioners are working they must consider the repercussions and consequences of every decision they are making, no matter how small or large or at what stage in the programme, is going to have. In addition all must be undertaken in conditions of extreme pressure and urgency and with finite funds.

4.3.3 Personal characteristics

As well as methodology and approach in development work Slim reminds us that:

No practitioner practices in a vacuum. The operational setting of relief workers is normally complicated, with an intricate interplay of local and international policies and interests. (Slim 1996 p.196)

Therefore operating in these situations the practitioner also requires many other personal skills. Practitioners who were interviewed spoke about the need to be flexible and resourceful in order to anticipate and implement contingency plans and to think creatively. The practitioner must have personal resilience and confidence to ensure reverses and complications do not compromise the quality of the work and the best possible outcome. These are not mentioned in either job description number as this area of skill is perhaps best assessed in the interview stages of the recruitment process.

The terms of reference specifically reflect the necessity for cultural awareness and appropriate operation in relation to it in the core competencies section under the heading of ‘awareness and sensitivity of self and others’.

The job description uses the phrase ‘demonstrable cultural and gender sensitivity’, which also appears to encompass the required personal qualities including social, cultural and political
awareness and the ability to integrate these aspects into their work as well as the need to consider the long-term developmental and strategic aims involved in the work. This issue was spoken about in the interviews particularly with regards to how shelter programmes can be integrated into and positively impact upon development and that this is an essential part of successful shelter programming.

The requirement for knowledge of ‘good practice and current issues’, mentioned in the job description, may be in recognition of the relatively new cluster system or that shelter is now identified as a process and not a product as described in recently published guidelines in *Transitional Settlement and Reconstruction After Natural Disasters* (2008). The terms of reference are much more specific about these particular guidelines, as they explicitly require ‘knowledge of transitional shelter and settlement options’. It must be understood that these options will be constantly evolving for those affected but neither example mentions this aspect. However the terms of reference do acknowledge that the working environment is ‘fluid’, requiring the practitioner to have a ‘capacity for initiative and decision making’.

The terms of reference emphasises that the practitioner may have ‘a very active role in technical co-ordination, support and advocacy with other stakeholders’ and there is also mention, in the core competencies section, of the need for ‘effective negotiation and representation skills’ and the ability to ‘work with disaster affected people in a sensitive and participatory manner.’ All of these aspects of building partnerships and power sharing with stakeholders are facilitated by many interpersonal skills, which also relate to the political and social awareness discussed previously. The ability to build relationships was echoed in the experience of many of the permanently employed practitioners who were interviewed. This also reflects the current situation in the wider humanitarian sector where improvements are being made in co-ordination and relationships between donors, NGOs and national governments, including the cluster system. However, the view that national governments particularly have often been bypassed by NGOs in shelter programming was widely held by interviewees. Building partnerships with local government and the local commercial sector not only provide benefits to the affected communities through strengthening their capacities and economy but also to the programme, as it avoids any duplication of what the host authorities and communities already do for themselves.

**4.3.4 The job market for shelter practitioners**

Many of the requirements and criteria in both of the descriptions are extremely broad and could encompass a large number of issues. The premise of most job descriptions is to show the minimum requirements that candidates need. This is to avoid discrimination against the candidates who have various other skills and qualifications, or simply deter people from applying by sounding too demanding. The format also does not allow for long and detailed statements about approaches, mandates and specific interpersonal skills.

In a number of interviews the capacity of the shelter sector as a whole was discussed. The general view was that there is a shortage of suitably qualified practitioners, professionally and in terms of personal attributes. However, responses varied as to whether the deficit of practitioners was a large or small. The result of this deficit and the fact that many practitioners are only employed
on short-term consultancy contracts is a lack of a sustainable community of practice and that opportunities for institutional learning and capacity building are infrequent.

Many NGOs who do give shelter as part of their mandate respond to natural disasters using teams of practitioners. These teams have various titles including technical teams and emergency response teams. Often the shelter practitioner is brought in once the need for support for shelter is identified, when it is shown there is a lack of local capacity to deal with that need. It was emphasised during the interviews, and particularly by one head of shelter at an INGO, that to be relevant the practitioner must have skills over and above that which exist and are available within the affected area otherwise they do not add value to the response.

The aim of recognising the local capacity during the planning of projects and in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is to reduce vulnerability to hazards in the future. A development practitioner in shelter practice should support and build the capacity of the affected communities they work with so that outside assistance is not required when the next hazard occurs. In effect successful practitioners must make themselves redundant.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

This conclusion brings together all of the attributes needed to operate as development practitioner in post emergency shelter practice, as a result of the study.

The first part of the conclusion is a job description for a shelter practitioner. The shelter practitioner would be employed to work as part of a team some of whom may be non-specialists, so the role would be of technical specialist and they would not have immediate line-management responsibility. The following parts of the conclusions are recommendations for the future of recruitment of shelter practitioners. With the job description the important aspects raised during the study will be emphasised.

The most fundamental aspect of operating as development practitioner in post emergency shelter practice is that everything that is required must be interconnected. The role cannot be undertaken without the ability to perform technical task but these tasks cannot be carried out successfully without the appropriate attitude and methodology.

5.1 Job Description for a Shelter Practitioner

The Role

- To respond to short term needs after a disaster whilst reducing vulnerability and meeting strategic developmental objectives.
- To build partnerships with stakeholders to facilitate increase in their capacity.
- To prepare programmes that are flexible, adaptable, agreed upon by all stakeholders and that include an exit strategy for those providing external assistance.

Methodology and Approach

The use of technical skills, relate to the physical aspects of projects, and there are personal characteristics of the practitioner that are essential to implement the physical aspects of the programme in accordance with the long-term developmental strategy.

- A fundamental attitude that respects and recognises all stakeholders and their capacities, including the national and local authorities from the outset.
- Holistic approach to all of the tasks involved in practice, consideration of consequences for every part of the programme of every decision made.
- An understanding of the need to be a facilitator for the entire recovery process.
- The ability to use professional experience with humility and the knowledge of his/hers own limitations and when assistance is required.

Experience

A minimum of 5 years experience in development and humanitarian projects.
Within development and humanitarian projects and professional experience:

- Construction project management and contract administration;
- Development project administration; and
- Participatory projects, from research to implementation.

Personal characteristics

These characteristics must be used in conjunction with each other and throughout all aspects of the programme, including the technical work.

- Adaptability in the highly volatile situation after a disaster.
- Ability to creatively solve problems that will arise due to the volatile situation.
- The ability to respect work within a culture, to communicate and negotiate within it's political systems.
- Personal resilience is must in order to continue to make confident decisions and contributions.

Technical Skills and Competencies

These technical skills and competencies relate to the technical and practical operations of the programme, they must be carried out with the appropriate attitude and methodology.

- A recognised built environment qualification to degree level.
- The ability to appropriate and deliver suitable sustainable resources.
- Knowledge of the service, structural and hazard resistant requirements of a large variety of housing types and the ability to integrate these with local vernacular traditions.
- Ability to speak local language.

5.2 Recommendations

There are likely to be few practitioners with the particular set of knowledge, characteristics and experience in this job description. The conclusion must be that there is a great need for multidisciplinary teams in which a group of people make up a wealth of experience and skill. This collective skill and knowledge base could indeed exceed what has described previously. Although it is unlikely that humanitarian and development agencies will be able to afford to deploy an entire team when required, there are other ways in which their support can be given. It is possible that at a small number of the team actually are deployed and the other members of the team are available via email or phone to provide information and support.

It is also important to recognise that even with a collective of suitably qualified practitioners a manager or lead is required to ensure the cohesion of the team and the resulting work. This manager must also have experience of shelter programming and the appropriate knowledge in order to resource the team effectively.
There is obviously a great need for practitioners who are experienced in development and humanitarian work and experienced professionally, to ensure the success of shelter programmes. In the current situation where lone consultants are deployed there are few opportunities for aspiring practitioners to work with and learn from more experienced practitioners. The recommendation is to formalise internship schemes through partnerships between development and humanitarian agencies with commercial or academic bodies. Aspiring practitioners from graduate or postgraduate level would have a much clearer path in to development work and the opportunity to work alongside and learn from a more experienced practitioner. The lead practitioner would also have assistance in the field for minimal cost to their organisation as this form of arrangement would allow the cost to be shared.

The recently formed Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELHRA) network is a collaborative community dedicated to supporting partnerships between academic institutions in the United Kingdom and humanitarian organisations around the world. Hosted by Save the Children, the ELRHA project aims to support research partnerships on current and future issues in the humanitarian sector. Key issues include: innovative and future preparedness, collaborative working, humanitarian principles and operational challenges. This network and others like it would be an ideal starting point for internship schemes supported by academic institutions for those organisations wishing to build these types of relationships. The work of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) is also extremely relevant as they have a globally established reputation for providing internships for students; they have relationships with in-country NGOs as well as professional networks and universities. EWB currently do not specifically assist in post disaster situations but have provided training for many individuals that have gone on to work in this area. Article 25 another UK based charity implements building projects with the aim of providing improved shelter to those in need and do include post disaster projects within their remit. The ability of this kind of organisation to connect professionals to building projects around the world is key to building the experience base of potential shelter specialists.

A sustainable skills base in the shelter sector is urgently required as demand is rising. In order for this to happen the sector needs to attract the appropriate kind of professional. Another recommendation would be for NGOs to publicise more widely the way in which they recruit and what they require from suitable candidates. Making the sector more accessible would attract a greater number of candidates for the agencies to choose from and train. If the trend of employing consultants on short-term contracts continues, the larger the community of practitioners is the larger the pool of practitioners there will be for agencies when building a project team.

NGOs, with limited budgets for assisting beneficiaries, may not choose to divert funds to more training for professionals or more publicity. Research has shown that there is a lack of understanding within the donor community of the complexity of shelter programming and this results in a lack of adequate funding generally and for a creating a greater pool of practitioners. To address this issue an initial investment of time and effort is needed from the NGO community to educate donors and make the case for a level of resources that is more proportional to the complexity and scale of the work involved.
In conclusion, it is not only the responsibility of NGOs, the UN and the IFRC to produce the practitioners they require. A sustainable community of practice could be created through collaboration and mutual support between the development and humanitarian organisations, academic institutions and commercial bodies. Such collaboration will make accessible the combination of skills, competencies and experiences required for operation as a development practitioner in post emergency shelter practice.
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Appendix 1

List of interviewees

Elizabeth Babister, Emergency Shelter and Reconstruction Senior Specialist, CARE International UK - Interviewed on: 25.06.09

Rick Bauer, Public Health Engineering Advisor, Oxfam GB - Interviewed on: 16.07.09

Dr Camillo Boano, Course Director, Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London - Interviewed on: 15.07.09

Dr Tom Corsellis, Co director Shelter Centre - Interviewed on: 14.08.09

Dr Jo da Silva, Director, Arup International Development - Interviewed on: 28.07.09

Professor Ian Davis - Interviewed on: 16.07.09

Bill Flinn, Architect and independent shelter specialist - Interviewed on: 08.07.09

Seki Hirano, Architect and Shelter and schools infrastructure specialist - Interviewed on: 04.06.09

Rumana Kabir, Architect and Independent shelter and reconstruction specialist - Interviewed on: 25.06.09

Dr David Sanderson, Director, CENDEP, Oxford Brookes University - Interviewed on: 08.07.09

Graham Saunders, Head, Shelter Department, IFRC - Interviewed on: 02.07.09

Melvin Tebutt, Construction Advisor, British Red Cross - Interviewed on: 03.07.09
Appendix 2

List of sample questions for semi-structured interviews:

Please could you introduce yourself

**Section 1.**

In your experience of working in the field of post-disaster shelter, what projects have you worked on that were the most successful? And why?

And which experiences were the most challenging and why?

What things would you do differently?

How do you see the future of post-disaster shelter practice?

Who are the key actors involved? Who is missing?

What in your view is the single biggest obstacle to better post emergency shelter?

What in your view are the ingredients for a successful shelter programme?

**Section 2.**

What formal training have you had, if any?

What skills and competencies have you used from that training?

In what ways did your training help or hinder your work?

What are the most important skills and competencies that you have learnt through your own personal experience?

When you first started working in this field what do you wish someone had told you?

What skills and competencies do you think are lacking the shelter sector?

**Section 3. (This section was specifically related to the conference Building Relevance)**

What role do architects currently have in shelter practice?

What experience do you have working with architects?

How do you think an architect’s training might prepare them for work in the shelter sector?

What role do you think architects could have in shelter practice?

What could make architects more relevant to shelter programmes?

Is there anything you think we have missed in our questions that is important to what we are looking at?

Thank you.
Appendix 3

Sample of transcriptions of interviews

Interviewee: Architect and Senior Shelter Specialist at INGO

In your experience of working in the field of post-emergency shelter practice, what projects have you worked that were the most successful? And why?

I'm trying to think of what was most successful in terms of impact for the beneficiaries. One where it has been most successful is where we've managed to balance how much support the beneficiaries actually need and we've identified what materials would be best to use. And also the other ones that have been very successful have been where there is a prolonged input of advocacy in to specific legal issues. Our organisation does a huge range of projects that range from very soft programmes which might be an advocacy programme all the way across to thousands of house constructed in reinforced concrete.

At the moment we have a very, very broad view of what shelter could mean. Illustrating where it goes wrong as well gives you an indication of where it goes right. The best examples are where a lot of work has been done in trying to understand what the target groups, the beneficiaries are able to do themselves and really matching that with the input that the organisation can give. Not always very easy because you have donors which are pretty early on reasonably precise about what they want to spend their money on.

So we had a very successful program in Peru after the earthquake where there was very good coordination between NGOs to supply a range of different options. Some families, if they gained access to government compensation, could actually rebuild houses themselves. Whereas other families, especially if they lived in the more remote, rural areas, their needs weren't really being addressed as well by the government. They may need extra help, their method of construction, where the labour came from, was completely different from urban areas. They built as a community, they didn't hire labour, they didn't actually need funding for labour, the main input there was technical training on how to improve construction and make it more sound and more seismically resistant. Out of the affected population there were actually very different needs and it took us a very long time get the permanent reconstruction started, partly because the government were slow in sorting out how to access the compensation, although they had promised it quite early on. But also because it takes quite a long time to actually figure out what's going to be most effective for supporting people. I guess the other thing about our organisation is that you use development offices as a basis for emergency programmes, so it's not like the organisation is coming in new to Peru, we have been there for years, we've got five different offices, we've got a country office. So the people involved know where to get information and they know the families really well, that really helps. I suppose where it can go wrong, the main thing is monitoring where families are actually able to use the support that you're giving and where that doesn't happen particularly well, or there is just one way distribution, which is usually quite early on. So for example we have a programme where materials are distributed for self-build or to repair houses, but there wasn't enough follow-up done to make sure that vulnerable families were going to get the support they needed from the communities to actually construct the houses. So it was discovered later on that this wasn't really helping, in the culture of that country and a lot of vulnerable people just ended up with pile of material a few months later and nobody had actually supported them. And that wasn't found because the monitoring wasn't done regularly enough and initially there probably wasn't enough analysis.

So that was quite important. I think the other challenges you get are supply chains, they are a huge challenge, and trying to meet the gap between initial distribution of non-food items and then following up the same families with something permanent. The supply of funding which is usually a different source because donors tend to fund either emergency or permanent operations not both, which is usually a negotiation if you want the recovery aspect. The timelines are very different from different donors. One really good example of that kind of challenge was with the DEC in Bangladesh, we did negotiate very early on with them to start reconstruction really early because it was possible and we knew the monsoons were coming, so we knew there was going to be a gap for construction if we could get started. They said we only have either six month or twelve month window, this is the way we get the funds, so they couldn't give us an extension on their funds. They said if you can't get your shelter programme to fit in to this accounting window and you know at this point in time don't do shelter, choose another sector. But at that point shelter was the main need, it was the priority. So we could have done programmes in other sectors but it would mean that the main need wasn't being met. So we get this clash between our own need and how long it actually takes and that's something quite specific to, especially, permanent
reconstruction and even when you're constructing transitional shelter, but it takes along time.

It also takes along time for things to get off the ground, if you're doing a large programme you have to tender it, you have to find labour, you have to get designs signed off, especially if you're trying to implement it from a disaster risk reduction angle and you're trying to improve construction you actually need to do that reasonably slowly, especially if you're training communities in how to improve what are entrenched traditional methods. The understanding that there is this grey area between relief and development. I am banging on about funding because we have actually got a project on at the moment which is an advocacy project about how to structure funding because it is one of the major problems even with the same donor, for example the way that OCHA and USAID release their funding sometimes you have to find some bridge funding to go in the middle because their different pots of funding are accountable in different ways.

[It is interesting that the mechanisms don't match] Exactly, it is really difficult to get evidence on that. There is no policy that is sector specific, it's just not the way that the donors, most of them, think and that is the issue. That you are getting mechanisms set up for the purposes of accounting and then having this almost unintended affect on, particularly, the shelter sector. So following somebody from losing their home all the way back to having a home, and when I say home I use that word very specifically so it's not just the house it's the livelihood and everything else including access to services, is trying to knit together different pieces of funding, to get there. It's a hugely long process and I'm not entirely convinced that either the donors or NGOs have a real appreciation of how that should work.

What things would you do differently in the future?
What we are trying to do is we're trying to learn as an organisation more about how our donors do fund. I'm trying to learn so I can advise country offices about what to expect from different donors. There was a workshop that OFTA ran teaching it's internal staff and NGOs about how to write a good shelter proposal. That is the first time we have been approached by a donor saying this is what we want and they are quite prescriptive and that's not always a good thing, but it is a good thing if you agree with what they want. There is a discussion there it's not them prescribing and subcontracting.

The other thing we are trying to do is to arrange internal training for our senior management so they have a better understanding of what's actually required when you make the proposal for a project, especially for the permanent reconstruction end of things, understanding what the risk is involved in making that commitment and also how to calculate what you can actually commit to. What I mean by that is that during after the tsunami the method that a lot of NGOs were using was taking an agreed unit cost per house and dividing up the money they had by that unit cost and that was the number of houses they were committing to and often without taking in to account how long it had taken them to build that houses that they had already built. So what you got was a huge over-commitment and then real struggle to spend the money that the donor was expecting. When what should have been taken in to account first was how much internal capacity there was, how much capacity there was in the country to actually build at that rate and that taken in to account in to the overall unit cost and all personnel costs and the overhead costs as well rather than just this very simple equation. A comment on that is now in our emergency toolkit, which is our for all countries to refer to, but we are trying to roll that out to ensure there is a more detailed knowledge of not necessarily how to put steel reinforcement in a concrete column you can hire technical staff for that but senior management understand what they are getting themselves in to and they have the confidence to commit as well.

That's the other issue that if a country office doesn't have senior management who have any experience of doing shelter, why would they, and quite rightly, commit to doing shelter? We need to be sure that if shelter is the need we are well placed to respond, we are a huge organisation, we can be sure that we are in a position to do it or partner with an organisation and we know those organisations who can't. So that's another angle we're taking is that where we have no on the ongoing work in shelter, we then work through bigger local or international organisations that work with us in that country so we are always trying to be best placed.

How do you see the future of post-emergency shelter practice?
I think it's going to be a very slow process. If you look at the shelter cluster, at the moment, and you count the number of specialist staff that there are at . level and you look at the coverage that those organisations and the expertise level that they have within those organisations it's going to take a while.

I think there needs to be a big sea change in how organisations are funded.
It is quite easy to get funding for operations, especially from governments for high profile things, it makes them look like their doing something, especially disaster relief can be very high profile. But it's very, very difficult to get funding for permanent staff in organisations to do the technical end of shelter. So there isn't really a sustainable community of practice within post disaster reconstruction or even emergency shelter. And there is no career path in it either. There is no qualification in it. There are very few permanent jobs in it. Most people are independent consultants that back to back their contracts from one agency to the next. The benefit of that is that makes the sector slightly more coordinated because we all use the same people. And we learn from them because they bring experience from other sectors. But having said that it is a very small pool of people and they are not always available.

I do think the shelter cluster is good news overall, it has its issues but is good news for the sector. Because at least now there is an institutional commitment to all sitting down together and coordinating and there is a critical mass. Albeit that the people sitting round the table are the only person in their organisation charged with shelter and they have a huge remit which they are all struggling to find the time to actually fulfil.

There are mandate issues and coverage issues for NGOs and even the shelter cluster, the UNHCR and the IFRC, the reason we have got two leads is because they have mandates issued covering the whole lot. So the idea that one organisation can cover everything from emergency shelter all the way through to permanent reconstruction, there aren't that many organisations who can actually do that, even on a mandate level let alone at a practical level.

Who are the key actors and who is missing?
IFRC and UNHCR within the area of their mandates. NRC are another key organisation, but they lack coverage but they do have reasonable amount of capacity and they do programme a lot in shelter. We compare ourselves a little to NRC, we've got wider coverage and we don't have the funding constraints.

Oxfam used to be but they have reduced their remit in shelter. The knock on effect of that policy is really interesting, how to programme when you know you are only allowed to go so far.

Terminology is another thing which is evolving. There is better consensus now in the sector about what terminology we should be using but its not terminology that's understood widely enough, it's not really understood at government level, it's not translatable to enough languages. So that's a struggle as well, especially when you're dealing with, for example, permanent reconstruction is really controversial in some situations when it starts to involve land rights and relocating refugees.

What in your view is the single biggest obstacle to post emergency shelter?
Institutional capacity, what I mean by that is permanent positions within organisations with the authority to be informed about what country offices are working on and to be able to influence programme quality as well. It doesn't have to be huge number more, even for an organisation of our organisation's size, you could actually do so much more if you had three people rather than one person. The way that we are funded makes it difficult for us to fund permanent positions.

A broader understanding in the wider humanitarian community of what is involved in shelter. Partly it is a lack of linking up with the private sector.

In general do you think NGOs do shelter projects well?
No. If you compare the sector, its resources, the development of the sector institutionally, it is really quite behind the WASH sector, for a technical sector. I don't know a huge number of examples of really good shelter projects, because I think the way that we measure what is good about a shelter project needs to really be revised. One thing that I think will really help that is the revision of Sphere, because Sphere only goes so far and it's still based on quite an old fashioned model of life saving rather than incorporating too much of the relief development continuum. A lot of it is being applied to recovery and permanent reconstruction when it's actually originally minimum standards for life saving, so it's just not appropriate.

What, in your view, are the ingredients for a successful shelter programme?
The right number of the right skilled people involved. I don't just mean a load of architects and engineers, I mean senior managers who have experience of running a shelter project before. One thing I hear a lot is, well if they are a good manager I'm sure they can cope with it, I'm afraid I don't agree. Unless they are a good manager to the point where they realise they have to delegate a huge amount of the programming to somebody who actually knows what the construction process is, especially in construction because it is so specific with all the legal aspects involved and the importance that one
thing can't happen before another, and you can't have a consultative exercise to decide yes or no are you going to, for example, get a structural engineer to sign off on your drawings, actually you must it's a legal requirement. It's that understanding, you have to at least understand what the process is. The number of people overseeing the project equivalent to a WASH programme. I've come across shelter programmes that are equal value in terms of the contract value in terms of the cost where you have three people running the shelter programme and you've nine on the WASH team. Maybe that is because there isn't the same level of understanding out there about the sector so it isn't being given the same level of resources.

Anything that is built or anything that is being pushed for in terms of changing legislations has to come from the local, traditional culture and especially in construction projects it has to be able to be maintained and replicated in that culture, which is one of the reasons we have quite a lot at the life saving end of thing sometimes.

Making sure the environmental impact is at least neutral. It takes different guises in temporary displacement or permanent reconstruction. For example when they were building houses after the tsunami there was a lot of advocacy for not using timber, using bricks because there was a feeling that it was more sustainable also because of illegal logging. But actually you use so much more wood to fire bricks that the quantity of wood used was more. At the other end of the scale in a refugee crisis, for example, in Africa you get big swathes of vegetation being completely decimated very, very quickly.

**What formal training have you had?**
I'm a qualified architect. I've also had Redr training.

**What skills and competencies have you used from that training?**
To a certain extent, the design side and on the technical end, site planning, site assessment, materials and resources. The thing I use the most which is directly linked with my training is contract administration, dealing with contractual issues. That has been really key in what I've used again and again.

I think one thing that was really good that was probably specific to the school where I trained was the methodology of going in to a new environment and new site, culture or whatever and being able to say I am the facilitator of designing this building or this project or choosing this team and making the cue that environment or that site or that culture rather than bringing in your own ideas. That was the methodology that was used at the Cambridge school where I trained.

There is a certain amount of respect for the site they promote and you can translate that very easily in to respect for the situation and the culture and the people.

**In what ways did your training help or hinder your work?**
Although my research work, my dissertation at each level and to a certain degree some of my studio work on this kind of area I hadn't had formal disaster management training. So things like how to use a logframe and some of the real basics of administering humanitarian projects and you have to learn that en route. But if you have followed the architecture course all the way through you have similar knowledge that you use, your brain is used to thinking in that way. It is slightly frustrating that there are things that are very easily taught that we probably could do a short course in, there are courses out there but they are not things that you might necessarily know about if you're a qualified architect looking to get in to the field. One way that it helps is that you do get a lot of gaps in your architectural training where a student where you're not concerned about houses and jobs, if you get the opportunity to go overseas you can take them. I was incredibly lucky the last firm I worked at were incredibly good to me, in that it allowed me to be seconded to OXFAM.

It hindered me I suppose because as an architect you are trained to be an architect and you've got all these different skills as an architect but they are all pointing towards a very narrow profession and you have to completely rethink your range of skills and try and apply those to all situations. You have to think about yourself as a person with a range of skills rather than an architect and ask what skills does the humanitarian sector need? What can I actually give rather than, where do I as an architect fit in to this world? Because you don't fit, or you do not use all of your skills, or you don't necessarily use them in the same way. You might use some a lot more than others, you have to accept at a certain point that as a practitioner you are actually changing the kind of practitioner that you are.

**What are the most important skills and competencies have you learnt through your own experience?**
One of the most important things is understanding how the system works, architecture is pretty straight
forward in that respect, there are very hierarchical structures, there are different types of contracts and the industry is fairly straight forward. Whereas, in the humanitarian sector there is a lot more flexibility about how you get things done. In terms of working within an organisation, knowing how that organisation is structured and why the shelter specialist sits here rather than somewhere else.

What do you wish that someone had told you, as a piece of advice?
The most useful thing that somebody did tell me was; be flexible. That was one of the fort things someone told and the most useful. I'm lucky because I quite like it when you find there is a reason why you can't implement Plan A so you've got to find a Plan B and then something messes that up so you've got a find a Plan C, you've got to keep re-planning on the hop, you have to be flexible to make that work. That is one of the key differences between the private sector and the humanitarian sector, but not completely.

I guess, understanding a little bit more about coordinating with other organisations and government. More advice about how decisions that you make within your organisation then have a knock on effect and set precedents for other organisations. So for example if our organisation has a lot of money to spend on transitional shelters, not designing something that is completely out of reach of other organisations. So everybody wants a CARE transitional shelter and nobody wants one of the other organisation's. It's the importance of acting as a sector rather than an organisation.

Also you get organisations that are not necessarily big on the international scene but have good experience in country and maybe in that particular country they have resources and networks and if you can identify where the strengths are.

Would you describe yourself as a shelter practitioner? If not what title would you use?
Yes I think it's a straight forward title. When I joined this organisation I was interested to see that I had 'Emergency Shelter and Reconstruction Specialist' specifically in the title it's really good because they were being very clear and covered the whole lot. I think there is till a bit of work to be done on the title of some positions and at the moment I'm trying to figure out what's the best to use in our Spanish speaking countries because obviously sometime it doesn't translate all that well.

What role do architects currently have in post emergency shelter practice?
We would probably employ local architects to draught drawings and make sure that any local legal requirements would be fulfilled.
What we've found in architects is that they are trained differently in different countries. In the Asian countries they have a lot more structural training whereas in northern countries, the UK, Canada, America, they tend to be more in to the design side of things and much less in the construction based side. International architects, you bring them in because of their construction knowledge.

In Bangladesh you have quite a god pool there of guys in the private sector who also have experience of disaster management and working in post disaster settings. Whereas internationally there's not really much point in sending somebody from a country where they don't have disasters and they don't have experience being involved in one. The pace of the work is different, the way that the projects are funded is different and that career is different. People can get incredibly frustrated if they have come straight in from the private sector.

The other thing that architects can offer but it really depends on the architect, is this ability to understand processes and understanding how long things take. I'm just trying to think about when you might bring them in earlier on in the project maybe the emergency end of things, very good at usually understanding that you have to collaborate with people on the assessments and things.

What experience do you have working with architects?
We recently employed a team of a building services engineer, a structural engineer and an architect because there wasn't enough local capacity in the country. They had a local engineer, but really he was only junior level and didn't really have enough experience in strategic thinking and being able to understand the implications of the more detailed end of what we do. So it was mainly because of the way that construction worked in that country, this was building 100 schools, it was very difficult to find any one national who had been involved at that level. This wasn't post disaster but it's a useful comparison because we are going to use the same team again after disaster. The building services engineer was the member of the team who fly to the country and the architect and the engineer backed her up with some of the technical side of things. They were able to have this on going communication by email, so that they got every member of the team and their skills to hand. That's' the other thing about having all the right
things in place, you get a shelter specialist, but shelter specialists range from architects, to logisticians who at some point have distributed a bit a plastic sheet and say they have done shelter. So you've got to be really careful.

**How do you think an architect's training might prepare them for work in the shelter sector?**

Being able to analyse and assess at scale, quickly. I think one of the real things...that very few practitioners have do have is an ability to have an overview of a range of different aspects of the programme and understand the impact of each of those different aspects on the programme, so the social side, the technical side, the financial side, that's been something quite key. Some engineers have it, some don't, it really depends what type of engineer they are. Also an understanding of technical processes. I mean how you actually roll out a technical programme, an advocacy programme or a hygiene information programme, so take construction because it's an extreme version of that there are certain things you can negotiate on and certain things you can't because they are legal.

**In the future what role do you think architects could have in the sector?**

The gap at the moment is architects that have got enough experience that they can think on a strategic level to be useful in broader sense. Useful at the beginning of a project just after a disaster, useful in assessment, useful in identifying what kind of programme is actually needed. Do we just need to work on advocacy, in order to provide shelter or do we need to role out a construction project? That kind of ability to assess. The trouble is at the moment the only way you can gain the ability to make those kind of judgements is through field experience because there aren't any courses that really give you that. There is CENDEP which is brilliant example, but specifically for emergencies there are things you can actually teach people from a desk and there is specific experience that you can give people that allows them to make those judgements. What I've got at the moment is a pool of architects at graduate level or post-graduate level, who have little or no field experience but the right attitude which is also really, really important and the right approach but before I could actually send them anywhere they would need to be sent somewhere. It's a total catch 22 and there is the other end of the scale where you get architects who have totally broken away from the office and gone to practice on different sectors. They have focused on the softer side of things done a bit of more general programme management and then have come back and because they've then got the experience that they need they are then at the level where they can be a strategic thinker with all the right knowledge. It is mainly knowledge that is lacking really. But a lot of it can only be gained through practical experience unfortunately.

**What could make architects more relevant to shelter practice?**

The key bit of knowledge that is required is what does architecture look like in a humanitarian setting? I suppose there are two questions actually, what does architecture look like? But then there is what is the use of architectural skills look like? Because that is actually providing you with a different answer. Architecture in the traditional sense of the word, there isn't actually much of it in this sector, a lot of it is building. And actually building can be exciting and it can be incredibly creative but the actual end product is not that exciting. You are building big sheds and little shacks

I thought that I would find that the creative side of me would feel not fed but actually putting teams together, doing the HR side of things, thinking strategically about where the organisation is going, putting a programme together and all of that is feeds that side of your brain which you have as an architect, that looking at things at scale and having to take in to account lots of different things in order to make a decision, it is there. You have to be the kind of person who likes that side of architecture rather than the design side necessarily. There is design, there is a tiny bit of design. You have to enjoy designing teams or designing programmes or designing budgets and actually that can be really exciting as well but you have to be the kind of person who gets a kick out of it.

But now looking at it from inside of an organisation who actually does shelter, there is a shortage of shelter practitioners but there's not a huge shortage so I guess where I sit now, I don't think every diploma course should offer a module on the humanitarian sector. I think you probably need one or two courses that do it well, and people who go in to it need to be committed and it needs to get the numbers that you can actually sustain in the practice side of it. Because there aren't that many jobs and there won't be for quite a while and it is a very particular type of job that architects that are interested in putting their skills towards something that benefits the poor this isn't the only way of doing it. I don't think demand for courses is that high.

You can have a course which is quite broad that looks at sustainability and being an architect in a social sense but you still won't get the specialist knowledge and skills where you can be employed in the humanitarian sector. I think it's actually quite ok that the RIBA struggle with it because say that there
was a qualification in being a humanitarian architect at the same level as the qualification of being ‘an architect’ that is a different course. It would be good if it did exist but I think it is quite fair enough that the RIBA don’t find it easy except that part of the current definition of architecture in the UK is about practicing in a responsible fashion.

I think the main question that I’ve found, that I’ve asked for a long time looking at what type of career I could actually make, what could I give as an architect? But if you turn it round and say what architectural skills does the humanitarian sector actually need? Rather than what skills can the architect give the humanitarian sector? It makes it a bit more relevant.

I had a key moment where I came back from Sri Lanka after the tsunami and I had been seconded so I walked straight back in to practice. One day I was trying to figure out how many transitional shelters we could build for a certain unit cost and then I came back and I was trying to figure out how many student bedrooms I could fit in to a tower block for the least amount of money. The skills involved to do both those calculation were exactly the same, the ethics behind them was completely different. One was for an NGO and the other was for a developer and that was the moment when I thought this was not for me anymore. I think the same day I was designing the fit out for a kitchen for a couple that were retired in Cambridge and it was costing 30,000 just for the kitchen fit-out and I’d just come from trying to see if we could build transitional shelters for $500 If you struggle with those kind of concerns then this is the field for you.
Interviewee: Architect and Independent Shelter Specialist

Please introduce yourself:

I have experience in three different responses, one was post tsunami in Aceh, where I was the Shelter coordinator for Oxfam GB. The next one was the shelter cluster, emergency cluster coordination role after Burma’s cyclone Nargis and the one I have just returned from is the infrastructure consultancy for schools in Rawanda.

Has the work been successful in any way?
I can’t really sum it up, as yes or no, in any of them. Certainly each one has got their own challenges, so different. Is it successful? I really don’t know, you’ll have to ask me a bit more of a specific question. Basically in Aceh, yes, the international community had built what they had signed up to doing. It’s been a long road to that, four years since the tsunami and a lot of issues throughout the whole process which needed to be kind of worked on in a way.

Would you describe those as challenges and could you describe what kind of challenges those were?
Many, many different types of challenges. Maybe I’ll just talk about Aceh. There was a huge response from the international community, a large amount of resources and funds were committed to there and a large amount of aid was needed. However there was quite limited capacity by these organisations, by any organisations even the government to undertake such a large scale housing project which turned out to be a housing project in the end. It started off as emergency response. The area opened up towards international aid and then it started to role, money started to come in, people started to flow in and it kept on rolling really until the acceptable/acceptability was a permanent house. And a long process towards that. It has cost, maybe, 10,000 dollars for a house, a permanent house. Whereas other responses you get below 100 dollars for a house, for a shelter response.

What kind of approach were they using? Were there lots of different ones for each area or town?
Yeah, it progressed. Certain NGO’s stopped at emergency shelters and some continued. The community who only got the emergency shelters had to source other agencies to give them a permanent or the government to give them a permanent house. The other very, very particular issue that came up was to do with the beneficiaries being able to select their donors or their partners. It’s never really happened anywhere. They were able to say, ok OXFAM is offering this, Save the Children is offering this, and the other one is giving us a kitchen on top of the house, so ok we’re going to go to them.

How did that happen?
I think there was a lack of coordination between the agencies. There was a particular standard, 36 square metres is a standard house. Lack of coordination between the agencies created that and all the agencies had to use their funds. So that was the reverse side.

Do you think that the beneficiaries being able to select the donors ended up with better results?
No, I think it’s just human nature that we go shopping if it’s available and the communities started to know that the funds were available so they knew that the agencies had to spend the money and it was their right to have in a way because the money was given to them..

As an OXFAM employee did you feel under pressure, did you feel that you had to do something?
I know that in one office, one branch in OXFAM, they did have high tensions between the to NGO’s, fighting for the village in a way. Saying that ‘this is our village’. So that is interesting, in a way, that from that we all agreed, internationally, that coordination is essential not give a chance to creating these in equalities. So I think that’s what we learnt from that experience and in Myanmar we took that on and a lot of people from Aceh came to Myanmar for that response and we all agreed that, yes, let’s not try to let that happen again. We tried to set standards right from the start.

So your role in Myanmar was the same?
No, I was coordinating the cluster. The cluster is quite a new concept and I was the technical coordinator for the emergency shelter cluster. Basically we had about 60 NGO’s, local NGO’s, UN bodies who were involved in shelter around the table twice a week coordinating the response. Whose doing what, where, how and what quality of response are we giving them. So we all agree to a standard, so you try to avoid these inequalities.

And you mention quality of response is that based on some kind of participatory research about
aspirations and whether or not they've been filled?
That was in emergency phase so quality of response in that sense would be are we getting the
distribution to the right places, to where it's needed the most and are we duplicating? CARE would
go somewhere, Save the Children would go somewhere and are there duplications? Is there a gap in
distribution? And if there is let's try to sort it out, procure more materials etc.

So in terms of coordination do you think that response was more successful?
I think it is a different system because it was under the cluster system and in Aceh in 2004 there wasn't
one. So, yeah, for sure the coordination was much better and everybody had to work together because
there was limited funds as well as limited access to the affected area, due to politics. So we had to
share information and use information from everybody who's been out and come back. In Myanmar the
emergency shelter response was really successful in that sense.

Are there any lessons that you have learnt from that?
The two main points was that it was very hard to gain access to the areas, politically. We were not
allowed access and I was only allowed access to the affected areas six weeks after I arrived. The
government wouldn't allow that. So lessons from that is that to recognise that really early on and to see
what information you need and gain it in any way. I'm saying that locals were allowed to gain access,
some anyway, only form the capital. However, maybe they don't have the same background from other
emergencies but they had access. Probably like to train them or to use their capacity more to inform your
decision making. The other one, it is continually being debated, is the coordination between the World
Bank and the UN system. In Myanmar it was the first time that the UN cluster had to produce the same
report as the Word Bank. Both bodies have quite a different take on things and it's quite a challenge to
even agree on assessment. The World Bank and the UN are under the same umbrella but their objects
are quite different, so it was quite hard to coordinate with them.

How do you see the future of post-emergency shelter practice? Do you see this coordination
taking off, this cluster system really working?
It really depends I think, in Myanmar it worked really well. The cluster worked really well because we had
to work together, we were forced to, we had no choice, nobody had any information. So that was a good
thing, the bad thing was that because of all the politics we got limited funds allocated to that emergency.

I guess it's hard to tell when you don't know what disasters or emergencies might happen.
Yeah, but I guess you can predict what type of things will happen and each one is so different and the
whole politics around it is so different, that I mean that I don't think there will be another post-tsunami
type of response, in terms of shelter anyway. [Because there will be more coordination?..] It's quite hard
to say but I would hope that the coordination will keep on improving (and as humanitarian cluster will act,)
It's quite hard to say what the future..

What formal training would you say you've had?
Architecture, I'm a qualified architect.

And in terms of humanitarian work it has been experienced based?
Yeah and REDr training and Shelterproject.

How often do you do those kinds of things?
In terms of humanitarian training, I was volunteering for Shelter Centre for a while, that was how it
started. And then I volunteered for Article 25 and went on Redr courses now and again and then started
contributing to the training.

What kind of skills and competencies have you used from the training? Architecture and
humanitarian?
Core skills I think, I always start the core skills that I'm an Architect. I know how to build things, manage
building projects and start from that core competency and through different experiences all the positions
I've had are quite different. So trying to just open up my skills towards community engagement, gender
livelihoods and standards writing.

So which are the most important skills and competencies that you've learnt from your actual
experience?
To be able to soak up knowledge, soak up other people's expertise, I respect all the other branches
or sector's ideas and try to accommodate that within your programme. If it's construction, how can
construction contribute towards gender?, how can a construction programme contribute towards
livelihoods? How does that effect national strategy for economic development? For example. [So you're not just seeing it as your bit, that actually it's linked] I've kind of quite enjoyed growing in capacity to go beyond designing and constructing but to link it in. Because in an emergency you need that more because you are working in a vacuum and you quite often have to set up your systems. Things are completely wiped out, systems, government, things are quite scarce so then it's up to you to say 'this is important, that is important' and connect those things together and try to deliver.

When you first started working, in the field and in humanitarian work, what o you wish that someone had told you as a piece of advice?
I think the work and private life balance is quite hard thing to organise. I think it's more the human side of things like that, you meet people very intensely and then you go away from them

Would you actually describe yourself as a shelter practitioner?
Yeah, a shelter practitioner, yeah.

If not, you can say what you would rather,. Would you say architect, development practitioner?
I am an architect. What does my card say? Architect, and Independent Shelter and Schools Infrastructure Specialist.

What skills and competencies do you think are lacking in the sector? In your experience..
I think that the architects or shelter specialists are very much required or very much in need. There is a big gap there from the agencies or NGO's side of it. I think there is still a tendency not to recognise that need. For example, just in UNICEF, they are constructing so many schools a year around the globe, they are spending a huge amount of funds on it, but it just now that they are recognising that they need an architect. And they're pushing it now, they've got one architect in New York, and one in Copenhagen, and one in Rwanda, I think that's about it. So the recognition has slowly come and also through Shelter Centre and the Shelter Cluster there is a recognition. There is a lot of good people practicing, who has I guess fallen in to the sector.

What roles do architects currently have?
Construction specialist, shelter coordinators, maybe sometimes done by logisticians, by generalists as well, which I think an architect might do better. Its just distribution logisticians do better.

What experience do you have working with other architects in the shelter sector?
There was an architect in Myanmar, he worked for UN Habitat, and very, very competent. An Indonesian architect, he used to work in Aceh, for the government there. He came in and he was very technical, which was great. But probably lacked the ability to consider other aspects such as politics, such as diplomacy, coordination, for example. I think that's what sometimes architects shy away from.. ok that's not my area I'm just going to concentrate on this. Which is great but I would say the technical side of things are maybe half of the job. When you are out there running a programme the other half of it is to advocate it, to make the case for it to happen, to get enough support and agreement by everybody to make that happen. I think that in Myanmar that was really obvious from the very start. We were in a meeting together with the government, with the cluster, to design the standard housing and continually we talked about cross-bracing and better foundations etc. Very simple things that you don't actually need to be an architect to say and you agree that yes, that's a really good thing to do it's not going to cost that much more but it just didn't happen and a year on there are still being rolled out without that extra bit of safety. So if we could have done a bit more diplomacy and advocating and pushing it through I think rather than just leaving it at that. I guess that's a coordination role too.

How do you think an architect's training might prepare them for work in the shelter specifically? If it does?
I think you have to know what you are offering, first, and because it's not so opened up yet I think it's up to that individual to say ok this what I can offer . If there was a clear career path into development then you wouldn't need to do that. The role as an architect to coordinate is something to recognise, you are not just a designer. Even in a traditional sense you are coordinating all the design team to make that happen. I think the architect has that ability to open up and consider all these different issues and pull them together in order to make the programme work.

Is there a way that could be augmented through education?
I don't know if it happens now. Architectural education is a lot about design and your ideas and finding a solution and trying to know the solution. But maybe when you operate in completely different environment which you will definitely always be in as an outsider you cannot know that. I don't think
anybody could know that solution because even if you have been to that country before, the situation has changed because of the disaster. People are gone, the infrastructures are gone. So, the presumption of knowing the solution is something very dangerous. I think that architectural education is the opposite side of it. I think we are trained to minimise risk by knowing all of these things. So the training that the Redr courses do quite well is, ok find out what you need to know and then make a sound decision accordingly. I don't think anybody could tell you how to make a decision.

In the future, what role do you think architects could have?
I think if they could shift from being the designer who has got the solutions towards a person, a profession, who can engage in the problem and collectively solve or facilitate to solve physical, environmental challenge, that would be really, really great and useful. On the technical side, the design side, like Architecture for Humanity does the competitions, a lot of good things can happen from that but the question is how many of those ideas can be implemented. Coming back to half the work being how to implement it and how to advocate it, demonstrate that they are the solutions. It is a process and it's quite hard to say that, you design something and say, ok this is brilliant let's make a hundred thousand. It is important to have that side of it but the decision is how much impact do you want to make?

After you finished your education, did you work as an architect for a few years in a normal architecture practice before being a lot more interested in volunteering with Shelter Centre and Article 25? Did you think that that experience and learning through the profession was very useful for this kind of work? Did it add a lot more than the architectural education?
I think the architectural education really set me up. I did my thesis about Sarajevo at the AA, post-war urban thesis on it. That's where I got really intrigued about post-conflict situations and then went in to practice to gain competency and know my profession and get qualified. For me, that was really important because maybe I can say that I've got a core competency to run a building project and design something which is realistic and then I came back to something which really intrigued me at college.

So those years of working in the professional environment were really important to now work in this area?
For me it's really important because it grounded me. It grounds you in saying that I know about contract management, I know about detailing, I know about contractors etc. I think that's really important because the responsibility just gets amplified when you're in field, you are in charge of whole villages to construct.
What projects have you worked on that were the most successful and why?

It's those where there was the opportunity for continuity from the initial response, in the first two or three days after a disaster, right the way through the whole process, taking three to four years. So there was consistency in terms of it was part of a longer term strategy, it wasn't ad hoc where different people came at different times and started and stopped. There was a possibility of working with key stakeholders, who obviously evolved and changed over time, but part of longer term coherent approach to actually ensuring an appropriate response. In the early days, it's very much about understanding emergencies and complex needs and the fact that shelter and housing, though important, are not the only thing going on. There are resource issues and structures with government, depending on how much of a government still exists. And obviously that changes over time, the context shifts, so again maintaining that continuity. I would say those are projects, those are the interventions that seem the most successful.

The right resources have been there at the right time and that changes, you don't need urban planners on day one, you need people who get planning issues so mistakes aren't made on day one but after six months, twelve months planning issues become significant so then you do need to involve planners, for example.

The other scenario I would say is where the process has been successful is when a clear understanding from the get go amongst the main stakeholders about what has to be done, who is going to be doing it, what are the roles and responsibilities are. Some of them have not been long term projects but there has been a very clear understanding of what is needed and who is best placed to provide it. The short hand for that is you get the right technical people to make technical decisions, rather than generalists who have to guess what they think is the right thing because they read a book once. They are not necessarily big projects, some are, some are small, they are not necessarily expensive some have been more expensive, some have been fairly cheap.

The third category of interventions where I would say where constructions issues, the construction process has not been the most important output. Where the output has been a change in an understanding the whole approach to safe and adequate housing and who does it. So one starts to affect a modest systemic change in understanding which means that others have the know-how and understanding to affect the change themselves the next time round. In other words we don't have to be there So the issue actually was those stakeholders, the government officials or local community leaders or local carpenters now get the ways that they know can make the houses safer or better or more disaster resistant. So next time round there is no need for others to step in. There is one very particular example from two or three years ago we undertook in the Philippines. The Philippines is hit by 20 typhoons a year, typically, some are big some are small. In late 2006 there were four typhoons that hit one after another, and it did require a response to actually try and talk about approaches to safe housing etc. That programme worked quite well, and the following year there was another typhoon and our national society, whom we had worked with who were from the area that was affected the first time round and our national society, the Philippines Red Cross, took the people we had trained including the community leaders to the new affected area and used those people to explain to the new affected population how to go about things. So basically, we were no longer needed. We repaired 5,000 houses the first time round, but for me the impact was that local people now get it and they are now a resource internally within their own country. Ok it means there is no job for us, but it is a positive.

So broadly there are those three categories. One, the programmes where there has been continuity, there has been a strategic clarity from the very beginning all the way through over a period of several years with all the right stakeholders there. Secondly, activities which don't have to be big, some of them are small but where there is a clear approach from the get go, a clear allocation of responsibilities and lastly, those where there has been an element of the actual physical building process but that hasn't been the most significant part of the output, there has been some systemic change and awareness raising that has been key.

What experiences have you had that have been the most challenging and why?

I would split them in to two categories. One, where it has been personally very challenging because of the particular role and the context and the support or otherwise, and then secondly I would say in terms of the context where things could have been done differently.

Professionally I would say that where, there have been a number of examples, there has not been enough cohesion within the sector. So different agencies and different technical people are working
There is a real skill and a challenge in how do you deal with that conundrum? And the best people that has to be the solution, even though that is not acceptable for a whole variety of reasons.

Manager who says it has got to be like this regardless because from his or her technical point of view. I've been in situations where there has been architects or an engineer or a project which is understanding the context and doing the best you can. I think often that is neglected. The assumption that the whole technical part can be got right then there is this other whole piece of work stuff. If we are not good architects or engineers or planners, we should keep well away anyway. With work is almost as important as the technical aspect. From a technical point of view, we should know our stuff. I say this quite advisedly as a UK national and an architect who has worked overseas.

Albania, that this is something in humanitarian shelter and housing development, that other piece of the situations like the occupied Palestinian territories. And that's a dilemma, in terms of my experience from strong autocratic governments or, in fact, the absence of a government, Somalia is a case in point or changed a bit but still quite an issue and, obviously, there are quite a number of cases where you have in some of those states. Iran, was a case after the Bam earthquake, Pakistan remains a case now, it's unfortunately, there is still not enough consistent buy in particularly from the donor community, the major agencies are trying to do something about it but the donors in my opinion are not doing enough. The donors still say we are sovereign we report back to our parliaments and so we are not going spend enough time sitting down with you all. Things have moved but I would say they have not made as much progress as, say, the humanitarian agencies have. Although the humanitarian agencies have got a long, long way to go.

What would you do differently in the future?

One of them is happening now, better coordination from the outset of an emergency. It doesn't solve everything by any means but the previous lack of coordination clearly was not helping. So certainly improved coordination, and we are now seeing that, I'm not saying this just because the federation is the shelter cluster lead, although give us a very close insight in to what some of the issues are because we are tasked with trying to do something about it. But just from personal experience and having seen the problems, the difficulty of finding out what's going and who is doing what and who to talk and when meetings are happening and the fact that some of that is has been overcome is fantastic. We, unfortunately, there is still not enough consistent buy in particularly from the donor community, the major agencies are trying to do something about it but the donors in my opinion are not doing enough. The donors still say we are sovereign we report back to our parliaments and so we are not going spend enough time sitting down with you all. Things have moved but I would say they have not made as much progress as, say, the humanitarian agencies have. Although the humanitarian agencies have got a long, long way to go.

The second problem is the fact that International humanitarians do think themselves as a law unto themselves. I say this quite advisedly as a UK national and an architect who has worked overseas and I'm very conscious of some of the blinkeredness with which we go about our business. Going back to what I had mentioned about the notion of a Bangladeshi NGO turning up in Tewksbury telling people what to do, the same thing works in reverse and I think we have got to get an awful lot better at recognising that we are there in a supporting role, the government is sovereign, they may not be great, they may not be as liberal or democratic as we would like in our western opinion but they are sovereign. Recognising that we are there in a supporting role, the government is sovereign, they may not be great, they may not be as liberal or democratic as we would like in our western opinion but they are sovereign. That is our challenge, how do we operate in the face of those difficulties? Best ensure the right kind of result at the end of it? It's never going to be perfect but we are not the authority we don't have a mandate to ride roughshod all over government policies or a government minister or a local authority. It is difficult in some of those states. Iran, was a case after the Bam earthquake, Pakistan remains a case now, it's changed a bit but still quite an issue and, obviously, there are quite a number of cases where you have strong autocratic governments or, in fact, the absence of a government, Somalia is a case in point or situations like the occupied Palestinian territories. And that's a dilemma, in terms of my experience from Albania, that this is something in humanitarian shelter and housing development, that other piece of the work is almost as important as the technical aspect. From a technical point of view, we should know our stuff. If we are not good architects or engineers or planners, we should keep well away anyway. With the assumption that the whole technical part can be got right then there is this other whole piece of work which is understanding the context and doing the best you can and I think often that is neglected. The number of times I've been in a situation where there has been architects or an engineer or a project manager who says it has got to be like this regardless because from his or her technical point of view that has to be the solution, even though that is not acceptable for a whole variety of reasons.

There is a real skill and a challenge in how do you deal with that conundrum? And the best people
actually find ways round that. I don't mean they give and I don't mean they talk louder, but they find creative ways around dealing with that, which may mean compromising on some of the technical aspects, but that is what we should be able to do. In my opinion work in humanitarian shelter and housing development is a lot more challenging than working in the straightforward commercial architecture and construction. You don't have to make those really tough innovative judgement calls... There are elements within good design, of course, it's always about finding creative, interesting solutions but there is another whole dimension which is typically not there.

How do you see the future of post emergency shelter?

There are three areas. One is how do we ensure that there is greater connectedness in the learning process, in academic learning, between the more mainstream architecture, construction, project management etc and humanitarian shelter? I think it is seen as being a minor niche area in western Europe/north America, however in many countries, Bangladesh it's the living reality. If we were having this conversation in Dhaka or sitting in Phnom Penh or somewhere it would be very, very different because the housing needs and the needs of the technical role of architects and planners is very different, the context is changing all the time because of the frequency of disasters, the type of disasters and the context they are living in is not that stable and so it's a far more real part of the world. India, is a case in point, Indian architects and engineers are very different people to those who have been schooled in western Europe. So how do we recognise it's a core part of our business, it's not for everybody, but as the people of Tewksbury know these things do happen in the UK. Rather than a little topic a few people study out of interest alongside everything else, how do we bring it mainstream a bit more. As an architect, your year out, it's difficult to justify why you would go and do it somewhere else. You end up slipping backwards it's not acknowledged as well as it could be. So that's more structured learning in humanitarian shelter.

Professionalizing the humanitarian shelter sector, it's an issue for the humanitarian systems anyway. There's no real requirement for accreditation across the board and that really impacts on the technical sectors. It's not a requirement, for example, for Oxfam or Save the Children to have a professionally qualified architect or engineer overseeing a housing programme. The donors don't ask for it, the governments don't ask for it, no one asks for it. It's more just peer pressure and a bit of embarrassment.

How do we professionalize humanitarian shelter and make it more of a viable career option?

Most of the responses should be undertaken by nationals, at best or regional people. What right do I have as a UK architect to turn up in Bangladesh or Guatemala and say I know, local government, architect, engineer move out the way I know what to do. We know there are gaps, it comes back to the theme of the workshop, how do we ensure we are relevant? Or more importantly perhaps, what is the relevance? That is the thing we have to better understand.

I represent 186 national red cross and red crescent societies around the world and they are the ones who typically respond to the emergencies. Most emergencies are not CNN type emergencies, the CNN ones are what people tend to talk about, but they are minor. Typically in a year for us we respond to 450-550 emergencies most of those responses are undertaken by nationals in their own country. If we're going to be relevant it, how do we ensure the appropriate technical expertise sit at that level? And of course that is not going to come from UK architects, it's going to come from Guatemalan architects, it's going to come from architects in Papua New Guinea. The challenge is we know that in many of those places they don't have necessarily have all those expertise. So how do we provide that support? How do we ensure the exchange of information? How do we learn from them?

We sit in meetings in Geneva and London and think we know it all and of course we don't. Many people who have been in this business for a while, we know we do not know. Although when you are sat in a room it's not that apparent.

How do we ensure relevance to that Guatemalan architect? So that in the next landslide in the highlands of Guatemala that the local authorities can turn to their own requisite expertise and that expertise is informed by what happened in the region or maybe somewhere else? It's relevance to national level responses.

What in your view is the single biggest obstacle to successful post emergency shelter practice?

There are many but one that probably stands out most it's the lack of accreditation. Most other disciplines, architecture, construction, law, those where you have accreditation the practice tends to be better, it tends to be consistent. If I pick an extreme example of somebody that lacks accreditation and
highlights some of the dilemma, is the financial services industry. They have no formal accreditation, it's completely self-regulating. You can set yourself up as the person who knows everything and potentially bring down half of the planet.

I don't expect this to change over night, it's not something we do something about ourselves it does require a shift. However, we can take steps. Like with anything else there is no point sitting around waiting for someone else to come up with all the solutions. We have mandates and opportunities so let's us them.

**Do you think NGOs do shelter projects well?**

Some NGOs do fantastic programmes because of their status [as NGOs] they can just get on and do it. On the other hand some do an absolutely terrible job because of the lack of accreditation and the fact that they are no accountable to anybody, they may just be in it for the money, they may be in it because they have been given money, or they dong it because it's a way of getting money that means they can fund some head office positions.

We have to recognise we always have a national society in country so we have to make sure we don't jeopardise their position. They are going to be there after the emergency, they are always there. On the other hand they do have this excepted status so we can push for things more than the UN can do. But on the other hand we suffer from some of the same problems as some of the NGOs do, in as much as we don't necessarily always have the right expertise, we may have been given money so we can go and spend it anyway and we may overreach ourselves, we may not necessarily have all the right technical competencies there.

**What in your view are the ingredients for a successful shelter programme?**

I would say firstly that it is part of a commonly understood overall strategic plan, it doesn't have to be grandiose, in other words it's some thought beyond the end of the week. That it has been developed and agreed by all key stakeholders, in particular the authorities I would put them top of the list of course, where there is a functioning government. If there is not a functioning government it's whoever are the appropriate authorities it may be a UN administration, but it's whoever is the authority.

So strategic vision, involvement of all the key stakeholders in particular the government, any appropriate resources, again this doesn't have to be huge it's not a question of size. By resources that includes financial resources, where that is important and human and technical resources and lastly and not insignificantly it does reflect best or better or agreed practices rather than someone just thought it was a good idea.

**What formal training have you had?**

I qualified as an architect, I did my BA, I did my AA Diploma, I did my professional practice in architecture, so I did my RIBA exams to qualify as an architect. I've been on a whole number of different training courses in the humanitarian sector, which of course had varying degrees of status. Obviously none of them are accredited to anything. Let me give you an example, Sphere. So there's a whole range of those which are generic humanitarianism and some around shelter and some around a variety things, for example adult learning. A lot of what we do is training so we need to understand that And training in the use of a number of tools, by that I mean different approaches to going about work. So an example is do no harm.

**What skills and competencies have you learnt through you experiences?**

I've learnt far, far more by experience and the doing and that very much reflects most of the guidance I give to others about how to get in to this business. In fact even when I recruit, unless someone can demonstrate experience I'm not interested, I'm not running an academic institute. Having said that it is exactly the same in commercial architecture, when I think back to what I knew when I started that first day on my year out. I would say the same goes for humanitarianism and humanitarian shelter, you cannot substitute experience. That experience doesn't mean we've got to do five years continuous in some hell hole and loosing all your family and friends and going down with horrendous diseases, clearly not. It can come about through a number of short term exposure trips, it can come about through volunteering, it can come about through participating in workshops and conferences to hear what the issues are. Also one of the big gap areas in my experience is that I see an awful lot of people who have a year or two years running or being part of a construction project, in other words a very narrow activity, that gives them experience of running a construction project that is it, it doesn't make them an expert in emergency shelter at all.
Humanitarianism is incredibly broad, it's not just about doing your job as the technician, you've got to understand you're dealing with politics, the social issues. I'm going back to the experience I went through in Albania, probably the most stressful time I've had in my entire life, that was nothing to do with the professional work that bit was the easy stuff, running the project on site was a joy. Just knowing what you do with a government lawyer who says we've passed this law and it comes in to force in ten days time and you've got to hand over 2 million euros worth of housing to the government, not training course prepares you for that. So my other recommendation that I personally found quite useful was getting experience of general humanitarian programming. Those people who train as an architect and then jump straight in to shelter, unless that programme gives them exposure to programming, income generation programming, I feel they become incredibly narrow. Shelter is an important topic but as opposed to the commercial world where you are employed to do a building and that's what you do, you don't have to worry about what are the issues around the curriculum in the local school, as an architect in the UK it's not an issue for you. However, in a development context what is going on in that local school can have profound impacts on you because for example if there are issues around the curriculum well maybe families are not going move back because they won't be able to send their children to school. In which case you won't have anyone to live in your housing, your case load may no longer be there because they are not going to come back until the problem with the school is solved. I'm not saying you need to go and do education programming and health programming but certainly to have been exposed to it, to be part of a team involved in that grounds one, make one a more rounded individual. Then it means you have a better understanding of where a shelter settlement programme fits.

One of our big problems in the sector is that people outside the sector don't get it to start with, they think it's just about construction and even people inside the sector unfortunately have a very narrow view. We do ourselves the biggest disservice and one way round that is by making sure people are aware of where it sits particularly in the humanitarian context. I had a person here who I'm employing this year as a short term consultant who then go support from their national society to stay on...But after a couple of years I had to say to that person I'm going to effectively make you redundant because I think they need to go out to the field and get experience because they just didn't have the background to talk comfortably and fluently, they were very aware of what they didn't know. So I almost had to force them to go out to the field, get a project management job for two or three years find out how finance systems work, find out about how to deal with HR, find out how you hire and fire people, find out how you deal with logistics issues, when vehicles are broken down, how do you deal with that? Go through all that then you out of that a much stronger person and be able to make really informed decisions around shelter.