

MINUTES OF MEETING

TOPIC: Technical Working Group (TWG) - New Sites In North

DATE: 14 December 2007, 3:00 pm

LOCATION: Solidar Meeting Room, Colombo

ATTENDEES:

Chris Nixon	SCC / UNHCR (co-chair)	Shelter Coordinator / SCC Coordinator (National)
Mathias Anderson	SCC / Solidar (co-chair)	SCC Shelter Co-ordinator (North)
Maja Zotovic	SCC / Solidar	SCC Shelter Co-ordinator (Mannar / Vavuniya)
Chris Bleers	SCC/ Norwegian Refugee Council	Project Manager / Shelter Co-ordinator
Nirojan Donald	SCC / UNOPS	Project Engineer
Stella Ogunlade	UNHCR	Protection Officer
Annelise De Bruin	Zoa Refugee Care	M & E Coordinator (Colombo)
Oam Pragash	Zoa Refugee Care	Technical Officer
Robert Peries	Zoa Refugee Care	Coordinator
Julie Pharand	ICRC	Wat-Hab Coordinator
P Rubenthiram	FORUT	National Coordinator for Hum. Assistance
Tom Skitt	OXFAM	PH Adviser
M Thuvanakan	OXFAM	P H Engineer
Giovanni Cassani	IOM	Shelter Coordinator
Bob Cummings	IOM	Field Operations Coordinator
Ananda Jayanveera	UNICEF	Water Sanitation Specialist
Martin Taylor	RedR	Country Director

APOLOGIES:

Massimiliano Benevelli	Danish Refugee Council	Emergency Coordinator
Philippe Barragne – Bigot	UNICEF	National WASH Coordinator

REF ITEM / DETAIL ACTION

1. Introduction To The TWG

1.1 The background to convening the TWG was explained. The TWG was somewhat larger than usual, but all participants and their views were welcomed. In summary it is felt that imminent large displacements in the north, and experience in the recent Mannar displacement requires that the sector review some of the paradigms and axioms in use.

In particular the “Handbook of Shelter Options In Sri Lanka” which has proven very useful for agencies, particularly in the East and in Jaffna does not address some of the more recent constraints for design, construction, materials and costs in the Vanni and Mannar.

The SCC has launched various initiatives to address the changing shelter and site

environment, increasing costs, equity issues, harmonisation and coordination challenges

- 1.2 The SCC / Chair thanked agencies for being so responsive in attending and participating in the TWG. Staff from Mannar field offices were particularly welcomed.

The Chair thanked agencies for facilitating the attendance and participation of national staff from Mannar to share field observations and suggestions with the working group.

- 1.3 The meeting was informed that ZOA had brought a 20 min power point presentation of ZOA strategies and costs of shelters and requested this be presented – time did not permit this but ZOA was invited to present at a subsequent meeting.

2. Introduction - Changing Parameters Of Displacement And Response

- 2.1 It was explained that coordination and delivery challenges had arisen in Mannar in particular and to a lesser degree (more related to materials and access) in Manthai West. Through some two months these had not been able to be completely addressed in meetings at Mannar and National level.

An introduction was provided to set the scene of topics to be considered in respect of lessons learned and strategies for the future displacements in the north.

- 2.2 The nature of IDP sites in Sri Lanka is changing. Sites in Mannar :

- are not like the large camps of the East (which although not preferred options, developed)
- not traditional host sites (one or two shelters, next to host family premises)
- more like mini camps with 4 to 10 shelters in close (often excessively close) proximity
- often on small agricultural / cultivation sites, rather than next to the hosting family
- more difficult to provide full “services” (management, oversight, WASH)
- more expensive to construct, especially in North and Vanni, due to more material constraints and higher monitoring costs.

- 2.3 The recent Mannar displacement is an opportunity to learn:

- this is a relatively small displacement
- lessons can be learned
- it is projected in the foreseeable future, that displacements of up to 150,000 IDP caseload could be readily and rapidly expected in the North / Vanni - but displacements of that magnitude will not be easily accommodated
- how to plan and apply lessons from Mannar to future and larger displacements in the North
- a “lessons learned workshop” is being convened in Dambulla 18 / 19 December, by NRC on behalf of the SCC (contact chris@nrc.lk)

- 2.4 Identification of the differences between Development and Relief

- consultation and participation remains essential
- “sites / camps” cannot be completely treated like “village / community” settings or as development
- there must be some constraints and management of a “site” due to its relief and confined nature

- 2.5 Outside a traditional large camp a “shelter” in a “mini camp” is in many ways similar to some rural structures in practice and in the perception of a beneficiary

- beneficiaries may not appreciate the confines of a “camp” places constraints and responsibilities not applicable in a “village / community”
- closer confined shelters need a “camp” rather than “village” concept – for improved safety and welfare (fire risk, vectors, hygiene, adequate drainage, adequate common spaces, access, protection, etc)
- some management of a “site” (several shelters) is important not applicable to individual isolated shelters (traditional individual hosted shelter) due to safety / welfare considerations of the wider camp community (rather than personal considerations single family prevailing)

- 2.6 Agencies were asked to consider how they perceive “shelter” and it was suggested that this is not a purely technical engineering (albeit simple) “deliverable” but rather a wider and less technical “process” with particular obligations on the participating agencies. Agencies were asked to consider:

- there is a “duty of care” and a professional obligation to provide most appropriate shelter solutions
- shelter providers should be “holistic practitioners” of broader shelter solutions rather than primarily “technicians” providing simplified “technical engineering solutions”
- the holistic approach to appropriate shelter solutions considers equity, standards compliance, coordination with other agencies, consistency of response, appropriate durability / permanence / materials, etc rather than an individual technical solution
- agencies are asked to accept a wider responsibility for planning and IDP awareness and suitable layout of “sites” as they would for establishing a camp in the East, rather than “supply materials, designs and leave” - i.e. coordinated approaches
- agencies are asked to support advocacy initiatives by the Sector and Lead Agency where the GoSL does not provide adequate sites, or constrains delivery of standards consistent with the “Humanitarian Charter” and internationally accepted standards (Sphere, etc)
- there should be a consistency in approach and perception within individual agencies (and preferably across agencies also) across field and Colombo level, international and national staff and donor to agency perceptions and standards - i.e. a common “world view” of priorities and emphasis.

3. Agencies Commented On Responses and Challenges In Mannar

- 3.1 Agencies commented that in addition to the limitation on the sites – few sites, small sites, small number of villages permitted by SLA and low lying / water prone sites - there was also limited capacity of the agencies to respond recently in Mannar.
- 3.2 Furthermore it was pointed out neither the national staff involved in the recent Mannar displacement (except some from East) nor the GoSL authorities had experience in handling a recent major disaster, or displacement. Previous major displacements were in the 1990’s and were pre-Sphere, etc and under different conditions, with differing response.
- 3.3 It was pointed out that agencies see a need to capacity build and support staff in Mannar as well as the GoSL authorities in respect of emergency response.
- 3.4 Additionally existing policies need to be disseminated to the GA and local authorities, and where necessary new policies appropriate to local conditions developed and disseminated to GA and authorities and well as to local agency offices.
- 3.5 Agencies commented that in some cases where they had tried to convince people to move to less crowded sites for the safety and welfare of people on the site - where there was insufficient land to accommodate shelters with adequate spatial planning of the site, inadequate spacing of shelters etc - the people expressed their main concern was security against abduction. They wanted to be close together for improved protection and they were less worried about their safety in the “site” from fire / hygiene / overcrowding etc.

4. Solutions Proposed

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that oversights had occurred and lessons need to be learned from the Mannar displacement in which some agencies were underprepared and underresourced, had limited local capacity and were obliged to respond to the displacement “ad lib” with no reliable information of its growing scale or duration.
- 4.2 A lesson learned is to assume the worst. Implement for current displacement but plan from the outset with a view to its duration or extent growing beyond expectation, or beyond GoSL’s stated projections.
- 4.3 Immediate capacity building of staff (as above) is important.
- 4.4 Before any shelter solutions are put into place it is also going to be necessary to build capacity and advocacy within the GoSL authorities, as further displacement is believed imminent.
- 4.5 As further displacement is imminent already it is necessary to start 4.3 and 4.4.
- 4.6 It was expressed at the TWG as a concern that a large displacement is considered imminent and only at this time these issues are being addressed - given the long lead times on essential activities, such as procurement. It is clarified that in fact the TWG is to address

deficiencies now noted and change direction if required, to minimise recurrence.

- 4.7 Next displacement may be very large and the discrepancies, delays and challenges experienced in Mannar could be expected to grow to unmanageable proportions, hence requiring soonest attention and planning.
- 4.8 Given the size of the current Mannar displacement and the many scattered “mini sites” with various different deficiencies and weaknesses within the sites and in smooth implementation - sometimes beyond the control of an agency (i.e. equity perceptions by beneficiaries having negative impacts on some agencies) then the solution to the current Mannar displacement is by “ad hoc” solutions.
- 4.9 Agencies should review shelter solutions, policy and implementation to date and wherever possible, and soonest possible, effect corrections in policy or implementation in line with a consensus framework agreed within the shelter sector.
- 4.10 It is acknowledged that it is in the interests of all agencies and IDPs to achieve an agreed framework and policy and guidelines (based on Sphere implementation) which is consistent and equitable.
- It is recognised that compliance is voluntary and cannot be enforced by the sector.
- 4.11 It was however, pointed out the GA in Mannar is highlighting the need for responsible implementing partners and appropriate standards of shelter provision.
- 4.12 For any forthcoming displacement it will be necessary to plan for and predetermine the suitable solutions and shelter responses.
- 4.13 It was highlighted that not only construction and costs should be looked at and agreed by agencies, but also the phasing of solutions - i.e. has previously not been considered by consensus of agencies to incorporate concrete, or concrete blocks or similar materials in an emergency shelter. The timing and nature of upgrades should be considered. Premature and inappropriate inclusion of these materials may have a number of detractors, including:
- actual or apparent lack of equity - with impacts on beneficiaries and implementation progress (possibly of other agencies)
 - inappropriate longevity for emergency shelter
 - unnecessary price increases to agencies which may be unsustainable for large displacements
 - increasing the disincentive to return
 - increasing damage (or decommissioning cost) on loaned sites
- 4.14 Designs and agreed shelter solutions should also address the market availability and cost of materials, should seek to use a diverse range of materials wherever possible to minimise impacts of monopolies, constrained markets etc.
- Notwithstanding in some locations such as the Vanni, there is limited choice and availability of materials - prices can expect to surge, and availability drop if / when a displacement occurs.
- 4.15 It was agreed that so long as the price of an emergency shelter is NOT unreasonable (i.e. not approaching a core or semi-permanent shelter) then what was more important was for all agencies to reach consensus and maintain
- a narrow band of variation in cost of assistance provided
 - a narrow band of variation in covered areas provided
 - and generally maintaining a consistency across the agencies in key aspects of shelter assistance

5. Shelter Policy By Agencies

- 5.1 Agency representatives from Mannar indicated that within local coordination meetings agencies had agreed to abide by the SCC guidelines (refer Handbook) of \$US 300, covered area not to exceed typically 200 sq ft, etc and Sphere compliance in respect of shelter and site. It was

stated that Colombo inputs from some agencies had altered these parameters and agreements.

- 5.2 Local staff from Mannar pointed out that local designs are consistent with what local people are used to living in and use local materials and practise, or at least incorporate these in the shelter - mud / cow dung floors instead of cement , mud bricks instead of “tin” sheet walls, cadjan and possibly plastic to lengthen its live for emergency shelter roofing instead of “tin sheeting”, also some agencies making substantial unskilled labour payments while others require that to be beneficiary contribution. Local staff spoke with authority in pointing out these “improvements” in materials and labour inducements caused equity issues with IDPs and conflicts with agencies plus delays. People would ask for what they can get, even if significantly more than traditionally used to - an example of variance in shelter costs in the Vanni from LKR 16,000 by one agency to LKR 55,000 by another adjacent agency, was given.
- 5.3 It was acknowledged that there are some differences in the mechanisms of pricing (adding overhead or not) . On this it was clarified the SCC has always stated the price of the shelter is the all inclusive cost including materials, labour, transport, etc. In some instance agencies had employed IPs due to their own lack of resource and this cost had been added while another agency may have undertaken monitoring by own staff and not added the cost. It should be considered as Labour, Materials and Transport - if the IP is building they are effectively labour
- 5.4 It is agreed referring to “5.1”, “5.2” in some instances there needs to be improved communication between field and Colombo offices. Agencies should address this internally but where appropriate SCC coordination and reporting lines can be used to assist along with shared information across agencies working with common objectives.
- 5.5 It was also felt that the questions on firebreaks and clearances between shelters are in addition to Sphere requirements, and required additional assessment.
- 5.6 Referring to “5.5” it was subsequently clarified that Sphere qualitatively refers to and requires adequacy in aspects such as shelter separation / firebreak, but does not quantify same. It is therefore necessary to obtain quantitative standards from other internationally recognised standards on shelter (HOM V3 2007, UNHCR or Tents, UNOCHA) - this is not an addition to Sphere compliance, rather an independent authoritative interpretation of best practice for Sphere compliance.
- 5.7 It is also an issue in costing that some agencies have policies of loaning shelters, and then recovering and refurbishing frames and other materials where possible. Some materials are therefore recycled, and others, as required, are replaced.
- Agencies suggested that the depreciated cost of recycled materials needs to be taken in account in determining the cost of a shelter as opposed to “all new” materials shelter which can be retained by the beneficiary or hosts.
- 5.8 Agencies have indicated that capacity building and policy / advocacy to the GoSL agencies should promote the GoSL agencies refurbishment and reuse of shelters. Provision should be made to develop a “stockpile” of available shelter materials for future use and that wherever possible shelters should be “on loan” to beneficiaries for their period of displacement.
- 5.9 The principle of recycling materials has been established in the East. Some agencies do not have the capacity to themselves store recycled materials and in this respect other shelter agencies or implementing partners or GoSL authorities should be enlisted. It is agreed that to the extent possible there should be conformity in approach by agencies.
- 5.10 The principle was agreed that where more expensive materials / shelters are provided the agency should at the outset undertake and make provision themselves (or with third parties) for recovery / refurbishment and stockpiling of the materials.
- 5.11 Costing of shelters should then be based on:

- (a) all inclusive cost of materials, labour, transport for non recyclable materials and
- (b) for shelters with recycled materials on the depreciated cost / market value of recycled materials and market cost of new materials, plus refurbishing, transport and labour.

- 5.12 It was suggested that instead of various designs from agencies the SCC should develop one design for the Vanni and one design for the GoSL areas.

This was discussed and will require further attention by the working group as it has been felt from past experience that agencies should be free to develop their own designs in accordance

with agreed parameters and guidelines.

This is important to provide use of a range of materials rather than exceeding the capacity of the market in a smaller number of "specified materials" for "specified designs".

Agencies are then asked to share their designs as examples of designs complying with the guidelines for other agencies that do not have capacity to develop designs, or to assist in design development.

- 5.13 It was agreed that the TWG (in this and / or subsequent sessions) should establish clear and agreed parameters for shelters, as has been indicated in the "Handbook of Options" which to the extent possible should be retained, though prices may need review. It is clarified the "Handbook of Options" are examples, not prescriptive specifications. These parameters should as a minimum include:

- Size
- Type
- Height
- Labour content
- Price
- Governing Standards

6. Agreement on Basic Design Parameters

- 6.1 Further TWG sessions will be needed to finalise design parameters but the following were agreed:

- 6.2 Governing document shall be Sphere 2004 to which all agencies should comply.

Where Sphere has qualitative or other requirements which are not quantified in Sphere, other recognised international standards and guidelines shall prevail as agreed by the sector participants. The UNHCR Handbook of Emergencies (HOM) Volume III, 2007 is agreed as the partner for clarifying aspects required by but not quantified in Sphere (egg Firebreak, etc) or where HOM is not specific UNOCHA Handbook on Tents, or other internationally accepted guidelines to be agreed by consensus

It is noted that:

Sphere is a standard and Guideline for Disaster Response - it is not the definitive document beyond disaster response, and

That users should take specific note in applying Sphere, especially in what constitutes "Standards" and what constitutes " Key Indicators" or "Guidance Notes" - these are often confused.

- 6.3 For planning purposes of covered area the typical family shall be taken as and "standard" shelters sized for five (5) persons

As a result of "6.2" and "6.3" the "standard Emergency Shelter shall have a covered area of (unless permitted by Sphere) not less than 188 sq ft

The GoSL has in various instances sought 200 sq ft

Consequently sizes shall be not less than 188 sq ft (except as Sphere permitted exceptions) and shall target 198 sq ft +/- 5 percent

(range of 188 sq ft minimum to 208 sq ft maximum). This range also suits the standard modules of agencies attending the TWG.

- 6.4 Beneficiaries shall contribute unskilled labour, except in specific cases of Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs).
- 6.5 Beneficiaries are expected to contribute materials where possible, and any extensions must be beneficiary contributions.
- 6.6 Beneficiary contributions which increase the size of the shelter, within the plot, or in other manner impact on the safety or management of the site shall be subject to appropriate

constraints and an agreed framework for developing shelters on a given (especially small) site.

The DS and GN shall be required to be involved in such decisions and consents and the GoSL local authorities take ownership of the constraints of sites and consequences of uncontrolled beneficiary IDP construction / spatial planning.

- 6.7 The requirements of Sphere (and clarifying documents) shall also prevail for overall spatial planning of sites.

Where site conditions do not permit Sphere compliance the GoSL authorities agencies shall raise awareness and provide informed consent to IDP beneficiaries and local authorities and shall secure local authority endorsement of necessary constraints.

- 6.8 Especially on confined / constrained sites awareness raising shall accompany site planning and to the extent practical agencies shall mitigate spatial and safety / welfare constraints with the provision and adequacy for "camp" rather than "individual" facilities - such as appropriate communal cooking areas.

- 6.9 The GA shall be informed of, and details of, any necessary constraints (and possible consequences) on sites provided.

- 6.10 Heights of shelters shall typically be determined by eaves height and necessary roof slope:

- Basic eaves height approx 6 feet
- Roof slopes as per the "Handbook of Options"

(clarification of handbook content is: Cadjan roof slope > 40 degrees, Plastic covered cadjan or "tin sheet" > 20 degrees)

- 6.11 Use of concrete, cement and other permanent (or perceived as permanent) materials should be avoided in Emergency Shelters

- 6.12 Definition of Shelter Type (Emergency, Transition, other) remains as per the "Handbook of Options" - Emergency shelters are typically "a simple light frame structure designed for rapid installation, low cost and intended for a temporary period of accommodation only (3 - 9 months)"

- 6.13 Technical specifications are retained as per the "Handbook of Options" – Foundations, Roofs, Walls, Floors.

- 5.14 It is agreed that the \$300 emergency shelter remains the target, though local conditions and materials shall be addressed. Where the \$300 target cannot be achieved two parameters should be retained:

- Wide divergences in prices between differing shelters provided by individual agencies should be avoided in the interests of equity, and
- Prices should avoid approaching that of a permanent, semi permanent or transitional shelter

- 6.15 Agencies will determine the appropriate configuration (single or multi family) as appropriate to the situation and in keeping with the principle that earliest practical return to origin by IDPs is the preferred option, and that shelter solutions should not contribute to any disincentive to return.

7. Issues To Address or Follow-up

- 7.1 Agencies have identified a need to capacity build and provide additional support to local offices and to the GA / GoSL authorities without delay and before further displacements which can reasonably be expected in the foreseeable future.

- 7.2 Shelter agencies do not have the capacity to take on long term "camp management" of many mini-camps". It is agreed that assessments before providing shelter, careful layout and awareness of the IDP beneficiaries and GoSL authorities is required, especially in explaining constraints and necessary limitations.

However once a site has been developed Shelter Agencies are not resourced to "police" or make "continuing advocacy" to beneficiaries to prevent unsuitable extensions or site use. GoSL authorities, camp management and protection agencies are considered as possibilities.

- 7.3 Participatory assessments with IDP beneficiaries should be conducted to ascertain their priorities in the provision of shelter.
- 7.4 Joint assessments with shelter, WASH, protection and GN were proposed. However, with many sites and a rapid mass displacement this may not be practical. Alternatives are to be pursued.
- 7.5 It was suggested that decisions should be made at field level by appropriately trained and experienced personnel.
- This is agreed in principle though such decisions should be within, and complying with, an agreed consensus and documented framework of guidelines - the production of which is the objective of this and subsequent TWGs.
- 7.6 It was highlighted by participants that "ownership" and reuse of materials needs to be addressed in guidelines.
- 7.7 Ability to achieve the \$300 emergency shelter remains the target, and acceptable variances need to be determined by consensus.
- 7.8 In providing more expensive shelters with the intention for reuse, a concern was expressed that if the displacement becomes protracted, these shelters may need be upgraded for longer use as "transition" shelters. In this case the shelters will not be reused / recycled and they will then constitute a proportionately more expensive single use shelter. In that case the increased cost as "single use" shelters may be more difficult to justify - consequently the "pros and cons" should be considered carefully.
- 7.9 Agencies will address and where possible enhance the bilateral communications between field and Colombo offices.

8. Date Of Subsequent TWG Meeting

- 8.1 The TWG participants were thanked for their participation and inputs. It was agreed subsequent TWG or TWGs shall continue to develop options and guidelines for the northern situation as soon as possible.
- 8.2 Also was agreed that participation is voluntary and likely next TWGs will have smaller composition with the recommendations reported and discussed in the wider sector.
- 8.3 Participants interested in attending next TWG to advance guidelines will please indicate to SCC / UNHCR as soon as possible.