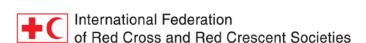Sheltering in the aftermath of Typhoon Bopha. Mindanao, Philippines
(Source: www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/asia-pacific/philippines/living-day-by-day--in-the-aftermath-of-typhoon-bopha-60659/)

Evaluation of the Shelter Role
of the International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies

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Executive Summary

The provision of shelter by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) following disaster can be traced to the 19th Century[1]. The first recorded mass shelter operation occurred in 1949 when the IFRC provided tents for some 300,000 Palestinian refugees[2]. Since that time, the IFRC has engaged in a multitude of shelter responses across the globe. Contemporary projects have included the 2004 Asian tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, and the Haiti earthquake of 2010. In addition, countless smaller scale disasters have demanded a shelter response. From 2003 to 2008, expenditure on shelter by National Societies exceeded 289 million US dollars.[3]

Though the provision of shelter to people affected by natural disaster has a long history in the IFRC, the 15th General Assembly (GA) in Seoul in 2005 signalled the start of a new era. The GA's decision resulted in a commitment by the IFRC to take a leading role in the provision of emergency shelter following natural disasters. This commitment was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in 2006. The MoU pledged that the IFRC ('in cooperation with interested National Societies') would:

1. Scale up its operational capacity in emergency shelter.
2. Coordinate a network of interested stakeholders in order to enhance preparedness for emergency shelter response.
3. Coordinate the provision of emergency shelter assistance at country level after natural disaster.

Collectively, the three are referred to as 'the shelter commitment' of the IFRC.

The decision of the 15th GA had not been unanimous, and it had been taken only after robust discussion. Concerns raised at the time had focused on capacity and on the financial and reputational risks to the IFRC in fulfilling the shelter commitment[4].

Because of these concerns, safeguards were incorporated into the 2006 MoU with UNOCHA. These safeguards included a definition of the term "emergency shelter" which specifically excluded traditional and permanent housing; the IFRC would become 'convener' (rather than leader) of the Emergency Shelter Cluster; the IFRC would not become the provider of last resort (as was the case with other cluster lead agencies); and the IFRC's commitment was limited to provision of emergency shelter in situations of natural disaster, and specifically excluded disasters resulting from armed conflict.

Significantly, the MoU neither tied National Societies to the commitment nor restricted them to the provision of emergency shelter only. Then, as now, a number of National Societies actively engaged in sheltering activities such as temporary and permanent housing, which did not fall specifically within the scope of the IFRC shelter commitment. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that the IFRC, National Societies and their partner organisations undertake a wider range of shelter activities than those of the shelter commitment alone.

[1] http://history1900s.about.com/od/medicaladvancesissues/p/redcross.htm
[2] IFRC, (2008), Shelter beyond Tents and Tarpaulins. (p.5).
[3] IFRC, (2008), Shelter beyond Tents and Tarpaulins. (p.8), based upon current exchange rates.
[4] Humanitarian Response Review – possible role for the International Federation (AG/10.2/1 and 2).

The shelter commitment was in line with the (then) newly developed Global Agenda. In 2013, the role of shelter within the IFRC's long term strategy remains equally relevant, because shelter (in any form) contributes directly to the three aims of *Strategy 2020.*

- Shelter saves lives, protects livelihoods and strengthens recovery from disasters and crisis;
- Shelter enables safe and healthy living;
- Shelter promotes social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Thus the 2005 decision of the GA could not have been be more apt.

In the six years since the MoU formalised the shelter commitment, the IFRC has:

- Expended more than 152 million Swiss francs at global level on emergency shelter items for distribution.
- Assisted more than 23 million people through the provision of emergency shelter.
- Trained more than 700 people in various forms of shelter.
- Convened the Emergency Shelter Cluster following natural disaster 23 times in 14 countries.
- Led and contributed to the establishment of the shelter sector through the development of numerous partnerships and publication of technical and advocacy materials.
- Raised the profile of the IFRC as a leader in humanitarian coordination and information management.

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to appraise the progress of the IFRC in taking up a leadership role in the provision of emergency shelter, as defined by the decision of the 15th GA and subsequent MoU, and the impact of its shelter commitment.

The evaluation team reviewed key reports and documents by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), IFRC, National Societies and the Shelter Cluster, and respective websites. In addition, the team elicited the views of more than 60 individuals from around the world, including staff of National Societies, the Secretariat, delegations, and external partner agencies.

Findings: Commitment 1 – Operational Capacity

The progress against this commitment has been commendable, although variable. At global level, the IFRC has made very noteworthy headway, its work underpinned by the establishment of a Shelter and Settlements Department (SSD) with a dedicated, professional staff and leadership. This has resulted in the development of significant support resources, including training services, technical materials, tools and publications. The development of support resources has in turn expanded the capacity of human resources available for emergency shelter, and simultaneously created numerous partnerships with other organisations. This has all been to the benefit of the IFRC.

At zone level, the extent of progress has not matched that made at global level. This has resulted primarily from a shortage of staff in these pivotal positions due to a lack of financial resources. Where zone positions have been filled, progress has improved noticeably. Without zone delegates in place, the IFRC will struggle to fulfil the operational component of its shelter commitment.

At country level, the shelter commitment has been taken up by a small (but growing) group of National Societies. This is reasonable given the variable nature of the shelter commitment for National Societies and the federated structure of the IFRC. Thus, progress on the operational component of the shelter commitment cannot be measured solely by the number of National Societies which "do shelter", but also by whether an enabling environment exists for them to pursue their shelter interests. The evidence suggests that this is generally the case.

The broad impact of these interventions on the provision of emergency shelter to disaster affected communities in large scale operations is generally positive, as evidenced by external evaluations. However, in smaller scale operations, impact is more difficult to assess, due primarily to a lack of widespread use of quality and accountability mechanisms. Nevertheless, when measured in financial terms, emergency shelter items represent the largest monetary component of IFRC relief interventions at the global level. This in itself is an indicator of the importance of emergency shelter in assistance to people affected by natural disaster.

Despite insecure and declining funding at the global and zone level, the IFRC has established a foundation upon which to continue its commitment to scaling up operational capacity in the provision of emergency shelter following natural disasters.

Findings: Commitments 2 and 3 – Coordination

The IFRC has achieved considerable progress in fulfilling Commitment 2. At global level, it has established itself as an innovative and energetic leader of the Emergency Shelter Cluster (ESC). It has acquitted itself well despite consistent shortfalls in funding and longstanding lack of awareness of what the commitment has meant in certain parts of the IFRC. It has raised the profile of both emergency shelter and of the IFRC itself.

In leading the development of tools for the ESC, the IFRC has invented much of the architecture of humanitarian coordination now adopted by other clusters and the IASC. It has done so by drawing on and building upon the comparatively limited shelter technical expertise available at the beginning of its commitment, and turning this into generally strong and diverse partnerships.

However in the short term, maintaining its commitment to emergency shelter coordination is tenuous if the IFRC fails to capitalise on lessons it has learned over decades: that successful leadership and coordination require ample time frames and adequate levels of human and financial resources.

The MoU pledged that the IFRC itself would fund the commitment in order to ensure its independence, yet funding for coordination at the global and country levels has remained a patchwork. Increasingly, other cluster lead agencies see coordination as a mainstream function, resource their role accordingly and are beginning to overtake the IFRC as they consolidate their cluster leadership commitment. By comparison, the IFRC's expertise and reputation rests largely on the shoulders on a small group of committed and expert individuals, most of whom work on short-term contracts which are susceptible to unpredictable internal funding

arrangements. In short, the IFRC needs to fulfil its funding commitment to emergency shelter coordination.

The risks the GA and Governing Board envisaged in 2005 were addressed in the IFRC's MoU with UNOCHA. Fears regarding loss of independence or of making an open-ended commitment to the provision of emergency shelter have not been realised. Rather, coordination of the global and country level clusters has raised the IFRC's profile and demonstrated its capacity for speed, innovation and resourcefulness. Nevertheless, its formal commitment to lead coordination of emergency shelter at country level does not always align with humanitarian imperatives that necessitate a longer-term view of shelter, and is inconsistent in an organisation that continues to demonstrate why it and others need to go beyond "tents and tarpaulins".

IFRC and Shelter – Moving Forward

Although more remains to be done, the IFRC is delivering on its shelter commitment. The commitment has given the IFRC increased competence, a new leadership profile and an enhanced reputation. Most importantly, the commitment has benefited communities affected by natural disaster. Clearly there have been, and will continue to be, challenges. All the same, the risks perceived at the time of the commitment have not materialised, and the IFRC's integrity and reputation are none the poorer for taking a leading role in the provision of emergency shelter following natural disasters. In many respects the contrary is the case.

Furthermore, the counterbalance provided by the IFRC (both in terms of its own independence and in engaging a broad base of non-governmental organisations [NGOs] and other partners) in a UN-centric cluster system is welcome and should be continued. Although some within the IFRC still have qualms about the shelter commitment, the broader discussion has moved from whether the IFRC *should* "do shelter" to *how* it should do shelter; and not only emergency shelter, but also broader notions of shelter including transitional and permanent housing.

The shelter commitment has established a foundation upon which the IFRC can do this, if so desired. By recognising shelter for what it is - a complex interaction of livelihoods, security, protection, family and community well-being - and supporting innovative ways of sheltering, the IFRC is notably advancing understanding of the sector. This broader notion of shelter and settlements is particularly pertinent as the shortcomings of a largely silo-ed approach to post disaster relief and recovery, exemplified by the clusters, become evident. The lives of people affected by natural disasters are a complex web of interactions in which all sectors combine to create the lived experience. Successfully addressing this complexity at the level of individuals and communities is a significant challenge for a global, sectoral based industry. The IFRC, through its approach to shelter, has acknowledged the challenge. With its own global structure, and grassroots reach, it is well placed to consider how to address this challenge should it wish to do so.

Recommendations

	Operational Recommendations
OR1.	*Continue to pursue innovative sources of funding and consider new funding streams (e.g. cost recovery of training provision and other relevant services). Ultimately, the recommendations contained herein, and the overall fulfilling of the commitment, rely upon regular sources of finance.*
OR2	*Give urgent priority to staffing the vacant zone shelter delegate positions, preferably on long term basis, notwithstanding funding constraints. This will enable the necessary relationship building to occur to progress the commitment. In addition, consider developing shelter support positions at the zone level. These could be staffed through various means including non-traditional approaches (e.g. internship programme, or secondments / sabbaticals from local industry, government, NGO and academic institutions).*
OR3	*Develop operational plans at the zone level where necessary, with inputs from National Societies, and harmonized with the SSD long term planning framework.*
OR4	*Review the shelter delegate roster to identify reasons for lack of retention of shelter delegates and / or deployability inhibitors. Follow through initial discussions for SSD to leverage off the HR roster system. Give continued focus to training up local staff of National Societies. Develop and implement a communication strategy to maintain regular contact with those shelter delegates employed outside the IFRC. (See also recommendation CR4 below.)*
OR5	*Through the zone delegates, continue efforts to increase the overall capacity of National Societies in shelter through enhanced use of lessons-learned workshops, case studies, networking, etc., combined with targeted training (as above). Expand the Shelter Reference Group membership through supported involvement of interested, but comparatively resource-challenged, National Societies via representation and / or hosting, particularly those from countries beset by recurring natural disasters requiring a shelter response.*
OR6	*Develop a targeted communication strategy to market the shelter message (in all its dimensions), to all levels within the IFRC (Secretariat, zones, National Societies), and also external partners and donors. This strategy should also reiterate the nature of the IFRC shelter commitment and who is accountable for delivering it.*
OR7	*Develop a low cost self-certification quality and accountability mechanism for emergency shelter interventions for use by National Societies. At a minimum this would include measureable indicators of scale, timeliness, appropriateness / relevance (both culturally and functionally), technical quality (including adherence to standards), cost efficiency, impact and accountability. Data could be sourced and triangulated through, for example, simple sample surveys of beneficiaries, implementers and partners. Participating National Societies could support this requirement by making it a condition of bilateral project funding.*
OR8	*Capture what the IFRC does in shelter, e.g. populate the existing shelter database (or similar) with completed projects and thereafter keep it maintained. The database also be expanded to include KPIs (see OR7 above) and institutional learning components (e.g. key lessons learned).*
OR9	*Recalibrate operational focus upon smaller scale disasters, including the identification of gaps or enhancements necessary from the National Societies' perspective. In particular, support National Societies to develop relevant partnerships at country level which facilitate emergency*

	shelter interventions.
OR10	*Recalibrate SSD direction to provide greater focus on the operational component of the shelter commitment, coupled with a renewed communication strategy to differentiate the (operational and coordination) roles, and the responsibility of the SSD within them.*
OR11	*Continue the production of emergency shelter publications and training tools in languages other than English (e.g. Spanish, Urdu).*

	Coordination Recommendations
CR1	*Guarantee minimum core funding for a fixed period (e.g. for three global shelter coordination and information management posts for two years). During this period, seek internal and external sources of sustainable funding for shelter coordination on the model of FACT or HEOps or other Clusters. Advise and support the Emergency Shelter Cluster in developing fundraising strategies and in mobilising resources from statutory and other donors, or from sponsors.*
CR2	*Guarantee minimum advance funding for a fixed period (e.g. for a minimum of four IFRC-led Shelter Coordination Team deployments a year for two years, each deployment lasting six months and a country team of four persons) During this period, seek internal sources of sustainable funding for shelter coordination on the model of FACT or HEOps or other Clusters. Advise and support the ESC in developing fundraising strategies and mobilising resources from statutory and other donors, and from sponsors. Carry forward any unspent balance to the next year.*
CR3	*Raise the profile of shelter coordination in contingency planning by identifying pilot countries in which the IFRC-led cluster and National Societies play a key role. Provide funding and opportunities for development and salaries for key staff in these countries in order to encourage retention and maintain predictability, profile and leadership.*
CR4	*Seek professional HR advice on how best to maintain the emergency shelter coordination roster. Attach dedicated support, (e.g. via an internship), to regularise and improve communications with roster members. Streamline financial procedures so that these do not present barriers to coordination team members and to coordination. (See also recommendation OR4 above.)*
CR5	*Seek professional communications advice from within the Secretariat, the membership or a business school to assist in developing a communications strategy for internal and external stakeholders, including National Societies. Promote the achievements of the IFRC in its ESC role, test awareness, use and user-friendliness of Shelter Cluster publications, videos and websites and make adjustments to quality and quantity accordingly.*
CR6	*Continue to formalise and make transparent the structure and work of the ESC at global level for the benefit of internal and external stakeholders, including National Societies, beneficiaries and donors. Seek ways of opening the global cluster to partners in countries beset by recurring natural disasters requiring a shelter response.*
CR7	*Pilot the use of a real-time "good enough" quality and accountability role in Shelter Coordination Teams, building on the type of stakeholder monitoring exercises conducted in Haiti, with the aim of sharing and using findings on stakeholder satisfaction at an earlier stage.*