



## Nepal Earthquake 2015

# Shelter Cluster Nepal Position Paper

Housing and Settlements Recovery: The need for a support approach

Version 1-June 2015

**This document was prepared to consolidate discussions to date among shelter and housing actors, on emerging issues, shared concerns and priorities for recovery and reconstruction.**

**It is intended to inform humanitarian shelter programming, early recovery initiatives and contribute to the longer process of planning for and supporting reconstruction and rehabilitation.**

#### Background

The 2015 Nepal earthquake has impacted the housing and human settlements sectors the most, revealing several vulnerabilities in the building stock.

Rehabilitation and reconstruction will bring new challenges but also opportunities to address shortcomings, to increase skills, introduce improvements and contribute to greater household and community resilience.

The housing sector is not only the largest, but also among the earliest to start recovery activities as people take initiative to salvage materials, start repairs and new construction as soon as they have the means to do so.

Rebuilding 600,000 destroyed and 250,000 damaged houses across a wide geography will involve a massive recovery effort, requiring policies and systems to achieve scale in social mobilisation, training, information, financing, materials and quality assurance.



Dohla district, June 2015



Sorting salvage materials and household items, June 2015



Bungamati, south of Kathmandu, June 2015

#### Shelter Cluster Nepal

The Shelter Cluster in Nepal is led by DUDBC supported by IFRC /NRCs with almost 200 participating agencies involved in emergency and temporary shelter assistance activities in the affected districts. The Cluster takes the view that shelter is more than just the provision of materials or the construction of a physical structure; it is also a process essential to the creation of an environment where people can begin rebuild their lives in safety, durability and dignity. The Cluster convenes a number of technical working groups to collect and share information, to discuss emerging issues and to ensure coordinated engagement with concerned authorities.

Since early May, Shelter Cluster members interested in recovery activities have met to discuss earthquake resistant construction, material supply and market assessments, technical training and capacity building for reconstruction including communications and outreach, such as identification of existing information and mapping of resources and capacities. The mandate, strategy and progress of the Nepal Shelter Cluster, technical working group minutes and resource materials are available on the Nepal Shelter Cluster website.

<https://www.sheltercluster.org/response/nepal-earthquake-2015>

#### Government of Nepal : Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy

With the June 2015 launch of the Government of Nepal Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and associated housing and settlement recovery and reconstruction strategy, Nepal is entering a new phase to establish the policies, institutional arrangements and programmes to coordinate and manage the multi-year housing and settlement recovery, based on the following principles:

- *Reconstruction should empower communities to take control of their recovery, facilitated through the Owner Driven Reconstruction approach. Reconstruction should apply "integrated safer settlement" principles where appropriate, involving the principles of holistic habitat development with an emphasis on basic services and community infrastructure.*
- *Reconstruction should become a vehicle for building long-term community resilience.*
- *Reconstruction should strengthen the local economy through processes supportive of the poor, marginalized and informal sector. It should provide an opportunity for the poor to upgrade their overall living and economic conditions.*
- *Reconstruction should ensure sustainable and environmentally conscious processes that keep in mind issues such as climate change, natural resource management and scientific risk assessments.*
- *Reconstruction should be equitable and inclusive, with equal rights to land and property accorded to women.*
- *Reconstruction should be initiated through targeted strategies that address the specific needs of the diverse communities and settlements affected by the earthquakes.*

Government of Nepal Post Disaster Needs Assessment June 2015

The Shelter Cluster fully supports the PDNA strategy principles, and the importance of the strategy to ensure accelerated recovery, to optimise resources and to inform decision making by all concerned, particularly affected households and communities.

#### Humanitarian Shelter and Recovery Support June-December 2015.

Humanitarian shelter support activities are expected to continue for the next 6 months to ensure the maximum number of families and communities are supported to have safe, weatherproof shelter solutions adequate for the period required until they have rebuilt their permanent homes.

Over the next 6 months many households are also starting early repairs and construction and the Government and partners will be developing wide scale reconstruction support programmes.

30+ Shelter Cluster Partners have expressed interest to use their field presence during this time to support early recovery activities by households and communities, or to support reconstruction planning. Agencies with specialist expertise are collaborating to support the early development of technical assistance during this transition period and to contribute to the wider programme.

The Shelter Cluster Partners interested in recovery include a range of stakeholders such as national training agencies, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, technical professionals, local community development organisations, under a broad umbrella we refer to as 'technical assistance'. Timely technical assistance is critical to inform the investments made by families and communities themselves with their own resources and the financial assistance provided by Government and other partners to ensure safer reconstruction.

**The Shelter Cluster advocates for the importance of technical assistance to be planned and implemented in time and at scale in order to support the needs of the affected population and for this assistance to take into account the particular needs of vulnerable persons and communities.**

**This requires a shared understanding of recovery principles and approaches and mechanisms to foster collaboration.**



Earthquake damage, rural village.

Photo GOAL

## A people-centred support approach

**People centred:** Affected populations are the central agents in recovery, in decision making and implementation. They mobilise the greater proportion of resources, time, labour and other inputs to organise the reconstruction of their own homes and communities .

**Recognise capacities, not only needs.** Families who lost their homes have constructed or started constructing shelters for themselves, demonstrating considerable capacity to recover even in very difficult circumstances. They represent a range of capacities, skills, knowledge and abilities, individually and collectively which will inform recovery. Social networks and cultures of organisation, planning and working together, including supporting the most vulnerable, are a key strength among communities . Recovery programming should not displace or undermine local coping mechanisms.

**Support approach:** A provision approach means agencies construct houses for individual families, providing the materials and labour, deciding the design and supervising the work. This also includes planning and implementation that takes into account of the specific and different needs of men, women, boys and girls, as well as assessing for such vulnerabilities as disability. A support approach means agencies assist the community with Government of Nepal approved technical advice and training, facilitating all families to plan and reconstruct for themselves. We strongly recommend a support approach rather than a provision approach to reach a far larger number of people, to increase the quality of all houses, and to contribute to lasting improvements led by people themselves.



Rasuwa District. Photo by GOAL

## Understand and adapt to context

**Flexible:** Programming should be responsive to the wide range of contexts, housing typologies, construction practices, community priorities, capacities and preferences. Be flexible, adaptable, incremental, adjusting to people's reality and varying speeds and paths. Recovery support can be planned, but will need to be an iterative and evolving process.

**Local and decentralised:** Technical assistance needs to be decentralised and accessible at local level to reach families and communities, to deliver locally appropriate and easy to understand advice and to generate and promote awareness activities and skills development. Local centres and mobile support should track, report and respond to field practices, needs and priorities.

**Appropriateness:** Standards and technical advice should be based on the use of familiar and accessible materials and techniques, including simple improvement measures which can be achievable and affordable. Training, information materials, outreach activities and social mobilisation should be tailored to the target audience and participants and to the range of settlement and construction contexts.

## Coordination for scale, speed and equity

**Coordination:** Coordination with Government of Nepal authorities at all levels, and other partners can ensure maximum coverage and consistency; identify gaps and priority needs, including areas with early reconstruction activity.

**Timeliness:** Facilitate availability of information, advice and training as early as possible to support people to make informed decisions about reconstruction. While construction will increase in early 2016, there is an important window of opportunity over the next 6 months to train construction actors, and to provide technical advice to those who are starting rehabilitation early. Contributing to the acceleration of recovery planning and activities can reduce the duration of the emergency and the impact of temporary living conditions.

**Coverage and equity:** Think and plan in terms of scale, coverage and replicability in order to add value to the very large number of households undertaking reconstruction, and over a very wide area. Promote access for all to information and advice, and maximum coverage of technical assistance to the affected population, using appropriate communication channels and participation in activities. Consider the particular needs of remote areas and areas of extensive damage where challenges are greater.

## Optimise resources and capacities by working together

**Build upon existing:** Nepal has extensive experience and expertise to draw upon for reconstruction, across topics including disaster risk management, earthquake resilient construction and community development. Build upon this base, adapting for the current context and needs. The cluster members also bring a range of skills and resources , experience in other disasters and reconstruction programmes, operational capacity from the humanitarian phase in affected districts and mechanisms, including information management to support transitional activities and contribute to longer term system development.

**Optimise Partner Organisation capacities and resources:** Promote the adoption of common approaches, tools, curricula, information materials, pooled finance and agreed through a joint development process to ensure consistency and quality in support activities, and to ensure equitable programming. Collective development of technical assistance resources will optimise the use of expertise and funds, ensuring benefit for all agencies and the wider response.

**Coordinate diverse inputs:** The earthquake affected area covers a wide range of contexts, conditions, communities, levels of damage and issues for reconstruction. The principle of aiming for maximum coverage and equitable assistance should also recognise the requirement for a range of appropriate technical solutions, community modalities and support to respond to particular needs. Developing a common approach does not mean uniformity, but encouraging agencies to plan and work together, harnessing diverse specialist inputs and accommodating targeted mandates, investments and activities in a cohesive manner.



Dohla District, June 201

## Housing and settlement recovery is social, economic and physical recovery

**Settlement is more than construction:** Shelter and settlement recovery involves processes of physical, social and economic recovery. This means more than housing reconstruction and rehabilitation, and more than individual family level activities, including community and settlement level activities: water and sanitation, community and social infrastructure and services, livelihoods, supply chains, communication and information processes, mobilisation and institutional arrangements. Shelter and settlement recovery activities will require integrated and coordinated planning and implementation with other sectors, at community level and at policy and programming level.

**Settlement land issues and urban development issues:** Shelter and settlement recovery by definition includes land issues, including land completely lost in the earthquake, land at risk of future hazards, land use planning and development control, and property status.

**Sustainability and resilience:** The aim is to improve the culture of construction, not only to replace the assets lost in the earthquake. Recovery programming needs to consider what will happen after the time frame of direct reconstruction timeframe, including institutionalisation, replicability and sustainability.



Bhaktapur, damaged homes in the old city, June 2015

## Urban recovery

**Urban recovery is essential for rural recovery:** While cluster partners are predominantly active in rural areas of the 14 priority districts, we recognise the importance of district centres and market towns and villages to support rural recovery, institutionally and economically.

**Urban shelter and sites:** Urban areas may see shelter needs continuing over a protracted period, as it may take a longer time to reconstruct. Many families are hosted or renting, but others are occupying community and other spaces. Municipalities, communities and families may require technical assistance to support appropriate measures for siteworks, services and shelter to meet temporary needs without constraining urban recovery and development.

**Urban recovery:** Urban recovery will require specific measures for a range of contexts: district centres, historic small towns, old urban cores, modern neighbourhoods, and for a range of housing reconstruction issues including technical standards, financing and institutional arrangements. Expertise and experience in urban regeneration, conservation and other urban development approaches can provide valuable support for urban recovery.

## Watch emerging issues

**Advice service for damaged buildings:** Many households with damaged buildings need a mechanism to access technical and feasibility advice to inform decisions on demolition or repair and retrofitting. This is particularly critical in urban areas. Unsafe repairs are already happening and buildings are being demolished that could have been economically rehabilitated.

**Moving to concrete blocks:** An increased prevalence of concrete block production and use is already visible in a number of affected districts. This pattern is likely to grow as blocks meet a demand for low cost and easy to use materials. However, the quality of blocks and the construction detailing used are seriously inadequate. Quality assurance measures and appropriate construction advice are urgently needed.

**Monitor the construction economy:** The ability of households and communities to recover will be affected by the quality, availability and affordability of materials, both imported materials and locally produced materials. It is important to monitor construction markets to identify shortages, bottlenecks, price rises and quality issues in time to inform policy and decision makers and to devise solutions to increase and improve material supply.

**Labour shortages and the role of women:** The impact of emigration of men from Nepal for work is predicted to have a major impact on the availability of labour for rebuilding. There will likely be additional burdens on women's time in addition to their already multiple and complex family roles. Women will have a critical role to play in managing and quality assurance of construction and should be supported in this and other roles through knowledge and skills development. Women's participation in training and other activities should be supported through consideration of timing, childcare and other specific measures.



Sindhuli District, new concrete block construction replacing stone, June 2015

## Implications for agencies

**Different roles, different skills:** A technical assistance role will involve facilitating, listening and training, rather than supervising, social and community skills as much as construction skills. Agencies may play different roles depending on their mandates and capacities, acting as resource agencies for programme development, or field implementation agencies working directly with communities.

**Programming and funding for technical assistance:** Technical assistance requires mainly human resources and associated costs including transport and communications. Technical assistance for reconstruction requires a timeframe determined by the pace of the affected population, not the predictable time frame of contractor construction. The Government of Nepal is developing an overall plan for housing recovery including technical assistance. This includes agreed common terms of reference, with basic staffing, roles, activities, costs and outputs for field partners, to guide agencies and ensure consistency and balanced funding and assistance across the affected districts.

**Outcome based:** Technical assistance needs to be monitored and evaluated on the basis of impact, for example measuring the adoption of practices rather than the delivery of information. This requires appropriate methodologies. A technical assistance approach is very different to a direct construction approach. Quality assurance, control and risk are the responsibility of the household, community and country. We support their efforts. Agencies and donors need to understand the implications in terms of liability and visibility and the value of wider impact.

## **Housing and Settlements Recovery: The need for a support approach**

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- **A people-centred support approach**
- **Understand and adapt to context**
- **Coordination for scale, speed and equity**
- **Optimise resources and capacities by working together**
- **Housing and settlement recovery is social, economic and physical recovery**
- **Urban recovery**
- **Watch emerging issues**
- **Implications for agencies**