

RMIT MoDDD + AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SYMPOSIUM

SHELTER SYMPOSIUM

The Challenges of Delivering Successful Shelter, Settlement and Infrastructure Projects

8 August 2018

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS:

RMIT University

Australian Red Cross

ARUP

Assai Consult

CARE

DFAT

Habitat for
Humanity

Humanitarian
Benchmark
Consulting

University of NSW



The Challenges of Delivering Successful Shelter, Settlement and Infrastructure Projects after Disaster

The process of sheltering people after a disaster can be a complex, lengthy and unpredictable process. For those working in the sector, there are many challenges that impact the delivery of successful projects including lack of coordination, lack of community engagement, lack of understanding of context and many more. Coupled with these existing challenges, the humanitarian landscape is rapidly changing with shrinking funding budgets, increasing prevalence of disasters and crises and increasing complexities in response, particularly in urban environments.

To begin to investigate some of these challenges for the sector as well as bring in key actors from the Australian shelter field: RMIT's Master of Disaster, Design and Development (MoDDD) together with the Australian Red Cross hosted a one-day symposium on Wednesday, 8 August 2018, that brought together representatives from DFAT, humanitarian organisations, academia and the private sector working in this sector (see Annex 1).

Specific objectives for the day included:

- Share brief snapshots from the field to illustrate the reality and complexity of the shelter and settlements sector;
- Discuss in depth four common challenges (identified by the participants prior to the event);
- Build relationships between the university research sector and the wide gamut of actors engaging in shelter and settlements projects across the Asia Pacific Region;
- Explore the potential of creating a network for NGO, government private sector and community agencies to share lessons from shelter and settlement programming, build collaborative projects and improve ways of working.

Through presentations, dialogue and participative group sessions, participants were able to build a collective understanding of the issues facing the sector, from the challenges of an urbanising world, to the need to invest in more localised and inclusive approaches, to mechanisms for coordination and collaboration.

At the end of the symposium, participants discussed a number of post-symposium actions including the potential of establishing a cross sectoral, cross disciplinary no-Logo shelter forum that could continue these discussions and help to move the Australian based sector forward.

There was a general sense from the participants that the day was more than a gathering of different voices and perspectives from within the sector, but also the opportunity for building new connections, networks and improved ways of delivering effective shelter, settlement and infrastructure projects and programs.

Postings and ongoing dialogue can be found at: [Australia Shelter Forum](#)



L–R: Charlie Damon; Fabian Prideaux; Tom Hallewell; Leanne Marshall; Tom Bamforth; and Megan Krolak

WORKshop ▶

The symposium was broken up into three main sections:

1. Shelter issues: snapshots from the field;
2. Open space forum on selected challenges facing the sector; and
3. Group discussion.

1. Shelter issues: snapshots from the field

The snapshots from the field section helped to set the scene for the day by allowing space for different actors to present some of their work along with highlighting opportunities and challenges that they had encountered in delivering successful shelter, settlement and infras-tructure projects.

The presentations included:

- The Inaugural State of the Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements report, 2018 (key trends, issues, challenges and opportunities for the sector);
- Providing better than tents for educational and other social infrastructure;
- Development of competency standards and guidance for humanitarian shelter in ASEAN;
- Importance of collaboration and coordination in response and recovery;
- Post Disaster Reconstruction: Australia's support to infrastructure reconstruction following Tropical Cyclone Winston;
- Gender, Localisation and Community-Led Recovery;
- Challenges of Urbanisation to shelter response.



^ image: Leeanne Marshall, Challenges of Urban Shelter Response presentation

WORKshop cont'd

2. Open space forum on selected challenges

Prior to the workshop, a survey monkey was circulated to shelter actors to decide on the four priority areas for open space group discussion. The four topics including the key themes that arose from the open space discussions are below.



What have proven to be the key success factors for shelter, settlement + infrastructure projects?

- Engagement of local community – giving ownership in decision making and ensuring sustainability of projects and programming;
- Better understanding of the next steps – making long term recovery a priority as soon as possible and linking this to disaster response and preparedness;
- Understanding how resilience can be built in communities eg. Build back safer campaigns;
- Mapping and understanding context – social, cultural, environmental, political.



How can the voices of beneficiaries be better integrated into the design and evaluation of shelter, settlement + infrastructure projects?

- Start from the basics, address some of the terminology (eg. beneficiaries), ensure it is an equal conversation
- Listen and engage with communities – create a two-way dialogue and relationship;
- Provide empowering questions and solutions
- Improve investment in preparedness – gather data on national processes, culture, hierarchies, governance and other relevant country information eg. Housing Land & Property rights, environmental issues;
- Make a whole of organisation commitment to inclusion and hearing local voices;
- Understand the continuum, humanitarian to development.



How can learnings from shelter, settlement and infrastructure projects best be captured + shared?

- Understand how people learn and how we can tap into that;
- Broad data collection – Agencies, donors and, beneficiaries;
- Engage with multi-disciplinary, multi-sector networks (eg. 100 Resilient Cities, Global Cluster system);
- Storytelling – media partnerships, education; and messaging;
- Creation of tool boxes – tailored based on the user;
- Sharing of lessons used as preparedness tools (build data base).



What could be the aims, structure, processes and outcomes of a successful academic-practitioner-private sector network for shelter + settlements?

- Fill resources/funding/institutional knowledge gaps existing in practice
- Both a platform for getting together to talk about what needs to happen in the sector, but also a register of expertise that can be utilised in different ways
- Ensure it provides both national and international services (development, capacity, support) to those in the sector;
- Capitalise on linkages and existing knowledge (ensure we are not always reinventing the wheel).

WORKshop cont'd

3. Group Discussion

Following the first two sessions a whole of group discussion was held to get final thoughts from participants and discuss potential next steps.

A number of participants, including DFAT, were positive that the day had touched on links to preparedness and recovery and the need to focus on the whole disaster cycle in order to deliver better outcomes in shelter, settlement and infrastructure programming. This linked in quite strongly to the importance of investing in the localisation agenda and building resilience within national structures and communities themselves to increase impact. A need for more inclusive program design and delivery of shelter projects that includes a greater focus on crosscutting issues was also highlighted.

There was interest from all levels of participants in the idea of continuing this kind of meeting in some way. It was seen as increasingly important in this complex and changing environment, to share differing perspectives, offer opportunities for collaboration, and consolidate resources, especially in a shrinking development and humanitarian funding scenario. It was noted that this kind of forum allows for the opportunity not only to share experiences and knowledge, but also to build connections in the sector and engage local voices from the region.

There was agreement that Australian Red Cross and RMIT would continue discussions already started with IFRC, Humanitarian Benchmark and others to develop a no-logo Australian Shelter Forum to undertake ongoing meetings/ symposia. The intention would be that these meetings have a clear purpose and allow open discussion to move the industry forward and link all actors working on similar areas, rather than being a 'talkfest'.

It was suggested the forum could be supported by an online, cross disciplinary platform (such as Facebook or Google group) that could allow for ongoing interaction and discussion between meetings. It was acknowledged that this should not interfere with any existing platforms or collaborations, such as the ACFID Urban Community of Practice, Academic-Practitioner Collaboration in Urban Settlements group (APCUS) or the Informal Urbanism Hub, but should instead complement these and provide a way of advocating from the Australian/ Pacific context to the global level.



^ image: Leeanne Marshall, Challenges of Urban Shelter Response presentation

SYMPOSIUM conclusions ►



KEY themes

Throughout the day, a number of key themes emerged from all of the discussions. High above all of these was the need to understand the changing humanitarian landscape and individual contexts. Increases in conflict, natural disasters and urbanisation together with a shrinking aid budget mean agencies have to do more, with less. It is important that all actors look to collaborate more and investigate their ways of working to be able to deliver successful shelter, settlement and infrastructure projects.

The other important issues raised were:

- The importance of linking stages of the disaster cycle – from preparedness to recovery – to enable more cohesive, sustainable shelter programming;
- Collaboration in preparedness (from academia, private sector as well as local actors) could assist in the

effectiveness and impact of shelter, settlements and infrastructure projects in disaster response and contribute to ongoing resilience of vulnerable communities;

- Investment in the localisation agenda and engagement of affected communities (including women, people with disabilities and old people) in all stages of disaster response can lead to more effective outcomes;
- Universities and private sector can assist agencies in building the evidence base around shelter response that is very much needed;
- We could set up a collaborative shelter forum where participants (including local partners) can share, learn and network and where a data base of materials can be held.

NEXT steps

- Set up google group to include participants of the symposium and other related actors that could become the Australian Shelter Forum (ARC).
- Disseminate the key discussion points of this symposium with all participants (ARC/ RMIT).
- Re-convene existing steering group to plan for ongoing meetings (ARC/RMIT/IFRC/HBC/Assai).
- Start to assemble case studies and share information with the group (All).
- Explore opportunities for linkages with other groups working in this area or related (All).

The RMIT (MoDDD) and Australian Red Cross Shelter Symposium was part of the

HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE WEEK

**6-9
AUG
2018**

Thank you
to all
participants



HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE WEEK

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ANNEX one

These email addresses are active – just click.

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