

case
study



Shelter Cluster Fiji
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



An urban house in Nadi that was damaged and submerged by flash floods in 2012. The house was rebuilt and extended upwards by owners with help from the Muslim League and Partners Community Network to provide a safe refuge in the event of future flooding.

Background

Tropical Cyclone Evan hit Fiji from 16 to 18 December 2012 as a category four storm with winds of more than 240 kilometres per hour. The cyclone passed over the Yasawa and Manuqa Islands with the eye of the storm coming within 28 kilometres of the western coastline of Viti Levu, the main island near Lautoka and Nadi – two of the most populated cities in Fiji.

The flooding of rivers and uprooted trees damaged public infrastructure which consequently hampered immediate access to affected areas. Tropical Cyclone Evan had a major impact in the housing, tourism and agriculture sectors, thereby impacting livelihoods. Prior to the cyclone, the Government of Fiji (GoF) had ordered the evacuation of low lying areas. At the beginning of the emergency there were 14,000 people in 242 evacuation centres across the country.

A state of natural disaster was declared on the 18 December 2012 in Fiji's Northern and Western Divisions. This was to be in effect for an initial period of 15 days so as to allow authorities and stakeholders to speed up rehabilitation work in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Evan. Government agencies worked with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to ensure sufficient manpower, resources and coordination were provided on the ground. Public servants around the country were fully mobilized to assist the NDMO and local disaster management officers with damage assessment, relief, recovery and rehabilitation works in the Northern and Western divisions.

The Shelter Cluster in Fiji

It was for the first time that the NDMO established the cluster system to coordinate the response of humanitarian agencies. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), as convener of the Shelter Cluster in natural disasters, was requested to provide leadership support. IFRC deployed a Shelter Cluster coordinator for eight months to support the Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment to help set up the cluster and identify the shelter coordination needs and recommend how best to address those needs.

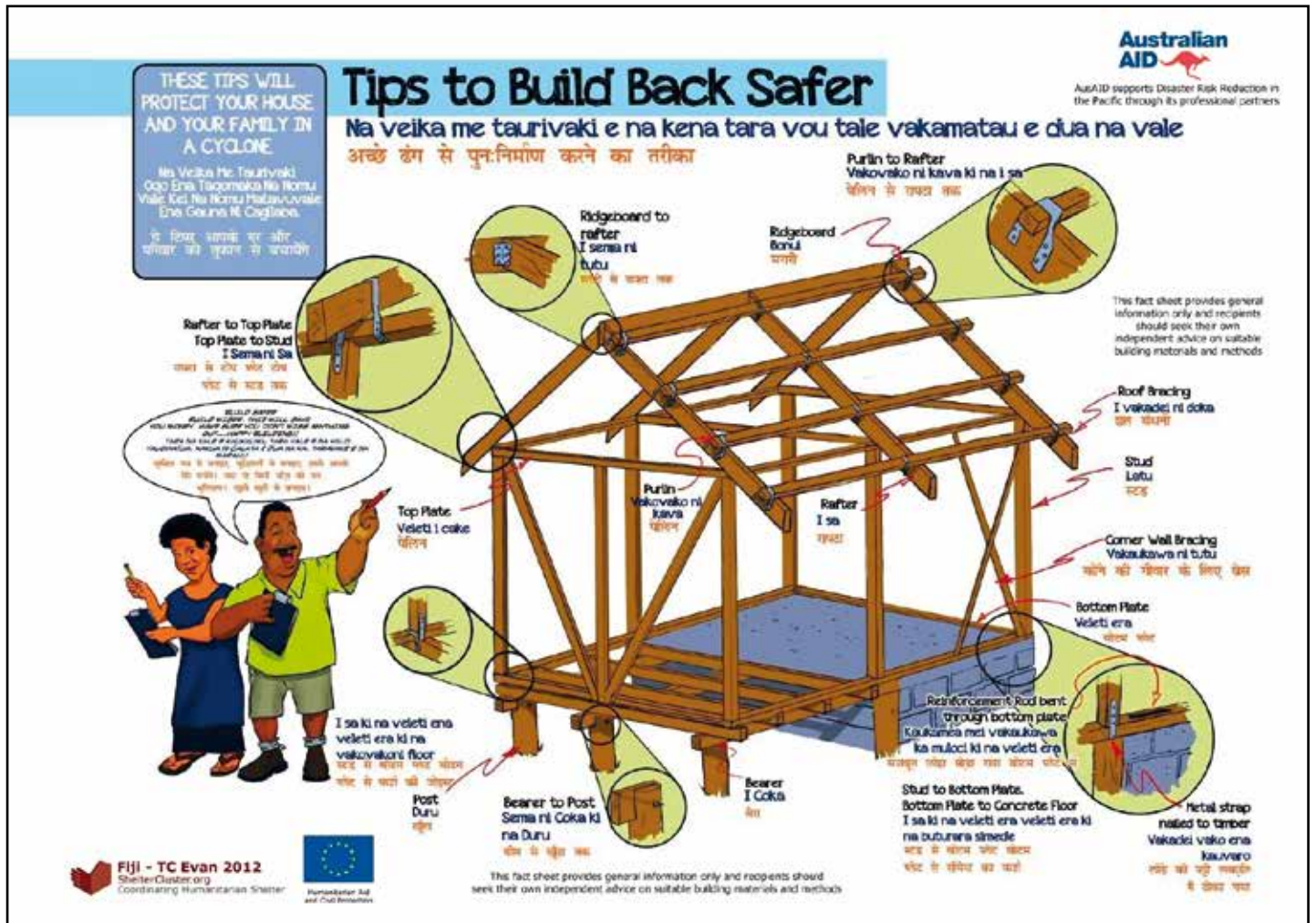
The Shelter Cluster's scope includes all aspects related to achieving the right to adequate housing with a humanitarian focus: household-related non-food items (NFIs), emergency and longer term shelter support, housing construction and reconstruction, and settlement support such as site planning and urban plan-



Humanitarian Aid
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ning. The Shelter Cluster acknowledges the variety of methods that shelter actors use to provide support and that shelter options vary according to the context, culture, protection aspects, climate, environment and material supply. These are defined in collaboration with the government and in line with local regulations. The Shelter Cluster also delivers preparedness strategies for predictable and timely response, increased resilience and to facilitate early recovery.

The Shelter Cluster in Fiji developed an enabling environment allowing members to understand differing roles that exist within the response and recovery, providing a forum of network and dialogue, and allowing agencies to consider and develop their future role in terms of shelter activities. A Strategic Operational Framework and Technical Guidelines were developed to:

- Provide assistance with repairs and replacement dwellings to those in formal sectors who meet the criteria of the government Housing Policy.
- Identify the needs of the informal settlements relating to shelter and provide assistance in repairing dwellings and providing 'transitional shelters' for the most vulnerable.
- Supply and restock emergency shelter supplies and assess evacuation centres for suitability together with WASH, Health and other clusters, in preparedness for future events.
- Provide 'build back safer' training and messaging with all interventions.
- Ensure a uniform response between all communities so as to minimize conflict between beneficiaries.

Housing damage and shelter needs

Tropical Cyclone Evan affected approximately five per cent of the housing stock in Fiji. The total number of houses affected according to data provided by the NDMO was 8,497, of which 2,094 were completely destroyed while 6,403 suffered some degree of damage. The total value of damage and loss identified for the housing sector has been estimated at just over 50 million Fijian dollars.

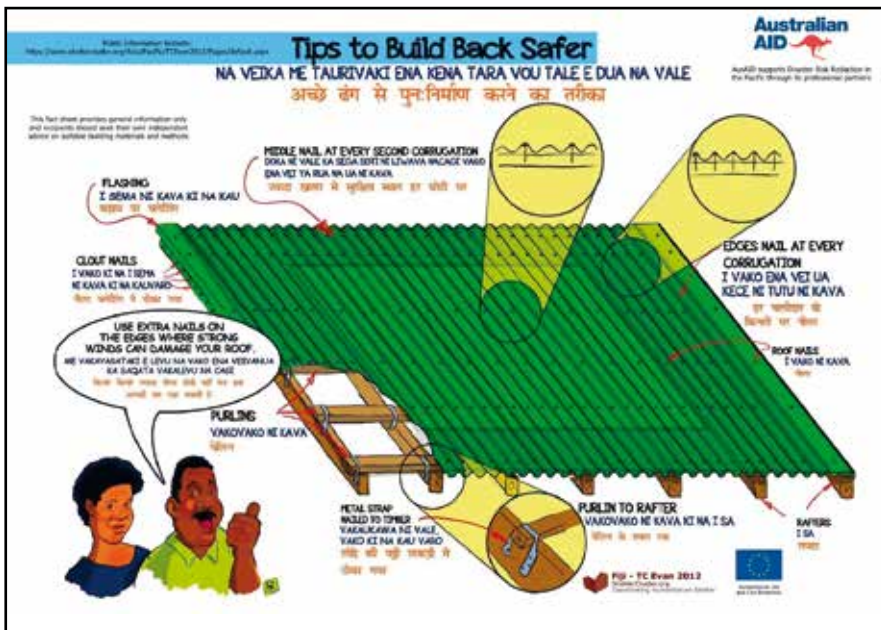
The three most commonly used construction materials for houses in the affected provinces are tin or corrugated iron (36 per cent), concrete (35 per cent), and wood (26

per cent). While most of the damage to the dwellings was caused by high winds, storm surge also affected low lying coastal areas and flooding occurred along some rivers. Extensive damage was inflicted on housing constructed with tin or corrugated iron, bure, makeshift, and other materials.

Communities hit by Tropical Cyclone Evan were still recovering from the two floods which hit them in early 2012 while some families had still not recovered from the damage caused by the 2009 Tropical Cyclone Thomas. Many affected households arranged their own repairs through voluntary involvement of family and local communities, instead of deferring the repair works until the arrival of government or civil society assistance. Others relied on financial assistance from friends and family overseas for the completion of repair works. A number of affected households perceived that the cost of building and hardware materials had increased following the cyclone. As a result they deferred repairs until the prices of building and hardware materials returned to normal. Most people surveyed did not consider relocation of their house as a viable option for mitigation against future disasters.

The GoF and the Fiji Red Cross Society undertook assessments of all the dwellings recognized as having legal tenure. On 21 December 2012 the GoF released a 'Housing Policy' that identified persons who qualified for government assistance. Persons, in formal settlements, who did not qualify for this assistance were expected to be able to self-recover due to their financial status.

Informal settlers were to be assisted by the local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A partial detailed assessment was undertaken of these informal settlement areas with the help of NGOs, Fiji Red Cross Society, and IFRC. Based on this assessment a picture of the needs, both in terms of providing new 'transitional shelters' and assistance with repairs and construction training to 'build back safer' were identified.



Who is affected?

- Legal owner occupiers, urban and rural – men and women who own and occupy their own house
- Legal tenants, urban and rural – men and women who are renting legal dwellings
- Settlers, urban and rural – men and women living in settlements that are recognized by the government as being legal (this includes Vacavanua settlers)
- Informal settlers – men and women who are:
 - Living with legal tenure – they are renting land from the owner but have no government approval to dwell there
 - Living with illegal tenure – occupying land they have no right to do so, whether private or public land

Housing and tenure in Fiji

The 2007 National Census data on housing shows that 93 per cent or 173,457 of the total households surveyed had their homes situated on land with secure tenure. Of these, a total of 109,849 households are on freehold land, state land and iTaukei Lands Trust Board (TLTB) leased land. Village housing accounts for 29 per cent of total households and is secure in terms of communal ownership.

Growth in squatter settlements in Fiji has remained a critical challenge for the GoF. Around seven per cent of the households surveyed in the 2007 Census, lived in over 200 squatter settlements around the country. The Central Division has the highest concentration with 56 per cent of the households living in squatter settlements. The cyclone affected Western and Northern divisions account for a combined 43 per cent of households living in informal settlements. Since 2007, this proportion has significantly increased due to expiry of land leases, declining performance of the agriculture sector (in particular the sugar industry), shrinking informal sector employment, and rural to urban migration.

Whilst the standard of living and quality of life for informal settlers is of considerable concern to the GoF, providing post cyclone assistance was complicated due to concerns that government assistance in informal settlements would be seen as granting legal status to these settlements.

Shelter response

The Fiji Red Cross Society worked in partnership with Commissioner West's office to assist in the distribution of tarpaulins, which complimented IFRC's shelter tool kits.

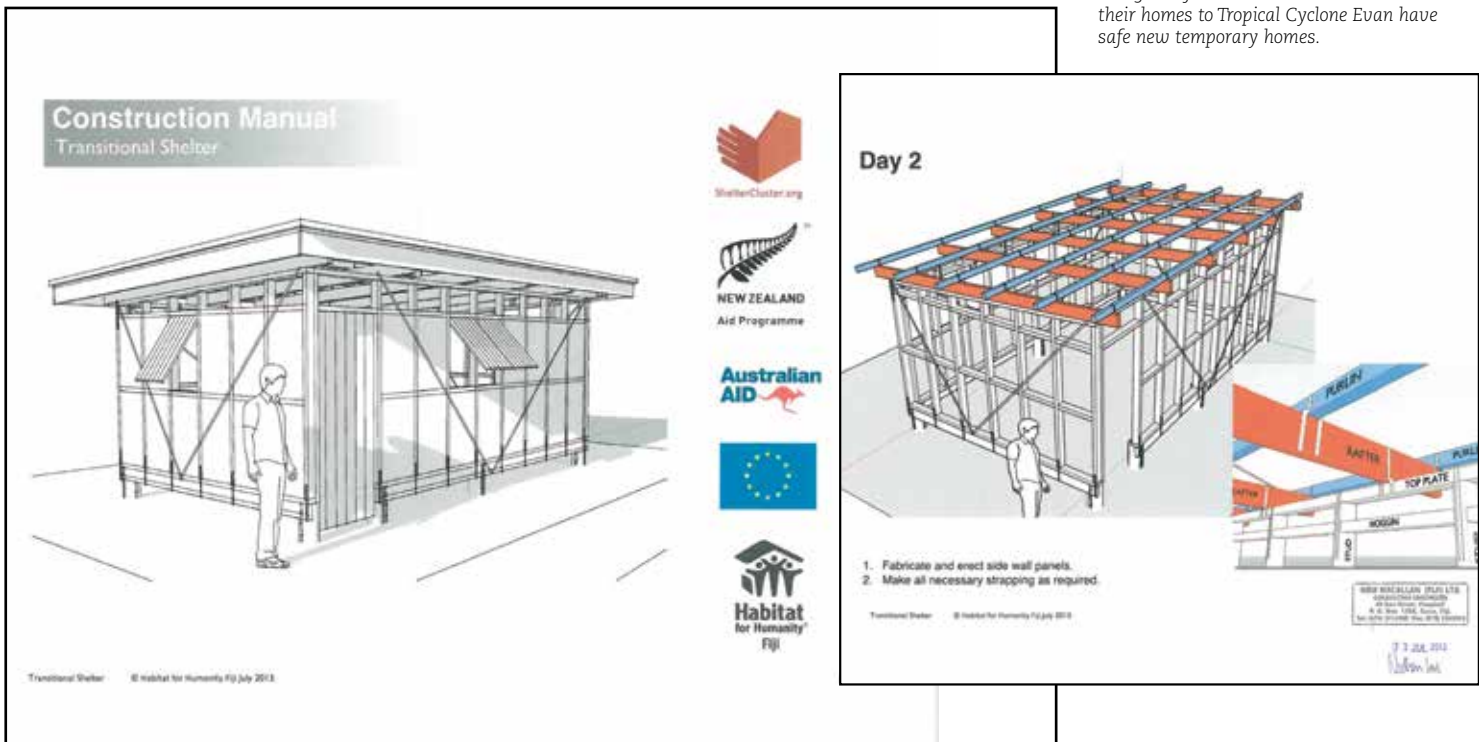
Shelter kit training was delivered to the government and Royal Fijian Army Engineers, Red Cross branches, volunteers, district offices' personnel and other local organizations.

The Shelter Cluster successfully advocated on behalf of affected people within informal settlements and conducted an assessment in these settlements. This resulted in the GoF approving their inclusion in the housing recovery programming activities and allowing the Shelter Cluster partner agencies to deliver transitional shelter and conduct

"The population is relatively small but we have the same responsibility towards disaster affected people here as we do anywhere else."

Head of OCHA's Regional Office for the Pacific

A transitional shelter certified to ASNZ Winds 3 was designed by Habitat for Humanity Fiji along with a three-day build manual to ensure that families living in informal settlements who lost their homes to Tropical Cyclone Evan have safe new temporary homes.



repairs to housing within such areas. A memorandum of understanding between the GoF and NGOs was established to facilitate NGO intervention in housing in informal housing sector in the form of temporary shelter.

A transitional shelter design was completed and certified to withstand a category four cyclone (structural wind code C3). A Manual was prepared for three-day build programme.

The construction of transitional shelters was late due to delays in material supply, particularly timber.

A build back safer poster was developed and 10,000 copies printed and distributed as part of formal and informal housing interventions and disaster risk reduction trainings.

The Shelter Cluster appealed for 13.98 million Fijian dollars in the Humanitarian Action Plan. Forty-eight per cent of this appeal has been funded.

The GoF has introduced a new Disaster Rehabilitation Housing Assistance Policy to assist Fijians earning less than 20,000 Fijian dollars annually and who have sustained damages to their homes in villages and recognized settlements around the country.

The government has commenced the reconstruction of houses in the formal (legal tenure) sector.

Numbers in the informal settlements remain unclear due to the nexus of lack of funding, low capacity for recovery, the difficulty of attributing damage to Tropical Cyclone Evan or previous natural disasters and difficulty in discerning the difference between the 'normal' flimsy construction of informal homes and temporary repairs to partially damaged homes.

A contingency planning workshop was held to encourage consortia and shelter-based actors in readiness for the next natural disaster.

Current needs

- Provide home owners with further training to ensure better understanding of basic techniques for strengthening houses to weather the effects of cyclones, for example strapping down the structure to withstand high winds.
- Provide additional financial assistance for those who have sustained significant damages to their dwellings or who have lost their houses and are unable to access sufficient resources for reconstruction.
- Provide the GoF, Shelter Cluster partners and communities consistent support and capacity building in their disaster preparedness planning, cluster roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a better understanding of the extent of support that the GoF will provide to affected households to rebuild or repair their houses under the 'Rehabilitation Housing Policy.'
- Provide training on coordination, shelter technical assistance, assessments, information management and reporting.
- Pre-position NFIs.
- Introduce the use of alternative shelter materials and a broader 'menu' of shelter assistance options to improve the timeliness of response which is currently hampered by delays in the provision of material supply.
- Advocate to donors for funds to continue support to implementing partners to undertake repairs in the informal settlements and to fund pre-positioned stocks.
- Advocate for the continued presence of a Shelter Cluster coordination focal point in the region.

“It is a national development priority to provide equitable access to adequate, affordable and quality accommodation for all citizens”

Government of Fiji

Constraints

- Few active and experienced partners for recovery
- Lack of informative assessment forms and data collection
- Insufficient preparedness for response and recovery of community and cluster
- Absence of records on informal settlements
- Low levels of funding for the shelter sector

The Global Shelter Cluster

At a global level the Shelter Cluster is led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in conflict situations, and by the IFRC following natural disasters. At the country level the Shelter Cluster is comprised of members also identified as institutions and agencies from Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, NGOs, United Nations organisations, donors, and the host country government. Shelter Coordination Teams are deployed at a country level to provide coordination services to the Shelter Cluster.

For more details please visit:
www.sheltercluster.org

Adi Livi Paret and some members of her family outside her rural home in Nadi, repeatedly flooded since 2009. Now repaired and fitted with a second floor so that Adi's family and possessions can escape the flash floods which are often associated with tropical cyclones.

Cluster Partners

The lead agency: Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment

Co-lead: IFRC

Cluster partners:

- Act for Peace (AFP)
- Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
- Community Support Network (CSN)
- Fiji Institution of Engineers (FIE)
- Fiji Red Cross Society
- FRIEND
- Good Neighbour International (GNI)
- Habitat for Humanity Fiji (HFHF)
- iTaukei Land Trust Board
- Local Government Units (LGU)
- Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Ministry of Health (MoH)
- Ministry of Labour (MoL)
- Ministry of Provincial Development and National Disaster Management (Divisional Offices, NDMO, Rural Housing Unit)
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- UNOCHA
- People's Community Network (PCN)
- Rotary Fiji, Rotary Lautoka
- Salvation Army



Sources: Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Government of Fiji, World Bank Fiji Humanitarian Action Plan 2.



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