

TRANSITIONAL SHELTER QUALITY, STANDARDS and UPGRADING GUIDELINES

Introduction

Following the tsunami on 26 December 2004, it is estimated that there are approximately 500,000 displaced people and 100,000 properties destroyed. More than 90 different organisations – UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs, political parties, private donors and government - have provided assistance by constructing transitional shelter in Sri-Lanka. In 6 months since tsunami, some 40,000 shelters have been built, and it is envisaged that 10-15,000 more may be needed.

Whilst the majority of shelters are of suitable quality, there are many which have been assessed by Transitional Accommodation Project (TAP) and others, as being sub-standard. The purpose of this document is to discuss the issues relating to improving the quality of these shelters. Also, to propose a methodology to do so, with the aim of assisting TAP to develop a policy on upgrading and to provide guidance on this topic to the districts, whilst allow sufficient flexibility to ensure that specific situations and structures in each district can be accommodated.

It is noted that the purpose of upgrading is to rectify sub-standard shelters rather than improve shelters. This approach is essential in order not to perpetuate the **dependancy** culture that is beginning to emerge as a result of tsunami relief programmes; neither to create further **inequity** between the assistance provided to conflict IDPs, or the housing standards of the local population, as compared to those who has received tsunami related assistance.

This document is the outcome of discussion and consultation with the Shelter + Settlement Forum , Lead Agencies and TAP Colombo between 13June and 6 July 2005.

Quality

Transitional shelters are required to bridge the gap between emergency shelter and durable housing. Since it is anticipated that repair & re-construction, and re-settlement of those in the buffer zone is likely to take several years, the transitional shelters will serve as basic housing for many for sometime.

1. It is essential that transitional shelters are **fit for purpose**. They must be structurally sound, and provide adequate protection from the environment; monsoon rains, cyclones, high temperatures, floods, etc. Minimum safety and security of the occupants must be ensured and access to adequate water & sanitation is also a necessity.
2. In addition transitional shelters should **comply with government policy** which refers to UN guidelines and international standards. They should provide adequate security and privacy, thermal comfort, and adequate living conditions to carry out normal household duties and re-establish livelihoods. TAP have specifically stated that all shelters should comprise a minimum floor area of 200sq ft, minimum height of 6' to eaves and have a cement floor, and have basic electricity provided (2 bulbs and a power point)

Standards

Standards provide an indication of whether appropriate quality shelter has been provided; assist in accountability of implementing partners to government, donors and beneficiaries; and help to harmonize the contributions of the various actors, in order to maximise the use of the

available resources in the equal support of all those affected by the disaster. A summary of standards applicable to tsunami transitional shelter is given in Appendix A.

Whilst the majority of shelters constructed are of appropriate quality, there are also a significant number of shelters which TAP, and others, have identified as **sub-standard**.

Shelters are sub-standard for a variety of reasons. A significant number of implementing partners, especially private donors, political parties, and local NGOs, have not participated fully in the co-ordination process, and were therefore unaware of the standards that had been agreed; this is despite district TAP offices, focal NGOs in each division, RedR Training at district level in local languages, and regular co-ordination meetings. Some NGOs made a decision to provide large numbers quickly to get people out of tents, often with limited beneficiary consultation and reference to standards. Others are simply poorly designed and constructed, due to lack of skills and expertise in this sector, exacerbated by the geographical spread of IDPs. Several organisations' design was driven by the initial budget proposed as \$350, which subsequently proved to be too low due to material and labour shortages, rather than consideration of standards as indicators of appropriate quality. The average cost is estimated as being about \$500.

A number of the shelters classified as sub-standard are in fact **emergency structures**, and these beneficiaries still require transitional shelter. The rest will require upgrading over the next few months, prior to the monsoon rains in October. It is recognised that in some districts land shortages, mean that upgrading emergency shelters to withstand the monsoon, maybe the only option in the short term, and this should be discussed and agreed with TAP and the DS.

Upgrading

Further works are required to transitional shelters if they are **sub-standard**.

- **Upgrading** works are required for sub-standard shelters that are not **fit-for-purpose**, such as shelters that cannot withstand the monsoon (rain & wind), high winds including cyclones, do not have proper foundations or floor slab, have structural deficiencies (unsafe), are prone to flooding, or do not have access to adequate water and sanitation.
- **Upgrading** works are also required to bring a shelter in line with **government policy** which refers to Sphere standards i.e. increasing of the covered space if this is inadequate, replacement of plastic sheeting with more durable and/or appropriate materials, provision of electricity and enhanced and sustainable water and sanitation eg. replacing bowsers with pipeline connections .

These additional works are intended to provide basic housing and living conditions only, so that there is a degree of uniformity and parity in the assistance provided to tsunami IDPs. It is noted that shelter currently occupied by conflict IDPs, and in some cases the local population, is frequently to a lower standard. It is recommended that upgrading proposals consider this, and that wherever possible on-going shelter and housing assistance is considered holistically, encompassing tsunami, conflict and local community needs.

The purpose of remedial and upgrading works is to get shelters up to standard not to improve. In some cases shelters may need to be dismantled, and re-built (re-using materials), for instance if the foundations are unsatisfactory. In principle, only emergency shelters should be replaced. Families are not entitled to a second transitional shelter just because the first one was initially not up to standard. If a second transitional shelter is provided because it is more cost effective than upgrading the initial shelter, the materials from the first should be re-used.

Responsibility for remedial works and upgrading should rest with the organisation that originally implemented the shelter. However, it is recognised that in some cases the organisation is no longer in Sri-Lanka, or may not have sufficient funding or human resource to carry out such works. In this case donors and implementing partners need to be identified,

with assistance from UNHCR and the Lead Agencies if required. Irrespective of who takes on responsibility for upgrading, the scope and timescale to carry out these works needs to be agreed in advance with the beneficiary family, and the district TAP office in cooperation with the Lead Agency.

Improvements

Some organizations have proposed further assistance in the form of **improvement packages**, to assist beneficiaries to transform a shelter into a home. This includes kitchens, planting, and extensions which require limited resources, and which is generally within the capability of the beneficiary family to provide. For example, kitchens have already been provided by some donors as an integral part of the shelter, but where they have not been provided, beneficiaries have generally constructed shared or individual cooking areas under their own initiative. Community improvements such as recreational facilities and community buildings demand more resources and may require donor assistance.

Transitional shelter should be the catalyst to enable beneficiaries to make the step change from dependency on external assistance, to self management and self help, enabling and empowering displaced communities to understand and meet their own needs. Therefore it is recommended that assistance under the transitional shelter programme should be finite, so as not to create or perpetuate a dependency culture. Consequently, improvements should generally be left to the initiative of the beneficiaries themselves.

If assistance is provided, this should be based on consultation with the beneficiaries, so that it responds directly to needs and targets vulnerable groups. It should be integrated with community mobilisation and livelihoods programmes. The issue of promoting owners to improve their shelters themselves should consider technical advice, examples, samples, and possibly assistance with procurement of materials. Co-ordination locally is essential to prevent inequity and competition between different groups; tsunami IDPs, conflict IDPs and the local population.

In conclusion, improvements are not the immediate priority. It is recommended that donor assistance for improvements (as opposed to upgrading as above) should not be provided until all IDPs in an area – both tsunami and conflict – have obtained basic housing of minimum acceptable international standard, and that this is compatible with the housing standards of the local community.

Strategy for Upgrading

A. Assessment

A rapid assessment needs to be made in the next 2-3 weeks, to identify shelters where remedial works or upgrading are necessary, so that these works can be implemented before the monsoon in October. Although, an assessment of all transitional shelters is desirable, it would take too long both to conduct and process.

It is recommended that the assessment is carried out at divisional level led by TAP. It is essential that at district level the government, local authorities, TAP and lead agencies (both shelter and wat-san) reach agreement on the purpose, scope, timescale, resources, and responsibilities for this assessment. It is recognized that this may vary from district to district, but should be agreed by TAP Colombo. The following are made as suggestions:

It is suggested that the purpose of the assessment is to:

1. identify **sub-standard shelter types** so that bi-lateral meetings to discuss what remedial or upgrading works are required, can be held with the relevant organization, so they can be implemented as soon as possible.
2. identify locations where there is **inadequate access to water & sanitation**, so that the Water Board and PHI with assistance from UNICEF, can identify where further provision is needed.
3. identify locations where **environmental risks** eg. flooding, landmines have not been considered and where mitigation measures are required, or where other **essential infrastructure** such as access roads, electricity need to be provided.

These are immediate priorities to identify short term programme needs prior to the monsoon. Further assessment will be needed in due to course to provide for instance, information on livelihoods, identify a route to durable housing, and to verify the legal basis for a shelter occupying land. These issues relate to the timescale and entitlement for permanent housing, and it is recommended that they are addressed under a combined housing programme, rather than as an extension to TAP's remit.

At district level, the assessment process needs to be agreed; an assessment form needs to be designed and agreed by all parties; appropriate technical expertise and training needs to be identified and provided. Assessment guidelines are contained in Appendix B, and in recent weeks, various assessment forms have been developed and circulated by TAP Colombo and TAP at district level.

B. NGOs, UNHCR and UNICEF

In parallel with the assessment process, UNHCR (with Lead agencies) are encouraging NGOs to be self-critical on completion of their programmes, and satisfy themselves that the shelters provided are fit for purpose and comply with government policy. If not, to propose upgrading works, to be agreed with TAP prior to implementation.

In parallel with this process, UNHCR (assisted by the Lead Agencies), and TAP will continue to hold bi-lateral meetings with organizations who have large shelter programmes, in order to identify where large scale remedial works and upgrading is required, and provide assistance if needed.

UNICEF have carried out a wat-san assessment March-June 2005 and this needs to inform an action plan for improving access to water and sanitation.

A. TAP & Lead Agencies

It is recommended that the facilitation and co-ordination structure, comprising TAP Colombo and TAP officers in each district, assisted by Lead Agencies, continues for the next 3 months in order to enforce standards and ensure that both the remaining construction and the upgrading of transitional shelters is co-ordinated and compliant. This needs to be closely integrated with the water and sanitation sector (UNICEF, Water Board, PHI, Wat-san NGOs). Input from the electricity board and local authorities will be needed with respect to provision of electricity, garbage disposal, road access, land drainage.

Jo da Silva
Senior Shelter Co-ordinator (Consultant)
UNHCR
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APPENDIX A

Standards for Tsunami Transitional Shelter

The TAP circular 8 March 2005 requires that transitional shelters “*provided will meet UN Standards and guidelines*” and should “*conform to the following requirements*”

- i. *Each unit comprises a minimum floor area of 200 sq.ft.*
- ii. *The height of each unit should be 6 to 8 ft.”*

The guidelines Transitional Shelter: Strategy ver6 21-01-05 and Transitional Shelter: Technical Implementation ver6 21-01-05 prepared by UNHCR, were initially endorsed and adopted by Centre for National Operations (CNO) prior to their dissolution, and subsequently by Task Force for Relief (TAFOR), and TAP as above. These presented standards to be applied to transitional shelter construction so as to “*harmonise the activities of government, the United Nations, donors, NGOs and local actors, in order to maximise the use of the available resources in the equal support of all those affected by the disaster.*”

The standards proposed therein “*do not offer a detailed design or specification for a single type of modular shelter, as this would mean all those affected would receive exactly the same shelter, regardless of their family size, their culture, their specific needs, or of the building materials available locally. If there was only one design, the NGOs implementing the transitional shelter programmes would also be constrained, as each has different working methods and donor requirements.*

The transitional shelter standards offer indicators of the performance of the shelter. The standards support flexible, appropriate responses, and offer ways of government and donors to determine whether the shelters built meet equally the needs of those affected safely.”

The guidelines are “*consistent with the internationally-agreed standards presented in the UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies, the UN Guidelines on Internal Displacement and the Sphere Standards in Disaster Response.*” In order to help clarify the inter-relationship between the government policy, the UN guidelines and Sphere standards, UNHCR prepared a further document Shelter and Settlement Standards Ver 2 30.05.05.

Jo da Silva
Senior Shelter Coordinator (Consultant)
UNHCR
1 July 2005

APPENDIX B

Guidelines for Assessments

In the short term, it is suggested that an assessment is conducted in each division of:

- a) each organizations shelter types
- b) each location.

The DS and Divisional Lead agency already hold a list of organizations that have built transitional shelter, and in many districts a database of locations also already exists.

1. For each organization, 10% of each shelter type in the division are assessed, with a minimum of 3 shelters per location or GS/GN divisions. Typically, there is only one or two types of shelter per organization.
2. The assessment form should identify the organization, the shelter type, the number of shelters of that type in the division, the location of the shelters assessed.
3. The methodology, planning, resources needed, timescale, monitoring and follow up for the assessment should also be agreed at district level between TAP, Lead Agency and District Secretariat. Transport and training needs also need to be identified.
4. It recommended that the assessment form allows simple Yes or No answers for the following. If there is doubt “?” should be used.
5. The following questions (see Table 1) are suggested for an assessment form but may be varied/modified on a district level.

| If the answer to any of the below is “No” upgrading works will be required. | If the answer to any of the below is “No” upgrading works may be required. |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are foundations and floor slab adequate? ▪ Is the frame structurally sound (gravity, cyclones)? ▪ Are the walls and roof adequately fixed? ▪ Is the floor 6” above ground level? ▪ Is the roof and walls waterproof? ▪ Is there a risk of flooding? ▪ Is there access to drinking water? ▪ Is there access to washing water? ▪ Is there access to toilets? ▪ Are there site hazards eg. flood, landmine, conflict? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there about 200sq ft enclosed space? ▪ Is the shelter 6’-8’ high? ▪ Is there adequate ventilation? ▪ Is the internal temperature acceptable? ▪ Are the roof and wall materials durable? ▪ Is the shelter secure? ▪ Is privacy/partitioning adequate? ▪ Is there electricity? ▪ Are access roads adequate? ▪ Is there garbage collection? ▪ Is there adequate space between the shelters? ▪ Is there adequate access to site, and to local facilities eg. schools, medical care, market? ▪ Other? |

Table 1: Assessment Form Questions

6. On completion of the assessments, the results need to be processed by TAP, who should agree with the DS, based on the “No” and “?” responses:
 - Which organizations need to upgrade their shelters?
 - Which locations need further water-sanitation provision?
 - Which locations need improved infrastructure; roads access, schools etc ?
 - Which locations require a more detailed assessment?

An action plan needs to be developed at District Level to address shortfalls to be addressed over the next few months, which reflects the capacity of local actors, and local government structure and the task forces which vary between districts. This should be monitored weekly by TAP, reporting to TAP Colombo.

7. UNICEF have carried out an assessment of water and sanitation and this together with the TAP assessment, when available, should be used to identify gaps, and formulate and action plan to address the water and sanitation gaps. It is recommended that the Water Board and PHI are integral to this process.