

NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

EVALUATION REPORT

COMPLETE REPORT



SHELTER EVALUATION AFGHANISTAN FINAL REPORT

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NORWEGIAN
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Cover page pictures

Top row (from left to right)

1. A man building the roof of his house in Kuz Kunar District
2. Carpenter building doors in Sar I Pul
3. "Visibility" placard on an abandoned shelter in *Andkhoy* Land Allocation Scheme
4. NRC warehouse in Herat
5. Building roofs in Kuz Kunar District

Middle Row

1. ID and land ownership documents
2. Beneficiaries building their house in Kuz Kunar District.
3. Timber in the Jalalabad NRC warehouse
4. A house built with NRC support in the Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme
5. The ceiling of a house built with NRC support in Sar I Pul

Bottom row

1. I beams in the Jalalabad warehouse
2. A domed house in Herat
3. Completing a house in Kuz Kunar District
4. Digging drainage in Sozma Qala transit camp
5. Building the roof of a house in Kuz Kunar District

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Thanks to all the people who supported this evaluation, in particular to Zabihullah Ghazawi, for planning and accompanying the field visits.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*One of the very few inhabitants of the Andkkoy
Land Allocation Schemes, by his house door* 4

This evaluation took place at the end of 2009, and was conducted by a team of two consultants: Silva Ferretti (lead consultant) and Joseph Ashmore (technical consultant). Most NRC project areas (with the exception of Faryab) were visited. Key programme staff and external stakeholders (beneficiaries and their community leaders, government representatives, NGO and UN personnel...) were consulted.

This report starts by looking at the “**shelter**” dimension, i.e. focusing on the standards adopted and on the physical aspects of the constructions. It then gradually broadens its scopes to look at:

- ① **sheltering**: focusing on beneficiary involvement in the process of shelter building and on the realization of their rights in the process;
- ① **settlement** dimension: relating shelters to the place where they are built – e.g. villages, urban areas, land allocation schemes - and looking at the aggregate value of the shelters and their impact, as multipliers, on the local economy
- ① **durable solutions**: considering different contexts of return and displacement in addition to planned return to place of origin – i.e. emergencies and durable solutions -; looking also at enabling vs. delivery options.
- ① **organizational aspects**: considering at the impact of area management on shelter delivery; looking at how the shelter programme is supported and monitored and on how accountability and learning are built around it.

Overall it appears that NRC has successfully conducted large-scale projects under difficult conditions, and its engagement should continue. Suggestions are put forward towards

- ① **Improvement of the current modalities of interventions** (by looking for example at technical issues, flexibility of the standards, beneficiary selection and community involvement, integrated programme, modalities of participation, programme timeframe, differential support packages, transitional shelters...)
- ① **a broader strategic approach**, looking at improving the inter-linkages of the shelter / legal work of NRC, at piloting and testing new approaches (linking delivery with enabling approaches) and at exploring more proactively new contexts for interventions (e.g. protracted displacement).

A “dashboards of dilemmas” concludes this report, and summarizes the quandaries that will need to be considered when thinking about options for intervention on shelter in Afghanistan.



BACKGROUND

*Where does NRC works?
Detail from the map in NRC radio room, Kabul.*

This evaluation examines NRC shelter programme in Afghanistan. As demanded by the Evaluation Policy of NRC and by the TORs, it will focus on the efficiency, relevance/ appropriateness, effectiveness, coordination, impact, connectedness/sustainability of the shelter programmes in achieving protection and durable solutions. Other relevant NRC policies (e.g. Shelter policy, Gender Policy) have also been consulted to build the evaluation framework.

This evaluation was designed to examine strengths and weakness of the programme with a “forward looking” attitude and to feed into the strategy building process of NRC. In conducting the evaluation we therefore focused not only to explore “what the programme achieved”. The consultant looked at the potential impact of NRC engagement: what could NRC achieve, within its mandate, building on its strengths and learning, in the current context in Afghanistan.

Overview of the programme

The NRC shelter programme started 2006 in Meymana. As summarized in the evaluation TORs, “In 2007/08 Shelter projects were started in Herat, Kabul, Sar I Pul and Nangarhar provinces. The Shelter projects follow a self-build model, based on the three designs approved by UNHCR and the Government of Afghanistan. To date, NRC has supported the construction of almost 8,000 shelters in Afghanistan, with current projects for construction of a further 1,500 shelters in Herat and Nangarhar provinces.

Eligibility for assistance in constructing a house requires that the beneficiary be a returned refugee or IDP, with access to land on which to build a house. The situation of the household is assessed to determine vulnerability and to confirm the need for assistance. A proportion of the beneficiaries are selected from the most vulnerable in the community who did not flee as refugees. Where title to land is disputed the ICLA team provides legal assistance in order to resolve claims.

*NRC believes that the Government of Afghanistan’s **Land Allocation Scheme** is part of the solution to permit durable return of landless refugees. However, site selection in remote and inhospitable landscapes coupled with failure to provide basic services has meant that many of the sites remain almost uninhabited. In 2007, NRC supported 300 returnee families to construct homes in Andkhoy Land Allocation Site – it is estimated that less than 30% of these houses are occupied on a year round basis.*

*Due to the high number of landless returnees, NRC is investigating options for **locally appropriate temporary shelters**, which could be moved in the beneficiary is not permitted to remain in a spontaneous settlement/on family land, but which could also be reinforced as the frame for a more permanent structure.*

The Emergency Shelter Cluster operates in Afghanistan and NRC is a regular participant in meetings. The Shelter programme works in close collaboration with the Department for Refugees and Repatriation and UNHCR at field level.

Programme objectives

As stated in the TORs for this evaluation, “the overarching objective of the Afghanistan/Pakistan regional programme is: **To promote and facilitate durable solutions for war and natural-disaster affected IDPs, refugees, returnees and others of concern in Afghanistan and Pakistan.**

The specific goals of the Shelter programme are:

- 1) *To facilitate voluntary return and reintegration of returnees in Afghanistan;*
- 2) *To provide vulnerable returnees (and vulnerable members of the surrounding community) with the means to build their own shelter. The means are training, materials and some financial support. The beneficiaries contribute with labour and locally available materials such as mud bricks;*
- 3) *To increase access to sanitation facilities (through latrine construction) and improved hygiene practices (through training);*
- 4) *To build the capacity of national staff in technical construction matters, monitoring and evaluation and the protection of rights; and*
- 5) *To successfully advocate for the rights of displaced people, including returnees, in Afghanistan.*

Shelter projects in Afghanistan

The following tables summarize the projects examined by this evaluation (data as available in Dec 2009).

The shelter programme was funded by a number of donors (the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECHO, BPRM and SIDA) and has been implemented 5 main areas: Faryab, Herat, Sar I Pul, Kabul, Nangarhar.

Note: Information relating to the projects is maintained in databases held in Kabul and in Oslo. Databases are not fully aligned and it was sometime challenging to gather documentation. In some cases the consultants could not get hold of all the reports relating to a project (for example, final reports were missing, or it was not easy to locate documentation relating to project extensions or changes).

The former shelter coordinator based in Kabul had left a significant amount of valuable documentation. There was also a useful field report from the NRC shelter advisor in Oslo

Year	Code	Donor	# shelter	Location	Budget	Approx budget USD
2006	AFFS0602	Nor MFA	500	Faryab	USD 661,789	662,000
2006	AFFS0605	Nor MFA	1000	Faryab	USD 796,755	797,000
2006	AFFS0606	Nor MFA	500	Faryab	USD 380,882	381,000
2007	AFFS0702	Nor MFA	1151	Faryab	NOK 10,850,000	1,839,000
2007	AFFS0703	ECHO	630	Herat	USD 699,937	958,000
2007	AFFV0701	BPRM	70	Herat	USD 475417	475,000
2007	AFFV0702	Nor MFA	1250	Herat, Kabul	NOK 16,000,000	2,712,000
2007	AFFV0703	ECHO	450	Nangarhar	USD 620,000	848,000
2008	AFFS0801	Nor MFA	2000	Nangarhar, Sar I Pul	NOK 23,519,577	4,388,000
2008	AFFS0802	ECHO	775	Nangarhar	USD 1,200,000	1,866,000
2009	AFFS0901	Nor MFA	530	Nangarhar	NOK 23,519,577	3,782,000
2009	AFFS0902	ECHO	850	Nangarhar	USD 1,508,000	2,118,000
2009	AFFS0903	SIDA	340	Herat	SEK 9,432,514	1,268,000

Faryab

Year	Project	#	Donor
2006	AFFS0602	500	MFA
2006	AFFS0605	1000	MFA
2006	AFFS0606	500	MFA
2007	AFFS0702	1151	MFA
<i>total</i>		3151	

Herat

Year	Project	#	Donor
2007	AFFS0703	630	ECHO
2007	AFFV0701	70	BPRM
2007	AFFV0702	800	MFA
2009	AFFS0903	340	SIDA
<i>total</i>		1840	



Sari Pul

Year	Project	#	Donor
2008	AFFS0801	1000	MFA

Kabul

Year	Project	#	Donor
2007	AFFV0702	450	MFA

Nangarhar

Year	Project	#	Donor
2007	AFFV0703	450	ECHO
2008	AFFS0801	1000	MFA
2008	AFFS0802	775	ECHO
2009	AFFS0901	530	MFA
2009	AFFS0902	850	ECHO
<i>total</i>		3605	



THE EVALUATION APPROACH

*Discussing house layouts with community representatives
in Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme (Nangarhar district)*

Timing and planning

This evaluation was conducted in November / December 2009 by two consultants, Silva Ferretti (team leader) and Joseph Ashmore (technical consultant).

The lead consultant was briefed in Oslo on the 3rd November. The original plan involved fieldwork from 16th November to the 8th December. It was changed due to the presidential inauguration and the Eid holidays: for several days all offices were closed and field related activities were stopped. In agreement with the steering committee, the work in country was then extended until the 15 December. Even if at a short notice, it was possible to delay the arrival of the technical consultant, and he came in country from 29th November to 6th December. The stay of the technical consultant was actually cut short – in agreement with the steering committee - when the consultants assessed that the technical evaluation would have either required a relatively limited presence in country or a much longer one, spanning over weeks, not days (to look in real depth at the technical options). Even within the new timeframe the evaluation plan needed to be continuously changed, to adapt to the weather conditions. In the end the consultants were lucky enough to access most field locations.

Another challenge was that the evaluation happened at a time of management change. The local staff made a great work in supporting the consultants, but the evaluation planning overall suffered from the ongoing changes, in terms of logistic arrangements but also in terms of “ownership” of the evaluation.

It is suggested to NRC to revise the preparation of future evaluation – to:

- ⌚ avoid the late autumn / winter season – and its logistic complications –
- ⌚ ensure that evaluations are planned on prior knowledge and understanding of the reasons for the evaluation and its objectives, in strong coordination amongst headquarters and the field.

Methodology

As required by the TORs, the evaluation builds on:

Desk reviews.

The consultants reviewed:

- ⌚ NRC policy papers
- ⌚ project and proposals documentation and budgets
- ⌚ operations manuals and NRC guidance
- ⌚ reports produced by NRC shelter advisors
- ⌚ other relevant background literature on shelter in Afghanistan.

Interviews with key stakeholders

At the national level the consultants met with:

- ⌚ NRC staff,
- ⌚ UN representatives
- ⌚ representatives of other international NGOs working on shelter (including members of the shelter cluster);

In the course of our field visits the consultants met with:

- ⌚ beneficiaries and host community individual members (note: the consultants had good access to women in the community. In some field visit female staff members accompanied the consultants. When this was not possible the (female) lead consultant was granted access to homes and could engage with women
- ⌚ village *Shura* (assembly)
- ⌚ local authorities (government representatives, in particular DORR),
- ⌚ UN representatives
- ⌚ NRC staff
- ⌚ representatives of local enterprises working on the programme

Field Visits.

In the course of the evaluation the consultants visited most project locations (apart from Faryab province - where the oldest NRC projects are located). The following are the areas visited, accompanied by a short overview. The evaluation diary is contained in Appendix 3

Kabul office



Shakardara district

Shakardara district is located a 1 hour drive to the North of the Kabul office. It is documented that the project built 152 shelters. Of these, many shelters were observed to be incomplete. It appears that approximately 50 shelters were not completed but the material was handed over anyway.

Shelters were built in existing villages for returning families. The most vulnerable families in some villages were additionally included in the programme.



Bagrami district

Bagrami district borders Kabul and is a one hour drive to the east of the NRC office. 300 shelters were built (though no final report was found). The shelters were largely built in new settlements. Some of the land for the settlements was purchased by one family and then sold on to house owners. There was some variation in construction detailing of the shelters, but the general scheme of the UNHCR model was followed. 13 Families could not afford to complete the programme.

Jalalabad office



Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme

The Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme is located 30 km away from Jalalabad, on a desert area, but with good road linkages. Estimates place its population at around 4,500 HH. Several organizations are now working in the site, including UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, ACTED, DACAAR... to provide shelter, water and other basic services. NRC adapted the shelter it uses in the province to ensure uniformity with the other houses built by UNHCR (using iron rather than timber beams). Other housing models are however built in the site: UN-HABITAT, for example, is providing higher standard housing with community monitoring.



Kuz Kunar district

The Kuz Kunar District is in the North of Nangarhar province. The consultant visited a couple of villages at a short distance from Jalalabad. NRC has been working this district from the start of its engagement in the province. We could therefore look both at on-going shelter construction as well as completed houses.

Mazar Office



Andkhoy Land allocation scheme

NRC made a major investment in the Andkhoy LAS by supporting the building of 300 shelters. Other organizations – e.g. ACTED and UNHCR – also built shelter units in this LAS. The consultants could only find one family living on the site, on top of the police officers guarding the site. The site lacks even the most essential services and infrastructure. Land is inhospitable, water salty. This forced those who had initially moved here and invested in building their homes to leave. Some regularly came to check the state of their houses. Most of the “abandoned” houses are still in a good state. They are kept locked, with walled windows.



Various project locations around Sar I Pul

The consultants visited several location – in Sar I Pul town and in surrounding villages – to gather an impression of both the houses built in the first phase of the shelter programme (where beneficiaries had freedom in choosing materials and house layout) and in the second phase (where beneficiaries were asked to stick to the standardized plan).



Sozma Qala transit camp

NRC, with funds and in-kind material donations from UNHCR and SIDA, supported the emergency winterization of the Sozma Qala transit camp. The camp was intended as a very temporary settlement established for over 300 returnee households to the province in August 2009, but settlement took longer than expected. NRC engaged in the site when it became evident that households were going to face emergency conditions. NRC mobilized inhabitants to assemble and install Weather Mitigating Tent Shelters and in providing basic, temporary infrastructures and services.

Herat office



Kohsan District

Kohsan District lies west of Herat, on the Iranian border. We visited some completed houses and we could also witness the process of beneficiary selection currently implemented by NRC.



Taghi Naghi (Land Allocation Scheme)

NRC is not working currently in the Taghi Naghi LAS. However other agencies and Government representatives expressed a strong desire for an engagement of NRC in the area. This LAS is located on the main road from Herat to Iran, it has water, electricity and basic social services (school, clinic) but its occupancy rate is still very low. The government is currently considering expanding the site.



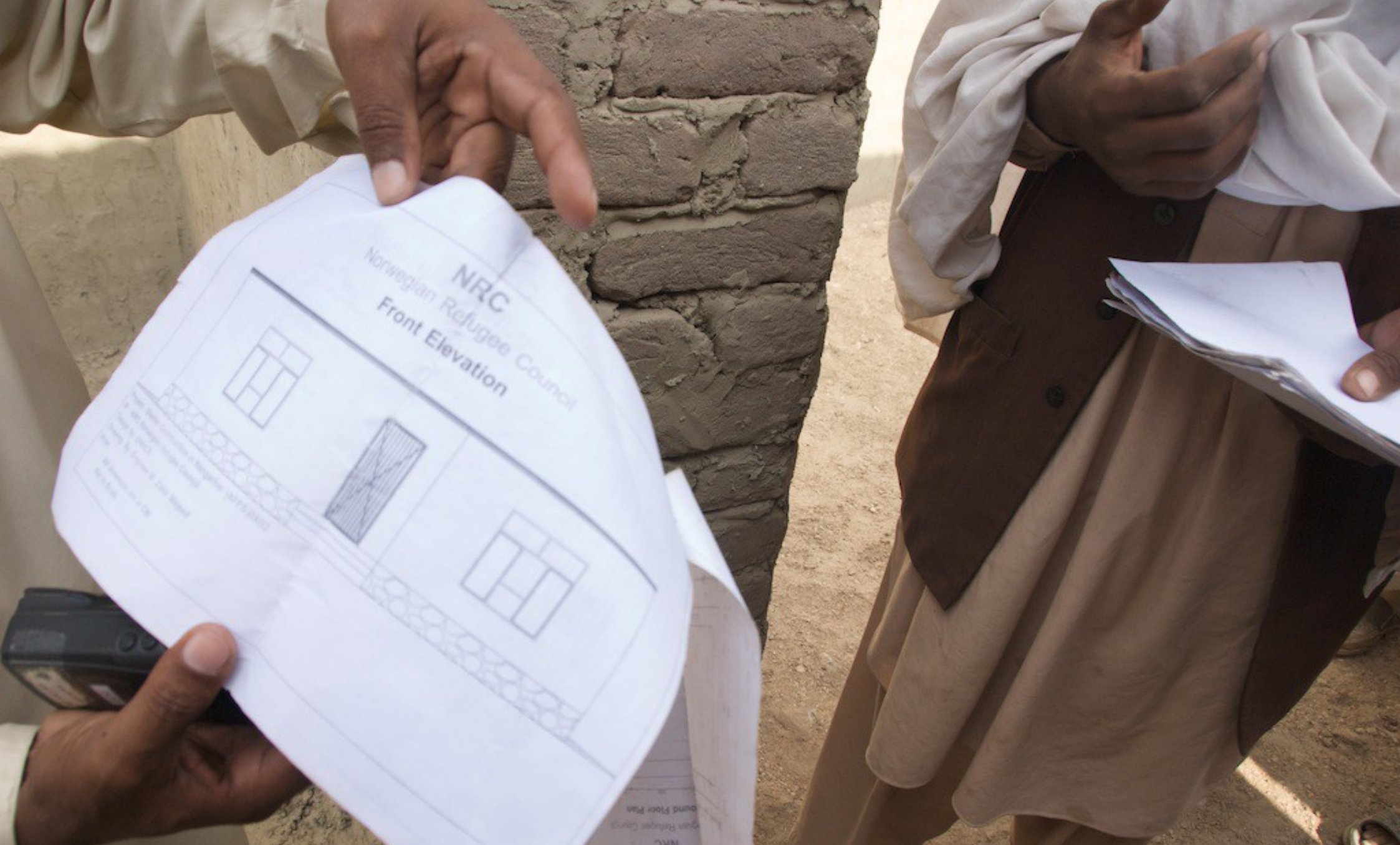
Injil District

The Injil District surrounds Herat, so some of the shelters are actually located in the periphery of town, in a semi-urban area. Here, in addition to the conventional shelter programme, NRC run gender violence programmes which included housing provision for vulnerable women.



Mashlak IDP camp

Mashlak is one of the largest IDP camp in Afghanistan, and one of several around Herat (the IDP population in the Herat province is estimated as 12,955 households as per Jan 2010). It hosts people from Badghis province, displaced for more than 8 years and with no immediate prospect of return. NRC is not implementing the shelter programme in Mashlak, but it is assisting the population for example with winterization vouchers for non-food items. NRC also assisted the UNHCR for a survey of IDPs in Mashlak

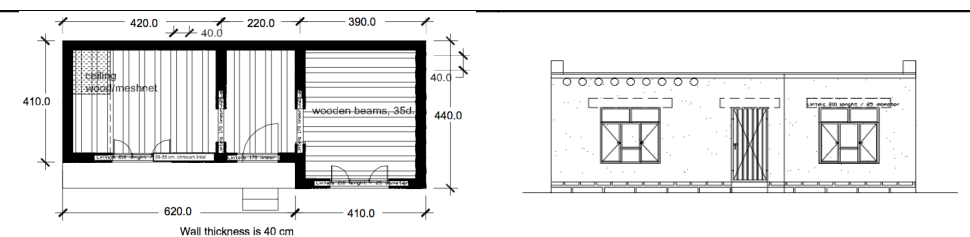


SHELTER

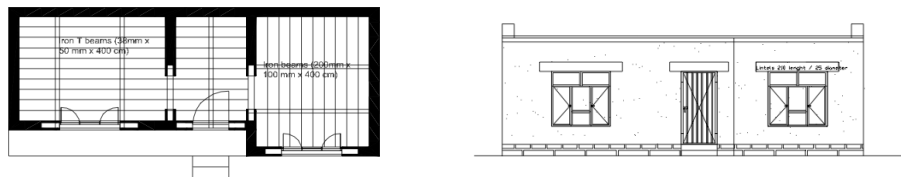
A NRC and a local mansion, in Chamtala settlement, discuss challenges encountered in complying with the UNHCR model

The standard shelter (UNHCR MODEL)

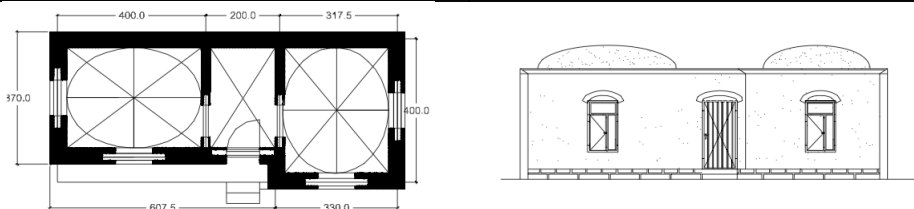
NRC shelter programme in Afghanistan conforms to the UNHCR standard, including design and procedures for beneficiary selection. The UNHCR shelter model has been changing with time. Initially all shelters had a timbered roof, steel was then included as an option. Over the years changes have been made to include minimal seismic resistance measures. It now comes in three versions, as illustrated below (the drawings refer to the UNHCR standard 2008). Some marginal changes have been introduced in the past year. For example more recent buildings do not have an “L” shaped plan, they are now rectangular.



Standard A: 43.46 square meter plinth area shelter package, including 24 wooden beams (35cm circumference), 32 square meter ceiling wood or meshnet, 29 meter linear (30-35cm circumference) beams for lintels, 3 doors, 2 windows, tool kit, latrine package, and a total USD 65 cash grant at completion of shelter and latrine.



Standard B: 43.46 square meter plinth area shelter package, including 5 iron beams (4m), 20 T beams (4m), 10 T beams (2m), 32 square meter ceiling wood or mesh net, 29 meter linear wooden beams (30-35cm circumference) for lintels, 3 doors, 2 windows, toolkit, latrine package, and a total USD 65 cash grant at completion of shelter and latrine.



Standard C: 36 square meter plinth area shelter package, including USD 50 cash grant for raw material, USD 70 cash grant for skilled/unskilled labour for roofing (dome, arch, vault or any type of rehabilitation), USD 30 cash grant to build arches or procure lintels locally. 1 door and 4 windows, tool kit, latrine package, and USD 65 cash grant at completion of shelter and latrine.

Beneficiaries are selected in accordance to the UNHCR criteria (as discussed in the next chapter). They are expected to complete the shelter + latrine package within the project timeframe. The construction is phased as per table below, and is monitored by NRC field teams, checking progress and construction quality / adherence to standards, with numerous visits on site (more than 10 per household). Recent projects are starting to employ local masons to make technical expertise continually available on site to monitor progress and to provide advice.

Foundations	
Lintel level reached	Shelter materials like doors and windows to be distributed before completion of phase
Completion	Cash contribution (to compensate for lost wages and offset for labour / material expenses)
Handover	Countersigned by <i>Shura</i> members / NRC / DORR

Beneficiaries receive cash grants (as detailed in the picture). They are expected to contribute labour (or hire it on the market, at their own expense) as well as some locally available material (e.g. mud, water, straw) needed for construction.

A key question that this evaluation will investigate is: “are standards adequate? And should they be rigidly adhered, or flexibility should be allowed?” The report will contrast different takes on standard and flexibility of different NRC projects, in the practice. But prior to this, the next section will examine more closely the standard package.

NRC packages

NRC provides beneficiaries with cash contribution plus a package including shelter materials (beams, lintels, doors and windows, toolkit) and a latrine kit.

Windows and doors are provided in different models and materials (wood or iron), based on what is available and can be manufactured locally. Beneficiaries are usually satisfied. Near Kabul some received metal windows, but would have preferred timber because they are less cold in winter.

Windows distributed in standard A and B are large, as commonly in use also in traditional houses. At first inspection, the large windows appear to be badly suited to the climate of Afghanistan, with its extreme temperature swings. However larger windows remain the most appropriate for cultural reasons and provide more light, and people use curtains and transparent plastic sheeting to improve insulation in winter. UNHCR is now working on a new model for smaller windows (90x150) that can be used separately or joined together.

Beneficiaries had no complaint about the quality of doors. In one project area, however, the doors of the houses visited seemed to be slightly lower quality than

the standard production (price declared by the carpenters we interviewed being roughly the same). There was not a possibility to double check on this, also because doors were produced by several carpenter workshops: it was hard to know who received what, to match prices and quality). But this suggests that there might have been issues of quality control. Or that NRC could have done a better job at negotiating lower prices for the doors or better finishing in the tender specifications.



Doors on sale in the market



Doors fitted in NCR shelter

What standard is adopted in a project area was largely a choice made by NRC, with **little consultation** with beneficiaries. Overall NRC went for strict adherence to UNHCR standards, with minor modifications. In Herat NRC tended to stick to the standard C (the dome house, traditionally used in the province). Elsewhere it favors standard A (wooden beams) over standard B (iron beams), but this is a contested choice. Several beneficiaries / government representatives expressed a preference for iron beams, on the ground of better quality / durability / concerns about termites. The dissatisfaction is aggravated when, on the same site, NRC houses coexist with iron beams houses built by other agencies. In the Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme, to limit these frictions, NRC ultimately resolved to use iron beams to conform to UNHCR, also active in the area.

The following pictures compare materials used in two houses in the same village in Kuz Kunar. Inhabitants consulted strongly preferred the quality of the UNHCR ceiling, and liked NRC lintels more. Overall UNHCR houses were the winner.

If NRC gives a limited role to beneficiaries in negotiating the housing package, then offering something perceived as lower quality than what other organizations provide is problematic. If standard B (Iron beams) is more valuable than standard A (timber), why should some beneficiaries settle for less? If NRC goes down the road of full conformity with the standard, it should work with the UNHCR to reassess the **equity of the packages**, and to transparently demonstrate to beneficiaries that they are getting an equitable deal. It is suggested, for example, that cost of a shelter package is calculated and publicly shared (with a breakdown by materials) with other organizations,

beneficiaries and community members (who were unaware of it) for transparency purpose, and to debate what is really the best material.



NRC: ceiling



UNHCR: ceiling



NRC: lintels



UNHCR: lintels

Revising shelter packages involving beneficiaries and local contractors might also be an option for NRC. NRC could, for example, negotiate alternative packages based on an established total cost. This might not be possible case-by-case, but could be attempted at least in pilot communities. For example: if timber was accompanied by higher cash grants, would beneficiaries still prefer iron? If iron came at the expense of quality of doors / windows, would it still be their option of choice? What about employing other materials? By leading such consultations NRC could still work within a standardized approach but ensure that it is more locally adapted and cost effective. Within this process NRC should also scan for innovative low-cost appropriate technologies that could be adapted as part of the package, if accepted by potential beneficiaries. NRC could consider partnering with some organization doing research / prototyping work on shelter in Afghanistan to this extent.

Standard C: the domed house.

The most controversial package is probably standard C, the domed house. It is based on a traditional design, largely used in the western province. There are some good reasons for promoting it:

- 🕒 it is well **adapted to the climate** (the high ceiling, especially when fit with a ventilation chimney, helps room cooling and ventilation);
- 🕒 it has a **low environmental impact** (it is made of mud bricks produced on

site, and does not employ timber / iron);

- ⌚ it helps to preserve **traditional building skills**, and had a positive impact on the livelihoods of local skilled craftsmen

However, beneficiaries had also complained about this standard:

- ⌚ The additional **cash grant** for skilled labour (to construct the dome), is insufficient to cover the cost of the roofing. NRC should reassess the cost of domes and adapt the package accordingly.
- ⌚ The dome has less **flexibility**: iron/ timber beams can be re-used, whilst the investment in the dome cannot be recovered. In addition, the roof requires continuous investment in **maintenance**.
- ⌚ Dome roofing requires much **larger walls**, which of course take more time and effort to be built.
- ⌚ Dome houses are seen as “**old fashioned**”. This is not a big issue in the villages, but it is a problem for the houses built near town.



The need for adaptation to context. The owner of the house on the right opted out the project when he reached roof level. He felt that a dome roof would have limited further expansions of the house. The final grant would not have been sufficient to cover costs of the vault anyway, so he invested in more favored options. Furthermore, - in the outskirts of Herat, most neighbors are opting for more modern solutions (see house on the left)

It is recommended that the NCR use a case-by-case approach when deciding what model to use, and in particular when promoting the dome house. Ultimately “forcing” a model of houses to beneficiaries that are not satisfied with it (but have no other option than accepting it) is problematic.

The cost (and the hidden costs) of a shelter.

The estimated cost of the standard shelter packages, as quoted in discussions amongst implementing agencies and donors, is approx **1500USD**. However this conceals the technical assistance / monitoring component (provided by the implementing agencies – see cost breakdown at page 46) and the self-help component (provided by the beneficiaries). A shelter cluster member strongly

argued that giving currency to the 1500USD figure is misleading. Implementing agencies should **estimate what is the real cost of a house** and put this on the table when making negotiations with donors and when choosing what housing models to adopt. For example, the deployment on large scale of some housing prototypes is sometimes hindered because they are introduced with their real cost, obviously higher than the artificially low 1500USD of the shelter package. An analysis of the real cost of shelter might give to donors and international organization a better basis for a **cost-benefits analysis** of their investments.

The cost of **monitoring shelter construction** (staff cost and the associated logistic of it) should be estimated to check if it is a justifiable overhead. Different options for monitoring shelter construction might mean that the same staff time could be employed in research on new prototypes, or development of local capacities for example.



Water, where it needs to be delivered by tankers, can be very expensive. Some households mentioned that the cash grant they received also had to cover the high cost of the water they used. NRC should reassess the cash grant given to the beneficiaries based on the availability of materials.

Most costs are hidden under “**self-help**”. Beneficiaries receive materials, a cash grant, technical assistance, but they are asked to build the house themselves

- ⌚ Self-help means **passing on the construction costs to the beneficiaries**. Much research demonstrated that the idea that the poorest are keen to build their own houses is a myth. Wherever possible people use labourers (in particular for the shelter components requiring more skills). The housing packages include a small sum of money for labour and materials (increased and paid in advance for particularly vulnerable people - e.g. female headed households) but this does not cover the total cost of labour.
- ⌚ Self-help does not assign a **value to poor people’s time**. Poor people are not idle. The requirement of building a in a short time clashes with their need to earn a living. Cash allowances not enough to repay them of loss income. For example, in Bagrami project, 13 families dropped out of the programme due to lack of funds.

- ⌚ The cost of **materials not included in the package** varies. For example water and mud in some cases were free or easily available. Elsewhere they came at a relatively high cost.
- ⌚ Self-help is not risk free, it has a cost in terms of safety. Despite contrary advice of NRC a beneficiary built a wall on foundations not yet dried-up. The collapse of the wall provoked the death of 2 children in a neighboring house.



Availability of earth is also an issue, especially where beneficiaries live on small plots. Getting mud by digging a hole in front of a house (which is then not promptly refilled) is a safety threat for the people living in the house and can cause structural problems to the house when too close to the foundations

Foundations, walls

The following are some consideration about foundations, walls, and roofing as currently built by the beneficiaries

Foundations

- ⌚ Insist on a stone foundation/footing for locations where the site-conditions means water is likely to damage walls constructed entirely out of earth (recommendation taken from report by Rob Delaney).
- ⌚ Stone walls could universally be improved by ensuring that there are regular stones tying the wall together.

Walls

The main materials used for walls of NRC shelters are:

- ⌚ Stone – usually up to a maximum of 1m
- ⌚ Mud – piled in courses.
- ⌚ Mud block – built up in courses approximately 30cm tall
- ⌚ Burnt brick – used by wealthier families. Often with mud as mortar.

All mud structures are best and safest when built in the summer months when it

dries faster. Consider ways to ensuring that families have access to straw as a binder for wall construction.

Walls are commonly rendered with a mud plaster and finished with a layer of mud mixed with straw. Sometimes they are rendered with cement at a cost of approximately 60 USD for a shelter. Many shelters were also painted, both on the outside and on the inside.



Sample of a wall showing how through stones could improve strength and seismic resistance.

Roofing

There are three models of roofing used in NRC shelters in Afghanistan,

- ⌚ Timber beams covered by timber planks and then mud
- ⌚ Steel I beams covered by timber planks and then mud
- ⌚ Vaulted roofs (Herat). Vaulted roofs require most skill to build and additional attention to the foundations and wall strength.

In Battagrami district of Kabul, beneficiaries identified minor deflections in timber beams used for roofing. This is due to the quality of the timber used and the span of the rooms. Subsequently dimensions of the rooms were altered from 3.6m to 3.3m in width, to create longer thinner rooms.

In a report by Rob Delaney, grass and matting and plastic sheet were noted as being used as alternatives to timber planking in Sar I Pul. It was found that these alternatives were substandard and should be discouraged.

Where plastic sheet is used it should go under the mud of the roof, not over it.

Earlier shelters did not have a timber ring beam, although later shelter designs do (see section on seismic resistance below for how ring beams can be improved).

Seismic resistance

Seismic resistance is an important concern in many (not all) the project areas where NRC is working. Cost effective solutions to improve seismic resistance are a challenge, currently, for all organizations working on shelter. UNHCR itself is struggling with it. In 2008 it experimented with wooden beams to distribute the weight from the roof, but the idea was not properly applied in the field. UNHCR is now considering abandoning this solution. But rather than discarding it altogether, it would be worthwhile exploring how to make this solution more feasible in practice.

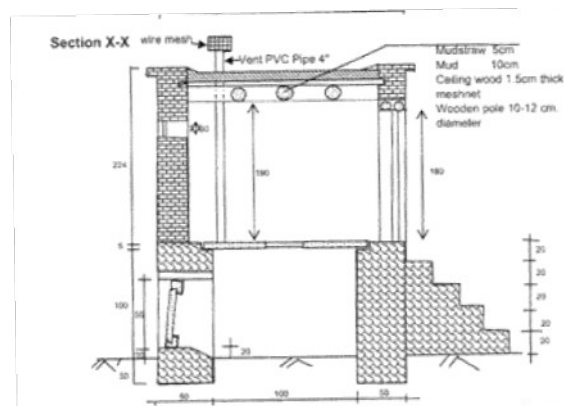
NRC is using – as per UNHCR model - timber triangles and ring beams. These technical solutions are discussed more in detail in appendix 3 (together with practical suggestions on how to improve seismic resistance and further reading). The bottom line is that, as implemented today, these solutions seem to be insufficient to guarantee adequate protection from risk. In Herat NRC is experimenting with vertical timbers, but – if they are not the main structural elements in a timber frame building they might be useless as bracing (timber is stronger in tension or compression). In fact they could weaken some walls if it is not properly tied into the mud.



Timber triangles inserted in the wall of a house

It is hard to pass judgment on technical solution without proper testing, and it is recommended that NRC should partner with other implementing agencies to verify the resistance of pilot homes. Shelter prototyping organizations are active in Afghanistan and are trying alternative solutions: NRC should establish also linkages with them and join forces in looking at different approaches. There is also a need to monitor more closely the work already done. A shelter meeting report mentioned that - according to programme managers based in Kabul and Jalalabad - “there has been some anecdotal evidence of building with earthquake resistant measures incorporated withstanding recent earthquakes better than those without such features”. But there was not follow up / research on the issue apart from these anecdotal findings.

Latrines



Design of a Vault /VIP latrine. This is the model more often used in NRC programmes, even if in some cases different types of latrines have been built (e.g. pit latrines)

Latrines are a problematic component of the shelter package. In some cases they are used and families are happy with them. Elsewhere latrines proved less successful: we found them spotless clean, probably never used even when beneficiaries had inhabited the house for some time. Some beneficiaries confessed that they still prefer to defecate in the fields surrounding the villages. This is not a problem itself if the area is sufficiently sparsely populated, but in the case cited the village was quite a large one, so this practice should have been discouraged.

We found a case where a new latrine was built even if one already existed on site. The beneficiaries of the new vaulted latrine, continued to use the pit one already on site. They considered emptying the new latrine as costly and uncomfortable. On this note, was discovered that near Kabul latrines were cleared out into the street in some cases.



The inhabitants of a NRC shelter in the Herat province built a vault latrine, as demanded by the programme. But they still prefer to use their pre-existing pit latrine, even if it is located further away.

Near Kabul, some of the most vulnerable, poor families, on cramped plots in the centre of villages did not have the space to build a latrine, but in some cases still received the materials. For such families, working on the required urban sanitation issues requires more intensive effort and negotiation than the shelter project timeframes allowed. (See KASS as an example programme in Kabul, although such projects may take three times longer and cost three times more than NRC shelter projects)

In the Sar I Pul Area, even if space was available, we found completed houses where the latrine was not finished, and were beneficiaries did not have any other alternative facility on site.



The house was completed, but not the latrine. The family living on the plot is not interested in completing it, even if they have no proper alternative on site.

If the latrine component is important to NRC, more investment should be made in making it work (sensitization on hygiene is ongoing in some areas). On the other end, there have been suggestions that NRC could consider disinvesting in the latrine component “Consider using the budget for the latrines for assistance with soil/stone if absolutely necessary. The priority should be to provide a sound shelter rather than shelter with poor foundations and a latrine (field report by Rob Dalaney).

As the use of latrines is highly dependent on local conditions, it is suggested that customs about bodily functions are explored as part of the village assessment, looking at what are the existing options. Wherever evidence is found that latrines are not commonly used, or models of latrines in use are unacceptable, NRC should invest more than it currently does in hygiene education, along its engagement with its beneficiaries. In these cases it is also important that latrine buildings is not left at the later stages of the programme, but that NRC demand to see completed latrines in earlier stages. NRC had now added components of hygiene educations. Village assessment will help to understand when this component is not needed, and where instead it should be expanded. A few

sensitization meetings do not suffice to change behaviors. Acceptable solutions / improvements must be designed in agreement with the beneficiaries and possibly with the input and involvement of influential members of the communities (elders, teachers, mullahs)

Model: flexible or rigid?

The UNHCR standard shelter designs and guidelines have been established so that a basic quality of safe construction can be met across the country. They were established for very large-scale shelter project managed by UNHCR working through many implementing partners. They also aim to reduce conflict between different organizations offering differing levels of assistance.

But to what extent the UNHCR standard is set in stone? What flexibility should be allowed? We had different responses to this question in the course of the evaluation, even by people working in the same agencies. Interestingly, different shelter programmes by NRC ultimately also had different takes on the issue. Some see the models as non-negotiable. They must be implemented as prescribed, even when they do not satisfy the requirements of the inhabitants. Some – and this had included senior UNHCR staff - saw the models simply as a good starting point that can be modified - based on local and individual needs and preferences. For them, prescriptive models are a safe option that can guarantee quality, especially when they are to be implemented by organizations with limited technical knowledge (as is the case of some local implementing partners of UNHCR). But when implementing organizations have the technical capacity to assist beneficiaries in developing their own solutions, do it safely and within the same costs, should they be limited by what is prescribed? What is the space for innovation? Of course the issue of equity amongst beneficiaries remains: equal entitlements to material and resources will lead to different level of quality / satisfaction when implementing agencies deliver at a different standard,

Standardized approach: advantages

- ⌚ Efficiency in procurement
- ⌚ Perceived equity
- ⌚ Uniformity of results, even quality
- ⌚ Easier monitoring (for conformity only)
- ⌚ Could serve to push through more technically sound solutions
- ⌚ Suitable also for agencies / contractors with more limited technical capacity (need capacity only on one approach)

Flexibility: advantages

- ⌚ Beneficiary empowerment
- ⌚ Customization to household needs
- ⌚ Local adaptations
- ⌚ Innovation

Standardized approach: disadvantages

- ⌚ One-solution-fits-it-all can be inadequate for households needs

Flexibility: disadvantages

- ⌚ Higher technical capacity by monitors
- ⌚ Beneficiaries might not be in a strong position to negotiate fair cost of labour / materials
- ⌚ When local capacity / techniques are poor, quality can decrease

In at least one case, NRC moved away from the standardized approach and left considerable freedom to its beneficiaries. In Sar I Pul phase one, beneficiaries were not only allowed to choose their favorite layout, but they were also allowed to choose and buy directly construction materials in the market. Beneficiaries interviewed really appreciated the freedom they had in building the houses as they liked. The downside of it is that – as reported by NRC shelter advisor – the quality of building was questionable: inferior roofing material was purchased and laid out incorrectly (but with modalities that are locally used and acceptable), and this will jeopardize the duration of the roofing. The same report made allegations that beneficiaries might have used lower quality material and pocketed the difference to make other investments for their households. It was then suggested to adopt a far more prescriptive model for Sar I Pul Phase 2.



This window looks into a room of an already existing house. Given the small plot size, there was no other way to accommodate a new house built according to the set model. The inhabitants of the house did not seem to matter much about this odd layout, but the consequence of it is that they now have a room with no direct lighting.

The Sar I Pul phase one project, where so much freedom was granted to beneficiaries, is possibly a wasted opportunity to learn more about local preferences of the inhabitants and local building techniques. The documentation held by NRC focused on the negative connotations of adaptation (technical issues related to roofing and latrines) but did not explore the positive (e.g. enhanced layout / responsiveness to inhabitants needs), which could hold interesting learning. Rather than falling back to a very prescriptive model, for Sar

I Pul phase II it would have been worth exploring modalities to provide stronger technical support to people as they built the houses, to negotiate housing that could satisfy fully beneficiaries' aspiration and be of better quality.

None of the beneficiaries interviewed for the Sar I Pul project 2 expressed complaints about the layout. However we found some incongruous solutions that could have avoided with more flexibility.

The bottom line is that, given the technical expertise and the investment of NRC in monitoring, it is a wasted opportunity to apply it only to projects based on standardized solutions. NRC should start to add flexibility to its work. It should revise the standards and discuss what issues could / should be deviated from and what would be non negotiable.

Local adaptations and innovations

"Housing needs throughout Afghanistan vary from place to place. Geographical and cultural variations should be taken into consideration when designing shelter models" (Shelter Handbook, NRC)



Herat: design for concrete beams

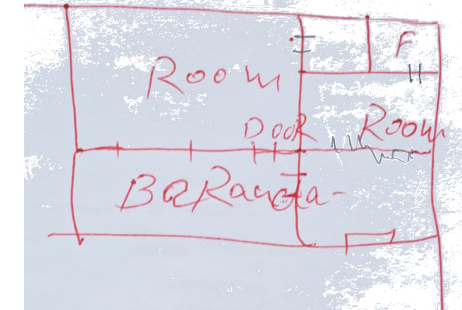
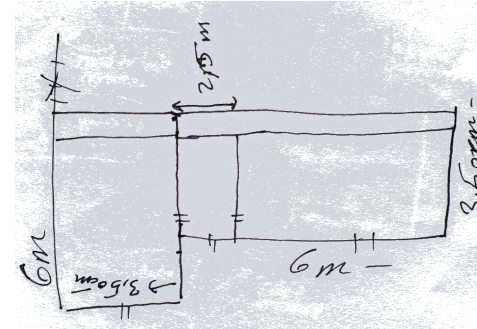
NRC could have a stronger role in learning from local adaptations and in promoting them. Local adaptations / innovation can be originated by **NRC, researching / prototyping solutions** that can then be rolled out as part of the standard package. So far NRC did not invest considerably in this. It is a missed opportunity to use its technical know-how – and the expertise gathered so far – to improve shelter standards. There are of course exceptions. In Herat NRC started to experiment with alternative materials, piloting the use of concrete beams. In Jalalabad NRC is now introducing a temporary roofing structure. In both cases, however, prototyping happened behind the doors of NRC offices, Local adaptations can also originate by **the beneficiaries themselves**, at the household scale, when they are given freedom to do so.

In the course of the evaluation we found several adaptations and additions made by the households, for example:

- ⌚ Moving doors
- ⌚ Removal of internal walls
- ⌚ building of stone foundations and plinths

- ⌚ adding concrete block coping stones on the roof
- ⌚ adding tin gutters to evacuate the water away from the roof
- ⌚ addition of plastic sheet on top of the roofing timbers for waterproofing
- ⌚ addition of fabric ceiling
- ⌚ painting internal walls
- ⌚ addition of door at the back of the house

Some alterations improved the quality of constructions. Others (e.g. doors in corners) are a safety hazard, and indicate that NRC had not been giving sufficient technical explanation to the beneficiaries.



Housing layouts proposed by the beneficiaries of the project in group discussions. If a standard plan for all was necessary, beneficiaries in Jalalabad area would have preferred having a veranda and larger rooms. Accommodating cooking / washing spaces in the house was also important to some inhabitants.



An alternation put in place by several beneficiaries was a door at the back of the house, linking it to a cleaning / toilet area. However the position of such door (by the corner) is a potential threat to the stability of the house.

In some cases the changes demanded by people were not accepted, and they were forced to build houses not satisfactory for them. What changes would they have wanted?

- ⌚ Use of different materials (for example, iron beam rather than timber beams / Wooden windows instead of steel windows)
- ⌚ Slightly larger rooms (to fit the standard local room size). Some beneficiaries pointed out that they were considering how to expand the existing room by removing a wall.
- ⌚ Some did not like the corridor. They would have preferred a larger room. They are planning to remove the corridor and expand room as the handover is completed (however if this happens there will be static repercussion on the house!)
- ⌚ Space for washing / cooking linked to the house through an additional door.



A beneficiary transformed one room of his house in a shop. The alteration was done after completion of the standard model of shelter. To do so, he closed an internal door and he opened a new external one facing the street.

“Transitional” shelters (start smaller, grow bigger in time)

“Transitional shelter provides a habitable covered living space and a secure, healthy living environment, with privacy and dignity, to those within it, during the period between a conflict or natural disaster and the achievement of a durable shelter solution. Corsellis & Vitale (Transitional Shelter Guidelines 2009, Draft)

NRC is currently involved in the provision of transitional shelter in various contexts. In Sar I Pul transitional shelter solutions were been provided through the winterization of tents in a transit camp for returnees. In the Jalalabad area NRC is going to experiment with a new prototype of transitional shelter for beneficiaries with no tenure title on the land they occupy.

Based on the experience with these different approaches NRC should look more systematically at its options for providing transitional shelter in Afghanistan. It should also contrast it with other options being experimented. For example, it will interesting to compare the solution adopted by the UNHCR for transitional shelter - one room, built as the conventional shelter - with the one designed by NRC in eastern Afghanistan (a movable metal roofing structure), as they will coexist on the same site. Actually some UNHCR representatives expressed discomfort with the idea that NRC was introducing a different housing model in the area. This should be an incentive to be bold about the choice and carefully weight its impact vis-à-vis alternatives.



NRC will soon start to deploy its own model of transitional shelter. It will be important to check acceptance of this prototype and share learning around this.

Transitional shelter could be a viable approach to use with landless people. But, as this report will discuss later, transitional shelter alone does not suffice to provide a durable solution. NRC should try to link explicitly - in its strategy - the development of transitional shelters, with the legal support work and advocacy work towards durable solutions. If engagement with landless people is

discontinued after providing then a lower standard package, issues of fairness could be raised.

Points to consider

- ⌚ NRC should reconsider its stance vis-à-vis “**compliance**” to the package. Overall following a standardized approach does not give justice to the capacity and the expertise that the organization would have to innovate, prototype and support beneficiaries in adapting the houses to their needs.
- ⌚ Some standard packages (e.g. standard C, domed house) are not liked by all beneficiaries, because of a mix of practical and economical reasons as well as perceptions about it. It is recommended that the NCR use a case-by-case approach when deciding if employing it, consider adaptations of the package (e.g. higher cash contribution) and **avoid forcing undesired options on beneficiaries**.
- ⌚ When NRC decides to conform to standards – without negotiating options with beneficiaries – it should **adopt the same standard used by other organizations working in an area**, or it should check with beneficiaries that the alternative offered is acceptable - to **ensure equity**. Currently NRC and UNHCR might work with the same broader standards, but then one organization chose the wooden beams option, the other the iron beams, perceived as more valuable.
- ⌚ If NRC prefers to operate through standardized approaches, it should invest more in revising the existing ones and in creating **different standardized options by negotiating and testing options for assistance** with beneficiaries, within the same total cost (and transparently sharing cost information as a basis for discussion).
- ⌚ NRC also experienced (Sar I Pul phase 1 project) that it is possible to leave considerable **freedom to beneficiaries** rather than working only through standards. In some cases beneficiaries chose to adopt lower quality solutions, but overall they seem to have appreciated the freedom of choice. NRC should consider building on this experience.
- ⌚ Beneficiaries might want to do **small adaptations** within standardized solutions. Flexibility in the design should be allowed, but openly so the risks are more fully understood and therefore can be mitigated against.
- ⌚ The **real cost of a house** should be calculated, including the hidden cost of programme support and self-help. This will help NRC and other implementing agencies to make better calculation of the cost-benefit of different shelter options (and to better quantify the contribution by beneficiaries) or to reassess the current shelter packages (for example giving higher grants where local materials need to be procured at a cost)
- ⌚ If NRC continues to operate through standardized packages, it might more actively research for **alternative materials and technologies** that could be diffused as part of the package (e.g. low weight metal trusses for ceiling as prototyped by research NGOs in Afghanistan).
- ⌚ If **seismic resistance** is a concern for NRC, it should invest more in testing the solution proposed. The evaluation team is concerned that the solution in place now and the quality of their implementation by inhabitants might not provide enough protection to households.
- ⌚ NRC should better assess use and perception of **latrines** by beneficiaries before starting construction. If NRC is committed to ensure that latrine are used, it should consider investing in hygiene education where hygienic behaviours are not in place. A check of existing facilities on site will also avoid duplications or to provide materials that cannot be used on site.
- ⌚ NRC is currently **piloting** the use of new materials and new housing prototypes, which should then be carefully monitored and shared with other organizations. In future prototyping and piloting work NRC should involve beneficiaries from the inception, and build its prototypes in field locations prior to roll them out.
- ⌚ NRC started to engage in **transitional shelter** and should continue to do so, learn from the solutions in place and develop new options. Transitional shelter could be used to support landless people, but to get to acceptable durable solutions work on shelter delivery will need to link up with ensuring security of tenure.



SHELTERING

*The hands of a woman who is helping to mix and carry
the mud needed to build her house*

Looking at the “sheltering” aspects means to look at the role of beneficiaries as active actors in the shelter building process.

This section will first discuss who are the beneficiaries and how are they selected. The shelter programme is currently designed to respond to voluntary return of refugees. Returnees need to present documents validated by the UNHCR and to have land on which to build their home. Particularly vulnerable categories within this group (e.g. female headed households and disabled) are given priority. But these criteria have strong limitations, in that they prevent the programme from reaching the neediest people: these who do not have land titles when they return to Afghanistan or as they are displaced within the country.

This section will then focus on some key aspects of sheltering (self-help component; the timeframe; the linkages with work on rights...) to discuss more in detail how to enhance the involvement of the beneficiaries in the programme

Beneficiary selection



A village elder signs the interview form after witnessing an interview with a potential beneficiary.

Current modalities of beneficiary selection.

Currently beneficiary selection happens in accordance with the **criteria set by the UNHCR**. Community Beneficiary Selection Committees (CBSCs) are set up. The CBSCs include community members, representatives of the Provincial Department of the Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation (DoRR), and a representative of NRC. NRC checks that potential beneficiaries have the necessary documents, and it interviews them at the presence of other community members. A final selection is then made based on the information collected. The village leaders are informed about the process, but – at least in

the location we visited – they did not receive a final record /a list of beneficiaries that can be publicly shared for transparency purposes.

Checking in depth the performance of the beneficiary selection process would of course require to spend more time in communities than the cursory interactions the consultant had during their fieldwork. Overall NRC is investing considerable attention in ensuring that the process of beneficiary selection is transparent and fair, and follows the guidelines.

Despite the commitment to ensure fairness of the selection process, there have been some issues in the past. Past NRC internal reports record that “although there was a transparent process, it was clear that some families had been better able to use the system to their advantages” and that in some cases selection had happen “by interview by one man and one woman from NRC. There does not appear to have been a village selection committee to verify findings.” A local government representative indicated that the **involvement of the local government** in the selection process is little more than a formality, and that its observations about the non-eligibility of some beneficiaries were not properly taken in too account. It is suggested that NRC puts in place **systems for recording, verifying and responding to observations on the selection process** to make it more transparent (this report will discuss further on the importance of setting complaint mechanisms).

NRC worked in areas where **other beneficiary selection criteria** are in place (for example in Chamtala camp the UN-HABITAT is also active). This allowed for a comparison - by the beneficiaries themselves - about the strength and suitability different selection processes. The UNHCR/NRC procedures were praised for putting forward criteria clearly focused on the most vulnerable (amongst the land owners). But they are implemented on a case-by-case basis, lead by the implementing agency. The UN-HABITAT involved more strongly the local Shura in the beneficiary selection and in housing construction (the Shura has control of the budget, for example). The beneficiaries themselves suggested that the ideal would be a combination of the two approaches: more involvement of the community but guided by stronger guidelines and supported by independent observers, helping them to focus on the neediest.

Vulnerable categories

Within the current criteria there are provisions for targeting vulnerable categories, such as female-headed households and disabled people. Some programmes specifically targeting gender violence had provided women with shelter. The consultants could meet with beneficiaries in vulnerable categories that expressed satisfaction with the assistance received by NRC.

NRC shelter projects are also increasingly gender sensitive. Female staff are

recruited in field offices. Some women from the communities are nominated to participate in selection committees, but it is still challenging to see women having a major role in the projects. Even in communities there where NRC selected women representatives, they did not sit in Shura meeting with us, and we did not have a chance to meet them. NRC should invest more in giving women representatives a stronger role and visibility.



A disabled man proudly shows the house he built with NRC support.

Differential packages?

Currently families receive the full package of support or nothing. The only exception is the package for vulnerable categories of beneficiaries (e.g. female headed household and disabled people): they receive some extra cash support to enable them to pay for labourers.

NRC could consider **different shelter support packages** – as other organizations working on shelter delivery are doing in Afghanistan -: e.g. CARE, in the context of the KASS programme. The existing beneficiary selection procedures are already quite thorough and intensive: the assessment process to assign differential packages might not require considerable more work than what is now done.

Is the programme targeting these most in need?

Is the programme reaching the people most in need? The simple answer is: **largely not**. This is the main concern the consultant team has about the current programme – as per UNHCR standards and procedures. This shortcoming does not depend on limitation in the existing selection criteria. The key point is that - **by design** - (because it targets those who have land titles) the shelter programme is not responding to the need of landless people, certainly much more vulnerable. (the work done by NRC in Land Allocation Schemes has more potential to this end, and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter). Responding to the need of the most vulnerable would require considerable

changes in the architecture of the NRC programme: focus on tenure issues, transitional shelter solutions and possibly incremental and phased approach to shelter building, within a longer timeframe.

Looking at the **occupancy rate** – which in several project locations is significantly below 100% - also indicates that the programme sometime targets people who already can rely on alternatives when it comes to shelter. (However unoccupancy does not mean that the house is abandoned or not needed: beneficiaries might be delaying moving on site for lack of livelihoods or could be migrating seasonally)



An unoccupied house in Sar I Pul, several months after completion. The beneficiary is not currently residing in the area. The picture also demonstrates the relatively high standard of some houses, finished with quality materials.

We were presented with evidence that the current modalities of **self-help** might actually prevent the poorest from benefitting from the programme. The poorest people might be too busy to scrap a living to also have the time to build their home. The very limited timeframe of the programme might simply make it impossible for them to find the needed time for housing construction. This consideration applies in particular to the households that have been relocated in Land allocation schemes. They have no support on site, and – in the absence of livelihood on site – they have to commute to town (or live there) to find job opportunities. Families these living in compounds in close proximity with their relatives might have stronger support towards housing construction, and more chances to have support systems in place.

The shelter standards cash grants are also intended as compensation for the income lost by working on the house. But they are simply not enough to cover the lost income - as well as the cost of additional materials. (In Chamtala NRC started to implement livelihoods activities to this end).

Beneficiary involvement

To what extent beneficiaries are involved in the programme? They are “implementers” of the **self-help component**. But, ultimately, the way in which self-help is intended by the programme means that this is a **passive role**.



A beneficiary builds mud bricks for his house in Chamtala LAS

With few exceptions – the programme is very prescriptive and does not leave much space to beneficiaries to express their **preferences**. This report already discussed that in most projects only very minor alterations are allowed in the shelter model.

As NRC is currently experimenting with alternative designs (e.g. a transitional shelter) there would be opportunities for beneficiary involvement in **prototyping**. However, the transitional roofing structure has been developed in NRC warehouse with no involvement / testing with beneficiaries, and it will now rolled out in large numbers. It is recommended that NRC monitors carefully beneficiary perceptions about the structure, and that in the future new prototypes are tried and tested in real conditions and with beneficiaries prior to roll out.

The programme is also not designed to have a high degree of beneficiary involvement in **decision-making**. Criteria for selection of beneficiaries are pre-established. Even the involvement of the *Shura* in beneficiary selection is actually structured as a bureaucratic process of validation rather than to as a truly decision-making one based on criteria established by the community itself. The programme is highly prescriptive and process are standardized and formalized: the “shelter” package is univocally designed and delivered.

The advantage of this is to ensure transparency, uniformity of response, and streamlined organizational processes. This can also reduce abuses of corrupted *Shuras*, which are a concern for NRC. This is of course a legitimate and efficient

way to provide assistance. The programme is now a well-oiled machine for shelter provision, and does deliver on that, in a timely way and with satisfaction of the beneficiaries. More beneficiary involvement is likely to complicate and possibly slow down the process, and NRC should consider if this is a reasonable path in an emergency programme.

The current approach might, however, prevent NRC from challenging its assumptions around the sheltering process and about the needs of the beneficiaries it serves. If vulnerable individuals could freely dispose of the amount invested in their shelter, which would be their priority? And if a community could manage the budget available for the shelter programme in an area, would they ultimately direct it to the few families selected by NRC? Or could they consider experimenting with more flexible packages, targeting more people? Would the *Shura* adopt the standard UNHCR model for house construction? Could the *Shura* put in place different mechanisms for shelter building employing *ashar* (**community work**)? And would a *Shura* ultimately choose to invest in individual shelters or rather on other priorities, such as infrastructures for the whole village? The rigidity of the programme now conceals these questions.

The point is that efficiency comes at the expense of the creative involvement of the beneficiaries and of the communities they belong to. NRC could consider, aside with the delivery of the shelter as per blueprint, to **create the space to experiment new solutions with active beneficiary involvement**. The NSP (*National Solidarity Programme*) approach showed that communities in Afghanistan can be empowered to have a more active role in decision-making, and NRC could build on this experience and to give a more important role in decision making to communities than it is current the case. We were informed that the NSP will be soon implemented in areas where NRC operates, and NRC could consider forging linkages with it, in coordination with communities elected structures and/or implementing agencies.

Towards owner-driven reconstruction?

Owner-driven reconstruction is run through a combination of cash, vouchers, and in-kind technical assistance. NRC programme could be defied as “**constrained owner (driven) reconstruction**”: owners are asked to manage the house construction but have little choice about how the house should be build, in terms, for example, of choosing layout, timeframe, materials. Choices about weather to adopt self-help or employ labour are also limited - for these with less-resources - by the paucity of cash allowance, not sufficient to contract external help. The advantage for NRC is that this constrained form is more standardized, therefore simplifying procurement, delivery mechanisms and technical assistance.

The drawback is that the above factors reduce the potential that owner driven reconstruction might have in terms of “**empowerment**”. Pushing people to be active actors would be important to help them to get control of their lives as they resettle, and to get them out of “passive assistance mode”, where they are recipient of choices made by others. In the current debate around emergency shelter, owner driven reconstruction is valued as “the most empowering and dignified approach for households, and it should be used whenever the conditions are right for it [Jha (2010). *Safer homes, stronger communities*. World Bank]. NRC might want to consider, for the future, to loose up its current constrained modalities and stir towards giving owners more options and choices. If the programme moves in this direction it should look at:

- ⌚ **Define clearly what is non-negotiable** (what building techniques are NOT suitable and acceptable? What materials should not be employed? What features – e.g. for seismic resistance – should be put in place? What should be the minimum standards?). It is important to set realistic standards, achievable by the poorest. This might also involve negotiation with local institutional actors around local standards and building codes when they are de facto too high for the means of the poor or biased towards alien technologies.
- ⌚ **Provide support rather than guidance.** Instead of checking that construction happens as prescribed, the staff of NRC should check if the choices of owners are sound. This will require judgment calls and therefore the full use (and maybe additional capacity building) of the technical expertise of NRC staff and its partners – e.g. local masons employed for monitoring purposes. They should see themselves - and be seen – as “experts consultants” on housing rather than “controllers”.
- ⌚ **Create options for inhabitants:** the choice for inhabitants should be expanded (and this is doable, especially in these areas where there is a critical mass of shelter). Beneficiaries should be provided with viable options for house constructions. This could include practical examples / prototypes of low-cost but high resistance materials, improved building techniques (e.g. for seismic resistance). This means to work actively with the local enterprises to create capacity to this end. It might also involve prototyping by NRC, or closer association with other organization currently prototyping different housing models. NRC could also consider creative ways to advertise more sound options and techniques. Beneficiaries and local masons might be made aware of alternatives through catalogues, visiting trip, and prototypes on location, house fairs.
- ⌚ **Take a longer-term approach.** Owner-driven construction must understand a house as the result of a long-term project lead by the owner. The shelter supported by NRC in emergency mode is the core of the future house. In addition to provide the minimal core of the house, as an emergency intervention, NRC should consider if and how to accompany the process

through which expansion and improvements happen. Such commitment to accompany and support a longer-term process does not necessarily need to be a direct provision one. It could take the form of advocacy for enabling approaches on the shelter sector (e.g. access to credit, security of tenure, livelihoods support...) as this report will discuss more in depth in the “durable solutions” chapter. Looking at a long term perspective - bringing together minimal direct provision in the short term and advocacy for long term support - could lead to reducing the current standards of provision, and to reach out a larger number of beneficiaries.

Timeframe of the process: emergency?

If sheltering is a process, what is the timeframe of such process? Currently the shelter response happens through one-year projects, because it is intended as an “emergency programme”.

There are still **emergencies** in Afghanistan – and NRC should be able to operate fast in these circumstances, much faster than within a one-year timeframe. The recent investment in creating capacity for emergency response by NRC is positive progress in this direction, and it already paid in responding to the life-threatening needs of the returnees in Sozma Qala.

But in most bases the focus by the international donors on “emergency” is little more than a pretense in the current Afghan context. Shelter is happening – with few exceptions – in situations of **prolonged instability**, which would require long-term solutions rather than quick patches.

The current timeframe is, simply, too short, because of:

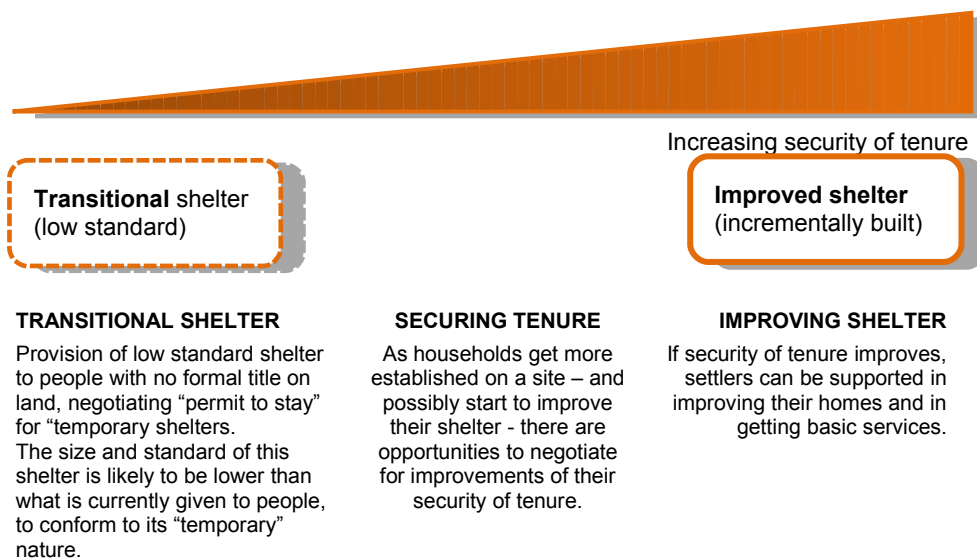
- ⌚ **Procedural issues:** By the time the programme is approved and staffed, some time has already passed: the real duration of the programme is further reduced (depending if donors give 1 year from approval or stick to end of calendar year).
- ⌚ Time required for **careful beneficiary selection.** Beneficiary selection is quite a time/staff intensive process, requiring several visits to the villages and long interview processes and data checking.
- ⌚ **Weather conditions:** In the harsh summer, availability of water for construction might become an issue. In the winter months the pace of construction is slowed by cold and snow. Walls take longer to dry. Access to remote areas not linked by tarmac road can be problematic because of snow and rain. In some cases the winter months also coincided with the end of the project. When NRC had put pressure on people to complete their housing by NRC deadline, this has resulted on protection issues (such as children mixing mud in the cold).

- ⌚ **Other engagements for the beneficiaries:** it is not right to assume that beneficiaries will be able to work full time on building their houses. In the summer months village residents are likely to be busy with their harvest; low-income households need to spend considerable time earning an income.
- ⌚ **Time needed for raising money:** In some cases families had to opt out the programme because they could not raise the additional funds needed within the project timeframes.

Aside from practical and logistical constrains – the NCR should recognize – and should help donors to recognize” - that sheltering is an incremental process that is likely to require longer time to be followed up. Success in two areas of work where NRC could engage to reach the most vulnerable depend on working on a longer timeframe:

- ⌚ On **Land Allocation Schemes** shelter delivery need to be designed to accompany the growth of a settlement. It must be delivered in phases, side by side with services and infrastructures. Time consuming coordination across different agencies will be needed.
- ⌚ In **situations of protracted displacement**, when working with households illegally occupying land (as it is happening in Jalalabad) the way forward is likely to be a phased approach, working in parallel on tenure issues and physical shelter building as illustrated below. Experience so far shows that – even in cases where the government resists settlement, i.e. squatters on government land - it is possible to negotiate provision of transitional shelter in response to protection issues. Transitional shelters need to be lower standard than the ones now delivered to be accepted as a “temporary” solutions. As households get established (in suitable locations), their tenure can be renegotiated, leading incrementally to conditions for permanent settlement on site. NRC should evaluate the equity of its shelter packages across the board to decide if settlers should be supported to improve their homes in the process, up to the level of the “normal shelter package”, or if it is acceptable to give to vulnerable people shelter of a lower standard of shelter (but accompanied by security of tenure). The timeframe for this process will well exceed one year.

Advocacy with donors on the timeframe issue is important. Shelter cluster members all lamented that such timeframe only allow for shelter delivery as usual, and impede to test more sustainable solutions. They agreed that concerted advocacy action should take place on the issue. NRC should take the lead in advocating with donors for longer timeframes, in conjunction with other organization working in the sector.



From delivery to rights

The shelter programme certainly respond to a basic right of the beneficiaries, but to what extent it is also an opportunity – as demanded by the rights-based approach – to empowering people to get a stronger understanding of their rights and support in demanding them?

Awareness of rights and entitlements

Enacting people rights presuppose that they are fully informed of them.

Helping beneficiaries to understand that they have a right to demand information - and to make an organization accountable - is a first important step to enact their rights. NRC carefully monitors the progress of work and also leave some documents to the beneficiaries, but overall monitoring and information is designed to fulfill the needs of the “office” rather than the needs of beneficiaries. A later session will look more in details at the accountability dimension, and describe more in detail how monitoring forms could be designed for beneficiaries (by simplifying them and making them accessible also to non-literate people) and how the programme could plant the seeds for more accountability.

NRC could also have a more active role as mediator and informant rather than shelter delivery only. As NRC engages with individuals in the housing construction process, it could use this opportunity to make them aware of rights linked to housing (e.g. rights to access services) and provide pointers on that. We did not find evidence of this happening, even in locations, such as the

Andkhoy Land Allocation Scheme, where inhabitants more aware of their rights might have engaged more effectively with the government in demanding them.

Tenure

Ensuring security of tenure is key in guaranteeing the right to an adequate shelter. In addition to working in support of people already holding this right, NRC should commit more energy to ensure that it is granted also to the most vulnerable, as part of its shelter programme.

NRC engaged in research and advocacy work on land issues, which should certainly be continued through the ICLA programmes. However the linkages amongst the shelter and ICLA programme must be strengthened. There is consensus, across other agencies, that NRC has a rare strong expertise on tenure, and that sharing of this expertise would be an asset for shelter cluster and for those working on shelter.

NRC should link more effectively the advocacy and research work at the national level with practical implementation of it. NRC could, for example, help to build practical instruments and responses to design flexible forms of land titling. Evidence – also based on research work in Afghanistan – indicates that it is dangerous to limit engagement on land and property issues to restitution and to the mechanical application of the *Pinheiro Principles* (the UN Principles for Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and IDPs). Restitution is only one of many issues, because refugees and IDPs may never have had property in the first instance. [Pantuliano, S. and Elhawary, S. (2009). *Uncharted territory: land, conflict and humanitarian action*. HPG Policy Brief 39]. In addition, working on the right to security of tenure does not necessarily coincide with work on private property rights. Actually, in contexts where land is a scarce resource – as in the outskirts of the expanding Afghan cities – granting full ownership might result in vulnerable people selling their valuable land, cash the money, but then be pushed to remote locations, where it could be harder to establish livelihood and where they would be ultimately more marginalized. The experience of many countries demonstrated that it is possible to guarantee adequate levels of security of tenure for the poor – encouraging them to invest in their homes – by increasing security gradually.

NRC is in a unique position to research the current options and mechanisms in place regulating land tenure, which – in addition to private property - are likely to include more nuanced ones - formal / informal and customary – leading to different degrees of security. And of course NRC is also in a unique position to research and advocate for other options, adopted for example in neighboring countries. The solution for ensuring that also the landless people can get a shelter and security of tenure will probably imply to employ different modalities of tenure, at different stages.

Points to consider

- ⌚ By programme design, **NRC is LARGELY NOT reaching the most vulnerable** returnees / displaced in Afghanistan. It should develop alternative options to support most needy landless people (e.g. work on landless people, as started in the LAS).
- ⌚ Within its programme NRC puts lot of effort in **beneficiary selection**, and has streamlined sound procedures around it. NRC seems to have satisfactory results in reaching out vulnerable people amongst its current target population, i.e. returnees with land title. There are still a few inefficiencies in the process leading relatively some better off people in a community to get access to shelter.
- ⌚ Consider **varying support packages** for families with different levels of need.
- ⌚ The shelter programme is overall a **prescriptive** one. The current role of beneficiaries is passive one, and they (both at the individual and at the community level) are not involved in decision-making.
- ⌚ NRC should consider transitioning from its constrained form of “**owner-driven reconstruction**” to a full-fledged version, giving choices and empowering its beneficiaries (it could also engage on a double track programme: when speed and efficiency of delivery is paramount, it should continue to adopt its tested approach oiled approach).
- ⌚ The current **timeframe** for shelter project – pushed also by donors demand – is not a realistic one for the sheltering process. NRC should look at longer timeframes, by strategically connected subsequent projects or – even better – by persuading donors to engage longer term on more sound processes. Longer timeframes and integrated approaches could be the way forward to serve the needs of the landless people.
- ⌚ Beneficiary selection (and monitoring) results in lot of **paperwork**, but – with the exception of few documents kept by the beneficiaries - it is mainly intended to be archived in the office. NRC should consider how to share documentation. Additional records for accountability purpose could include, for example: list of beneficiaries shared with the community representatives / formal replies to feedback on complaints about beneficiary selection.
- ⌚ The sheltering process should be implemented within a **rights framework**. This includes building more awareness – by beneficiaries – of their own rights. NRC could work toward this by increasing its own accountability and by informing, more proactively, beneficiaries of their shelter related rights.
- ⌚ The **right to land / security of tenure** is a key area of expertise for NRC. The organization has already a leading role in advocating for it. It could further develop its work on land by developing incremental options for land security. Practical work on land rights should be linked to sheltering process.



SETTLEMENTS

*The view from the window of an abandoned house
in the Andkkoy Land Allocation Scheme*

Looking at the “settlement” dimension means to relate the shelter to the place where they are built, and to consider the aggregate value of the shelters. In the following we will look at three contexts that are relevant for NRC shelter programmes.

- ① Return to villages
- ① Relocation Land allocation Schemes
- ① Settlement to Urban / semi / urban areas

Return to villages

A large proportion of NRC shelters are found in villages (or small towns) where returnees had land, or access to land could be negotiated with relatives or the local communities. The homes we visited in villages were often built as part of a larger family compound, and in many cases relatives could host beneficiaries as they built their shelter. Beneficiaries were selected amongst these returning in country supported by UNHCR. However – in a context of dispersed return – the criteria by which areas of intervention were chosen by NRC is not clear, and NRC should make them more explicit.

For future programmes NRC should reflect on **logistic challenges of running dispersed programmes** when focusing on the most vulnerable in scattered villages, in particular because the programme is based on frequent monitoring visits to the beneficiaries. So far the programme worked in villages and areas relatively easily accessible from the field offices, but if the programme intends to reach beneficiaries in ill connected and/or remote areas logistical challenges will increase.

The way forward for work in villages is probably the establishment of clear **village selection criteria** – rather than relying on criteria for selection of individual beneficiaries only. As the most vulnerable villages are identified, **holistic support** should then be given to the whole community. So far the programmes had mainly worked to support individuals, but the situation is now starting to change as livelihood components are added to the programmes. One reason for not focusing selection criteria only on returnees - but on the community as a whole – is that returnees might actually have a higher life standard and higher **expectations** than those who never left: focusing assistance on the returnees only might mean that the most vulnerable are left out. NRC could also consider how to add DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) components programmes, with a view of reducing present and future vulnerabilities.

Points to consider

- ① To make work in dispersed sites more viable, NRC should establish **criteria for prioritizing villages**, and link shelter delivery with broader programmes targeting vulnerable community members (as per its mandate).
- ① **Disaster Risk Reduction** components should be incorporated in assistance programmes at the village level, to reduce vulnerability of communities and to protect the investment on shelter.

Land Allocation Schemes (LAS)

LAS were launched by the MORR (Ministry of Relief and Repatriation) and endorsed with a presidential decree in 2005 to provide land and basic infrastructure to landless returnees. 5 pilots were set up in provinces with high degree of return (including Herat / Chamtala in Nangarhar) in 2006. Other 8 sites were launched in 2007 (including Andkhoy). As per 2008, 32,586 families had received temporary land ownership deeds in LAS and 4,018 have moved to the settlements (UNHCR data). The slow progress of the LAS is linked to the absence of essential infrastructures and social services (including water), to the lack of livelihoods – given their isolated location and also to poor beneficiary selection. By admission of government officers the criteria for assigning plots have been far from perfect, sometimes assigning plots to speculators rather than to the most vulnerable families.

The LAS were created to give land to the landless, a highly vulnerable group, and as such they are an obvious area of engagement for NRC. In addition to providing shelters on site, NRC also recently engaged in **research** on them, focusing on legislative aspects. The research and the shelter programme work have not really been connected in the practice. Future strategies should bring closer the research / advocacy work with the practical realizations on site.

NRC provided shelters in the LAS of Chamtala and Andkhoy. The LAS in **Chamtala** is still far from being the thriving settlement that it is intended to be, but people are on site, transport links to Jalalabad are in place, water is available (hand pumps and water tanks) and some small business are starting to appear on site. Interestingly, at the time when we visited the site, a displaced community (due to earthquakes) from the neighboring Sherzad District had also encroached the site. They saw the area as the only viable option for resettlement in the province: a clear indication that the LAS is considered as a viable place to live by those in need.

NRC made a major investment in Andkhoy, building 300 shelters. But the **Andkhoy** settlement is presently a failed one. The land is a harsh desert and no basic service - not even water (which is salty on site) – has been provided. We

only met one family living there. The only other presence on site is a police post, set to prevent looting. All the families that had moved to the site at the time of construction left. A few beneficiaries visit briefly Andkhoy from time to time to check their homes. Most houses are still in a good state. They are kept locked, and often windows are walled with bricks or protected with plastic sheeting. These signs indicate that houses are valued, even if the owners are not present. But, as time passes by, some houses are starting to show signs of dilapidation.



A walled window in Andkhoy

NRC built **too many shelters, too quickly** in Andkhoy. The government had promised to deliver services that never materialized, and NRC, having committed to build hundreds of shelters in a short timescale was in no position to wait. This shows that one-year timeframe is inadequate for resettlement projects in the LAS. Other agencies are working on longer timeframes when engaging in integrated support programmes for building new sites (see for example the CARE C-ISS programme – a 3 year programme). NRC should negotiate longer timeframes in the future or at least look at how to strategically link several projects for long-term engagement.

When the building work was completed, NRC stopped its engagement in the site. But NRC had invested too much in Andkhoy to allow that things remain as they are. It had lead too many families to invest their labour, their money and their hopes in building their shelter to allow that this is all wasted. NRC has now a moral **responsibility in advocating** and work for improvements that could lead people to settle back.

We were informed that the government recently gathered beneficiaries at the site (through a radio announcement) and promised improvements: linking the site to the water and electrical grid, building a school and a clinic. NRC should check what promises were made and should **make the government accountable** to

them. NRC could also summon beneficiaries on site, check their interest in moving back, and start connecting them in a network: it seems that currently there are no formalized organization of inhabitants or elected representatives, and NRC could have a role in forging one (it should have actually invested in this when inhabitants started to settle and build their houses).

Through the livelihood component of its programmes, or by looking for other cash for work funding, NRC could also generate **small improvements** in the site as well as income for residents: for example, currently there are no roads and no drainage, and the site is very muddy in winter.

The high un-occupancy rate of the houses is not isolated case. Other agencies involved in shelter construction in LAS (e.g. IRC in Taghi Naghi, near Herat) also experienced similar problems. In addition to the low occupancy of shelters, many plots remain empty. In part this is due to the fact that beneficiaries might not have the resources to build, or that they need to live off site to generate an income. But plots are also empty because they are a speculative investment. Low occupancy prevent LAS from reaching the critical mass which would allow them to start functioning as healthy settlements, with local markets and livelihoods. Government officers are now considering how it would be possible to get back the land if not occupied, and reassign it to needy family willing to settle. NRC – which started to engage in research on policy around the LAS - could have a role in proposing **alternative forms of tenure**, in revising criteria for selection and in linking all this with practical work, supporting a new weave of beneficiaries to move on the site.

It is recommended that NRC looks carefully - in its strategic process on how to intervene in the LAS - as this is certainly an avenue for targeting the landless and most vulnerable returnees.

Points to consider

- ⌚ Short-termism is an issue when working on LAS. In the case of Andkhoy it lead to build too much too quickly. One year is not enough for meaningful work on LAS.
- ⌚ The success of LASs derives from integrating shelter with services and economic opportunities. Coordination is key, but capacity to this extent by government / other agencies has been low. NRC should engage on LAS within strong coordination mechanisms. If they are absent, it should advocate for them.
- ⌚ The importance of having livelihood opportunities on site or close by is an important concern for inhabitants. NRC should ensure that its shelter package is linked to the livelihood component.

- ⌚ In LAS people comes from different areas, and there is a need to build community ties and local governance. NRC should check what community mechanisms exist, link to them and look at how to support them. Strong local governance and capacity of a community to mobilize are important asset in demanding rights and services from government and other stakeholders operating on the site.
- ⌚ There is a need to consider alternative tenure arrangements in the LAS, E.g., rather than full tenure, conditional tenure, which can be withdrawn if there is “no show”, no evidence of commitment to move to the area. NRC should advocate for these arrangements and could expertise to define and apply them.
- ⌚ The LAS have been, at least partially, a speculation opportunity. NRC should continue to denounce inefficiencies in the allocation process, but it could also have a role – through its selection process – in checking the eligibility of beneficiaries.
- ⌚ NRC had invested too much in Andkhoy to allow that it remains a “failed” LAS. It should commit to resume work in the area and identify the leverage points that can start pushing beneficiaries back on site.

Urban / semi urban returnees

NRC did not engage in any of the project specifically designed for urban areas in Afghanistan (e.g. the KASS - Kabul Area Shelter and Settlement). And when it implements its current programme at the outskirts of the cities, it does so with no substantial alteration from its usual *modus operandi*.

In the course of the evaluation we contacted staff from organization working in urban areas (CARE and ACTED) to gauge the current opportunities and challenges in operating in the Afghan cities. In general such projects require much more flexibility, as families live in smaller, irregular plots. So the use of standardized models for housing is not an option. We also learnt that some NGOs managed to put in place differential subsidies, based on families size and income.

All organization consulted pointed out that one of the key issues when working on urban areas – aside beneficiary selection – are land issues, and that NRC has an expertise that would be extremely valuable for urban programmes. NRC should therefore consider if and how to engage with work in urban areas, in consideration of the fact that cities are absorbing a large proportion of population return / displacement in Afghanistan.

Other areas for engagement in the proximity of urban areas, which would fall squarely in the mandate of NRC, are the IDP camps (refer to discussion in the next chapter)

Points to consider

- ⌚ Given the large percentage of displaced and returnees living in urban areas NRC should consider if to engage more in these contexts. Effective work in urban area would require adaptations / change of the current *modus operandi*, but it would be worth investing in this: because of its expertise on tenure - the NRC could be well placed to develop valuable innovation.

Shelter programmes as multipliers

Looking at the settlement scale leads to question what are the ripple effects of shelter. It is now broadly recognized that housing is a **multiplier**, and has a considerable impact on the local economy. Shelter building generates livelihood options, and NRC programme already started to tap in them. It now linking the shelter programme with capacity building of local masons, for example. In Jalalabad the contractors bidding for the transitional shelter and for manufacturing doors / windows were encouraged to recruit beneficiaries.

The report already challenged the idea of **self-help** (as having hidden cost for the beneficiaries). Self-help might also have a negative impact on the local economy. It reduces the market for skilled labourer. A self-help programme might therefore lead local economy to shrink rather than to expand. It would be worthwhile considering which part of the building should be done by skilled labourers and modify the cash allowance accordingly. NRC could also check the feasibility of a **voucher system** for recruiting local contractors to be sure that the increment of the grant is passed on to qualified workers, at a fair price.

Injecting more money in local enterprises could also turn up to be a better investment on capacity building. NRC is now investing lot of time in checking quality of houses, household by household. The effort in **creating the capacity for better building** is then lost, because the individual households are not likely to engage again in housing construction. Because checking quality of work has a cost (hidden) in terms of the time given by technical staff, NRC should consider if its expertise should not best invested in improving the quality of local industries / contractors instead.

It has also been mentioned, in the shelter section, that NRC could more actively scan and research for **low cost alternative technologies** (for example to improve seismic resistance). If such technologies are acceptable by the beneficiaries - and if they could be commercially valuable options - NRC could create momentum and expertise on them by creating opportunities for small enterprises to apply them on the shelters delivered thought the programme.

Procurement of materials is also an important factor in helping or hindering local economy. NRC is increasingly sourcing building materials, door and windows

from within Afghanistan. However the need to achieve economy of scale and efficiency of procurement means that contract are mostly signed with large business located in the main towns. NRC could consider how to source more proactively materials from smaller enterprises. The voucher system put in place to allow beneficiaries to get materials directly from local shops should also be more used in the programme (building on the experiences in Herat and Sar I Pul).



Timber is often procured from abroad, and there are concerns that Afghan timber might come from unsustainable sources and contribute to deforestation. Some project areas, however, produce sustainable timber, which has not been used in project. NRC should consider how to make more use of locally sourced materials, even if this means having to rely on multiple sources for procurement

Points to consider

- 🕒 The evolution of the NRC shelter programme demonstrates that the organization is increasingly more aware of the multiplying effects of a shelter programme and interested in reaping them. Investment to support small industries / contractors and support to local transport / commercial facilities (e.g. through voucher systems) should be continued and expanded.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

*Children play in a house,
built with the contribution of NRC, in Sari Pul town* 36

How can refugees and displaced realize their rights and live a fulfilling life in their communities?

This section starts by considering different context of return and displacement, pointing how NRC mainly focuses – thought its programme - to respond to planned return. However there are other challenging contexts (emergency / protracted displacement) that would where the NRC consider engaging.

This section then points out that, once the physical dimension of settlement is addressed, there is still a need to work on the social one. Ultimately durable solutions rely on citizenship building and it is depending on improving local governance.

Emergency and protracted displacement

With its shelter programme, NRC has mainly responded to **planned return**. In this context, it has been relatively smooth to link up with returnees and provide them, as individual cases, with shelter. There are, however, other situations of displacement where NRC only marginally engaged, but where it could definitely have an important role: the context of **emergency**, and - on the other side - the context of **protracted displacement**.

Emergency work: need for preparedness and DRR

Organizations in Afghanistan tend to work in rehabilitation mode, but acute emergency is still an issue in Afghanistan because of:

- ⌚ **natural disasters:** every year in springtime, for example, numerous villages are still affected by floods. In the hot season, drought can be an issue.
- ⌚ **conflict:** the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan (and of bordering states, such as Pakistan) is creating new waves of displacement.
- ⌚ **return:** bordering states are pushing large number of refugees to return and relatively large influxes can create problematic situations in return areas (e.g. in transit camps)

NRC recently recognized the importance of being equipped to respond to emergency and recruited an emergency coordinator. The work done so far – for example the commendable winterization of the Sozma Qala transit camp - shows that - if the organization is alerted to spot emergency situations and to intervene - it is then possible to respond by using largely resources and capacities already existing within NRC and then by tapping into resources that can be made available by other organizations.

The engagement in the emergency response could then become the first step of a long term engagement with the affected communities, to accompany the

vulnerable people in their settlement process. The experience of Sozma Qala also demonstrates that once NRC commits to support a community affected by an emergency, it can relatively easily negotiate with donors the resources needed to engage with them in the longer term.

It is recommended that NRC continue to keep emergency in the radar by:

- ⌚ **Create a surge capacity and contingency resources**, which can be used to respond to seasonal emergencies or to situation of conflict and return induced emergencies. Despite the fact that these emergencies are recurring in Afghanistan, there are not reliable mechanisms of quick response by humanitarian agencies. The relative low scale of some of these emergencies also means that they could be “unnoticed”. Another issue linked to scale is that mobilizing funds can be an issue: such emergencies are too large to be tackled within current programmes, but yet too small to trigger interest and funding from donors, unless an organization working in the area commit to respond to them and to advocate on behalf of the affected people.
- ⌚ **Recognize that emergencies are a recurring event in Afghanistan**, and add a Disaster Risk Reduction component in the response. The seismic resistance element of the shelter package is a first step in this direction, but there is scope for adding to the ongoing programme - more systematically - vulnerability assessments at the community level and practical Disaster Risk Reduction work. DRR components might also be linked to livelihood programmes, as a way to ensure that not only the living conditions off a community are improved, but that future shocks for the resettled returnees and their communities are also reduced.

Protracted displacement

In the areas where NRC works there are also situations of protracted displacement. In Western Afghanistan in particular protracted displacement is seen as a more problematic issue than return. Around Herat large numbers of IDPs still live in camps that lack even essential services. Their inhabitants are deprived of their rights, even the most basic. They need an ID to access to basic services, but, in a catch 22 situation, IDs can only be obtained in the province of origin, and they cannot go back there. So, for example, they cannot even get electrical power, despite being located near the main power line.

IDPs have been living in the camps around Herat for nearly a decade. What was a city made of tent transformed in to a city of mud houses, built incrementally by the inhabitants. These IDPs camps are built on contested land or on government land. In both cases no solution is yet in sight. The government does not want to grant tenure rights to the people occupying the land. Inhabitants do not want to leave: they invested in their houses, they have nowhere to go, and they are not keen to be dispersed and relocated away from town. The ethnicity of the displaced (Pashtu) is also a problem, and they are perceived as a potential

threat. But clearly marginalizing them, depriving them of school and essential services for years is not a solution facilitating integration. The situation is at a standstill.

NRC could have a role in such situation of protracted situation. They require innovative solutions, and NRC has the capacity needed to come up with new approaches: it has the legal capacity as well as the technical capacity to work on durable solutions. NRC is currently providing some support to the inhabitants, but to a limited extent and in conventional ways: winter distribution of non-food items, advocacy work with the local government. IDP camps really demand to look at shelter and site upgrading from a different angle than the current shelter programme. They demand to focus more on the tenure / community mobilization aspects rather than on the shelter building. They demand that legal aspects are considered, but in parallel with physical upgrading work. So NRC should consider designing a coordinated and strategic approach to realize the right to shelter of the displaced in these contexts. As discussed already in the “sheltering” section, longer timeframes should be considered, as well as truly integrated programmes, designed in such a way to allow for piloting and testing different approaches to displacement should be negotiated with donors.

Points to consider

- 🕒 NRC had been working mainly of situations of planned return, but it should consider improving its capacity to respond to emergencies (which is now been tackled) and to long-term displacement.
- 🕒 The recent work on emergency winterization demonstrated that the NRC, with relatively little additional investment, can improve its capacity to respond to emergencies, and should continue to invest on this and increase its capacity for contingency planning and rapid mobilization of resources.
- 🕒 Focus on emergency and disaster response should be accompanied by more emphasis of Disaster Risk Reduction, across the programme.
- 🕒 The engagement in protracted displacement situations would fall squarely into NRC mandate. NRC has the capacity to develop approaches around issues that are currently at a standstill.

Enabling approaches

If NRC is willing to engage with issues of long term displacement and if NRC is willing to support the landless in getting shelter (which would both squarely fit into its mandate of helping the most vulnerable), it might have to consider alternative approaches to shelter.

The very existence of settlements like Mashlak IDP camp is proof that even resource-poor people are keen to invest in shelter and are ready to do so, even

in the absence of full tenure rights. In the case of Mashlak, it is the number of people on site and their contractual power (a delegation of inhabitants even managed to meet with president Karzai) generated some “security of tenure” for the inhabitants, which is however still insufficient to do further improvement and to get services. These settlements – as other semi illegal settlements now encroaching the largest cities – shows that government and NGOs could work within an “enabling” framework rather than one of *provision* only.

Experiences in settlement upgrading around the world (and, incidentally, there are many interesting case studies in neighboring Pakistan) point out that creating settlement does not necessarily mean that the government or the international organization will have to provide directly houses. What matter most is to create the social and economic fabric that will enable people to build houses. This involve looking, for example, at:

- 🕒 **Land tenure options**
- 🕒 Community building and **mobilization** (looking at modalities for joint work on construction and maintenance of physical infrastructures and services, for example)
- 🕒 **Legislation and current standards** (are they realistic in responding to the living conditions of the poor? Or do they set unrealistic threshold that can never be achieve?)
- 🕒 **Appropriate and low cost technologies**, and local capacity to use them
- 🕒 Straightening and simplifying the **administrative system** and the access of people to it
- 🕒 Linkages and partnership with the **private sector**, with large and small scale enterprises
- 🕒 Access to **credit**
- 🕒 **Improved governance** and access of the poor and marginalized people to decision-making processes on housing and urban development.

NRC could consider **advocating for and creating awareness of enabling modalities of work** with relevant institutions. Contextualization of these approaches will of course require some research as well as practical piloting work, and NRC could engage in it or link with like-minded organization. AREU, for example, produced an interesting study on Jalalabad (Stefan Schütte (2006). *Gaining some ground: Urban Livelihoods in Jalalabad*) asking for policy frameworks aimed at “not only building houses, but also citizenship” mainly by applying several of the approaches listed above. The study concluded that “*Jalalabad already has the advantage of its land titling experience, and if extended to informal settlements also inside master-planned areas, to provide much needed services to them, and to give up the sole focus on centralized top-down urban planning processes, the city could set a new paradigm for the entire country*”.

The functionaries we met were still in “ask mode”. They had little strategic capacity, little awareness of enabling approaches and little power to impose its views. They often reduced the debate on housing to a demand for more houses of higher quality to implementing agencies. NRC should engage with donors and like-minded organization in creating awareness with and capacity for the government of different modalities of action. It could also model and test them at a local scale, in partnerships with other interested stakeholders.

An enabling approach can coexist with forms of more direct provision / support for the groups needing more assistance, that could then be targeted selectively. But overall, linking provision with enabling approaches might allow larger numbers of people to create, incrementally, their shelter – and ultimately lead to a broader impact than direct provision alone.

Working with the government?

What should be the engagement of NRC with government?
In a country where the legitimacy and the authority of the government is challenged, and where negotiation with the government could be ultimately be seen as “**taking sides**” with it, NRC should carefully reflect on its stance on local governance. There is a risk that NRC could now be seen as an agency implementing programmes in agreement with UN / government rather than an independent player. NRC had already tried to minimize the role and the exposure of the local government in beneficiary selection as a way to demonstrate independence and it is important - in the insecure context of Afghanistan - that it continues to demonstrate its **neutrality**.

But there is clearly a tension in negotiating and doing advocacy work with the government and in portraying itself as and independent organization: by concentrating its advocacy efforts on the government NRC does implicitly legitimize it. It is suggested that NRC should invest less into direct advocacy and relationship with government, and more **in building the capacity of the communities to do lobbying and advocacy** on their own.

Building local governance, building citizenship

Durable solutions might not require to build shelters: it might be the community fabric that needs to be reconstructed.
NRC programme overall tends to focus on the Individual / family dimension of settlement but focus little on the community one. It helps people to get a basic house, but it does not support them, in the process, in becoming active citizens. Since the inception of the programme, many steps ahead have been made to increase the impact of the programme on the local economy, thought creation of livelihood, but more could be done in terms of improving governance.

The current state of affairs is that NRC provides directly shelter to individuals,

and does advocacy work on behalf of the communities where they live. This report had suggested that NRC should help communities to make their demands directly to the government. This is an idea that is gaining currency in Afghanistan. For example, the current approach of CARE in LAS is not so do direct work, but to support local governance. They are investing in building local Shuras and supporting them to make their demand to the government, in transparent manners. Other experiences in country (e.g. the National Solidarity Programme) showed that – when linking practical work with a focus on governance - it is possible to improve the quality of local decision making processes and the transparency around these.

Building local governance is ultimately a key investment for successful durable solutions, and NRC should engage into it or tap more vigorously in processes already fostering it.

Points to consider

- ① Enabling approaches (security of tenure, access to credit, etc) might be a powerful way to allow a larger number of vulnerable people to access shelter. NRC should consider how to link direct provision with advocacy for or direct support of enabling approaches.
- ① As it relates with the government NRC should continuously reassess its relationship with it, to protect its neutrality, and avoid to be seen as too close for comfort. Putting vulnerable people in the position to do advocacy, for example, could be a better option than doing advocacy itself.
- ① Good structures for local governance are key in assisting communities in demanding and obtaining their rights to adequate shelter and services. NRC should consider how to best link its intervention in a community with work towards improved governance.



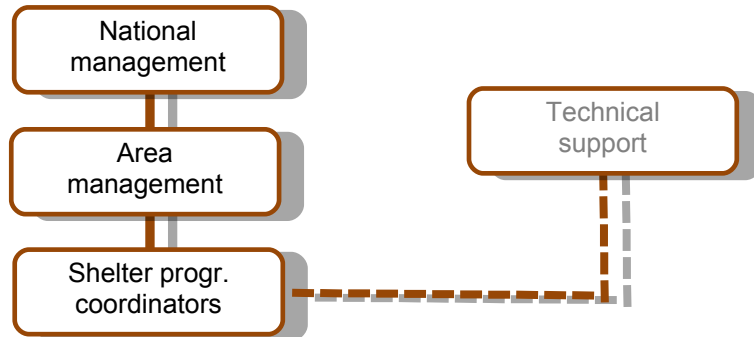
ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

A filled in monitoring form, for a house in Sozma Qala

Management of the shelter programme

NRC programmes in Afghanistan are managed by geographical area rather than by sector of activity. Implementation of the shelter projects falls under the responsibility of the Area managers. They line-manage the shelter programme coordinators. This represents a shift from the initial structure of response, which prioritized sectoral lines: NRC in the past had also recruited shelter coordinators at the national level.

Area management is obviously better to ensure coordination and linkages across programmes in the same geographical zone, and contextualization of response. But there is a drawback: in the absence of a shelter coordinator – or of a system to coordinate the shelter programmes – the linkages across shelter projects are now lost. In the course of the evaluation the consultants gained a sense of good shelter *projects* running in the field offices, each with its own character – but little sense of a strategic approach at the national level. The focus is on efficiency of individual programmes, to the point that, in a field office, the two ongoing shelter programmes are run through separated structures. This makes it easy to respond to the requirements of different donors, but at the risk of creating parallel systems for a programme that should be run consistently.



A casualty of this state of affairs is learning and cross-fertilization of practice. There is little horizontal communication across programmes on these soft aspects. But, more importantly, this state of affairs is a considerable handicap for issues that would require more harmonized approaches – across field offices but also across different sectors -, linking coherently programme responses at the area level with national work and advocacy. The work on the Land Allocation Schemes, but also the potential work in situation of long-term displacement are good example of these. The absence of central points of contact to influence key stakeholders (donors, central government) and to coordinate with other stakeholders in capital (e.g. national cluster) is also a challenge, reducing the

potential of NRC to broaden up its influence, building on practice.

How can NRC rebuild connection across the shelter programmes and also support the strategic work needed to bring its shelter programme to the next level? Should NRC invest again in Shelter Advisors deployed at the national level? What other solutions could be considered?

There are limitations in supporting technical work only through advisory positions: it is often hard to generate the push needed to get things happening – when not managing directly staff, and an advisory position might well not have clout. A full time advisory position, in the current context, and if the current modalities of intervention are maintained would be superfluous. In the current context better coordination could derive from:

- ① **Management push** towards more coordination across shelter programme managers in country, oriented at: identifying innovative and replicable practices / highlighting issues requiring advocacy at the national level / identifying areas requiring support vis-à-vis the strategy / identifying new possibility for intervention.
- ① Strengthening existing **communication channels** for communication amongst shelter staff, to ensure more interaction on ongoing basis. This should include testing communications means other than mail (e.g. monthly conference calls) that could be more engaging for staff. More structured shelter meetings –as run in the past by NRC Afghanistan - could be an opportunity for shelter staff to exchange practices (and should be ideally run in field locations rather than in the capital). Staff secondment / swaps across areas could also be an option.
- ① Identification of **link people** in Kabul that could maintain relationships with key players re: shelter (e.g. clusters, government) based on information received from the field.
- ① Ad hoc support through **external resource people** (NRC international advisors – who, however, are overstretched - / external consultants). Specific expertise might be for example needed when testing new solution (e.g. techniques to improve seismic resistance of shelter). Ideally NRC should maintain a roster of shelter consultant / advisors, to allow, as far as possible that engagement with its programmes is not a “one off”. Regional advisors, shared across countries, might also be an option.

However, NRC might also decide to invest in a new shelter strategy to push the organization to work on different lines. These, as discussed could include: coordination across different sectors / development of a range of different solution – ranging from transitional shelter to enabling approaches / engagement on longer timeframes (from emergency response to engagement with protracted situation and incremental housing) / investment in local governance and

mobilization of vulnerable communities / stronger linkages with national advocacy and practical work on the ground.

If this is the case, such shelter strategy would need to be vigorously pushed, new modalities of response would need to be tried and tested. Proposals should be produced on new lines, rather than replicating the existing ones. Capacities towards the new strategy might also need to be built. All this would require support and expertise, possibly in the form of dedicated staff. The challenge would be to build effective matrix management enabling the shelter “advisors” – which should be integrated strategically in senior management decision-making process - to have an incisive role.

Implementing partners?

Currently all programmes are managed directly by NRC. As part of the redefinition of its strategy the organization might have to re-examine its stance towards implementing partners. Currently NRC is not equipped for working with implementing partners, and the perception that the consultant gathered - when engaging with NRC and other organizations’ staff - is that suitable partners are currently not available (this perception should be of course re-evaluated by the NRC, as assessing the availability and capacity of potential local partners was beyond the scope of this evaluation). A decision of engaging with partners in the mid-term is likely to imply intensive capacity building, coaching and monitoring, NRC should assess if investing in this, and, if so, it should start considering *now* what are the best options to engage, support and build capacity of partners.

There are two main reasons why NRC might be considering to engage with implementing partners:

- 🕒 Security: as the operational space is getting eroded due to the ongoing tensions, NRC might not be able to access areas of need, and could use implementing partners instead. However, if this was the reason for engagement, it would be a questionable one, likely to transfer the risk to external actors.
- 🕒 Capacity building: UNHCR is currently working also thought local implementing partners, and it was pointed out that some of them have relatively little capacity (and little capacity exist to support them). NRC should assess, in conjunction with UNCHR the potential for working closely with local partners in building their capacity. Areas such as community mobilization / participation / accountability as well as technical capacity (e.g. on seismic resistance) are areas of expertise of NRC that could be transferred to partners.

Points to consider

- 🕒 Area management allows for projects to be adjusted to local needs and

should be continued, but management ensure more linkages across staff operating in different areas, for innovation and learning.

- 🕒 There is currently no national overview of the shelter programming. A stringer role of management is required to prioritize the location, the focus, the targeting of future interventions, and to efficiently link local and national work
- 🕒 Currently shelter work by NRC is a set of projects rather than a coherent programme. The planned shelter strategy should consider moving NRC away from project-based work towards programming, at the same time expanding the modalities of response to better targeting the most vulnerable.
- 🕒 Linkages amongst staff working on shelter should be strengthened. This should include stronger routines communication as well as national (field based) workshops to follow up on strategy and project progress.
- 🕒 NRC should define its position vs. implementing partners.
- 🕒 A full time shelter coordinator post is not required for the programme as it is now, but NRC should consider how to provide technical support for shelter programme avoiding “ad-hoc” modalities. Closer coordination with the international advisors, rosters of consultants and regional support could all be considered.
- 🕒 NRC could also consider revising its strategic approach to shelter and try and test new modalities of work, requiring more cross-sectoral engagement of NRC staff. If this is the case, personnel with strong expertise, working as part of the senior management team and not only as advisors, should support the strategy.

Programme support

Overall NRC put in place efficient and transparent procedures for tendering, for delivery and transport of materials to beneficiaries, and for disbursing money. The evaluation also found evidence of innovative practices for distribution, which have the potential to have positive and more diffuse effects on the local economy, e.g. making use of local transport companies or voucher systems for building and non-food items.

Procurement and distribution of materials

Materials are most often **procured locally** (through relatively large contractors) and distributed directly by NRC. It was already observed that the modalities of material procurement are important in allowing the programme to spin off benefits on the local economy. Increasingly materials are procured locally, whenever available, and this is very positive. Another step worth considering would be to move from relative large contractors to **smaller scale procurement**,

as a way to support smaller enterprises and business located in secondary towns. The downside of it is that procurement in bulk is more efficient, and smaller contracts would increase administration work (and would also require dealing with relatively more inexperienced contractors).

The **contracts** and the specifications are currently not translated in Dari. This is a relatively small problem when dealing with large enterprises, which employ English-speaking personnel, but it would be an issue for smaller contractors. We were informed that translation issues already caused problems to potential contractors, sometimes failing to put in a valid bid because they did not fully understand the requirements. The contract specs are currently illustrated to potential tenders in a public assembly, but it would be important that participants have then documents that can be understood. The translation of these documents cannot be done in house by logistic officers, as it needs to be a quality one, checked for legal issues.

Warehousing and transport procedures could be strengthened. One logistic manager noticed that NRC Afghanistan should revise its set forms for warehousing, to ensure that stock can be more effectively managed. The waybill is only produced in one copy, with no serial numbers (whilst other organizations in Afghanistan are now making use of 4 copies). There has been evidence of different procedures followed by different offices, and it is suggested that logistic managers meet to revise and harmonize it on a national scale. Incidentally as similar concern emerged re: administrative procedure. For example, each field office was attributing codes to contractors, and this resulted in different types of codes making it difficult to track contracts, and their tax deduction and payment.

As far as **distribution** is concerned, NRC tested innovative solutions. Sar I Pul programme phase one allowed beneficiaries to buy directly the materials they preferred, by using vouchers. It was reported that some decided to save on housing materials and got low quality ones, with negative impact on the quality of housing. There have been allegations that some of families pocketed the extra money by invoicing for higher cost of such low quality materials. If this is the case, it would be a signal that there are pressing and important needs that also needs to be tackled when providing shelter, and which families do prioritize over quality. Unfortunately the system in place in Sar I Pul phase one and its results have never been documented extensively, so important learning have been lost re the viability of owner driven procurement.

The Herat office piloted a system for distribution of building material by local commercial transport companies. The system had been well documented, and a "how to" guide produced. Beneficiaries receive vouchers for material when they sign their "Letter of Undertaking". NRC staff monitors progress of their work. When materials are scheduled for delivery, a transport request is issued and the

contracted transport companies deliver materials to beneficiaries. This has again the advantage of using local enterprises rather than managing transport in-house. Follow up monitoring is then done to check that they have received the materials. The method is an efficient one in unsecure context, preventing NRC staff from handing over valuable materials in the field. But, if employing transport companies reduces risk to NRC staff, but it passes it over to the transport company, this might not be a viable and ethical option.

It was suggested by some staff - based on their experience of distribution of materials with other organizations - that NCR should also test modalities where the beneficiaries themselves collect the materials from the warehouse and transport it to the build yard (transport money should be paid to the beneficiaries by NRC). The highlighted benefits of this process are that:

- ⌚ Distribution time could be reduced if beneficiaries are asked to come to town at set times. Delivery to the field is a time consuming process. Especially at harvest time it is very hard to find the beneficiaries at home, and this had translated in long hours spent by transport companies in the field seeking for beneficiaries.
- ⌚ Transport by transport companies requires follow up monitoring, whilst distribution from warehouse ensures from the start that beneficiaries receive what they are entitled to.
- ⌚

Points to consider

- ⌚ NRC should continue to procure material locally, to support local economy. **Smaller sale procurement** could be considered and linked to support of small enterprises, but would require some adaptation of procedures (e.g. translation of contracts, more administrative support).
- ⌚ **Logistic and administration** procedures must be checked and aligned.
- ⌚ NRC should continue to experiment with alternative solutions for **transport** and **distribution** (e.g. voucher based distribution), to improve security, efficiency.

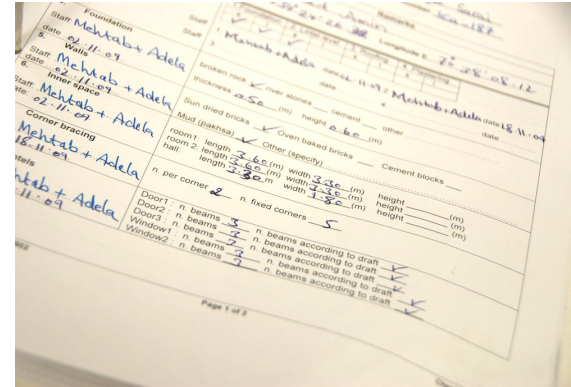
Monitoring, learning

Monitoring is very intensive: lot of effort and resources are invested in it. Field

monitors visit the same family several times (some field officers estimated more than 10 times, on top of the visits done by technical staff) for family. However, overall the monitoring system now delivers too little in relation with the investment in it.

The following considerations currently apply to the monitoring systems:

- ① Monitoring focus mainly on basic **outputs** (materials distributed, number of shelter realized, etc), but not on outcomes and impact (adaptations, beneficiary satisfaction, unintended and ripple effects of intervention...)
- ① Monitoring looks mainly at **compliance**. It is a bureaucratic form of monitoring that check if the project happens as established. It includes lots of repetitive form filling and box ticking. The long term and repeated engagement of field staff with households could reap more benefit if monitoring is simplified and staff is freed to also engage on mobilization / right awareness activities, or to focus on documenting outcomes / learning rather than compliance only.
- ① Concerns have been expressed in the past about the **quality of data** collected. Previous reports on a project area (not visited by the consultants) pointed out that some shelter lists were incomplete, including “shelters having no GPS coordinates given and the Head of Households name being simply recorded as ‘Tash’ or ‘Ferooz’ or ‘Tooty’”. The forms and records we were shown, however, were well maintained.
- ① Computer based systems (such as the former shelter database, now discontinued and the current spreadsheets) require very detailed (and repetitive) input. NRC should simplify data input requirements. It could also consider streamlining processes of data input by using PDAs in the field.
- ① Very little use is made of the information archived in the **data collection systems**. GPS locations, for example: only in one office the consultants saw a map generated with them.
- ① The archival of **project reports and learning notes** is limited, and this can impact on institutional memory.
- ① Monitoring systems and forms are designed mainly from the **perspective of NRC office** (as files to be processed and archived for project reporting), not to be beneficiary friendly and to enhance accountability towards them.



Shelter monitoring currently forms in use mainly check compliance with the established standards. There is no incentive to explore beneficiary needs or to question the relevance of the programme for the beneficiaries when monitoring mainly for compliance on an established standards.

Key areas for improvement of monitoring systems are:

- ① Investment to **consolidate, analyze, aggregate data** and effectively share them within the programme and with other external stakeholders.
- ① Moving from monitoring on compliance and outputs only to **monitoring for outcomes and learning**. The monitoring system now is designed to confirm that standards are been realized. It could be more significant to record deviation, and learn from it. For example, the adaptations put in place in project areas where more freedom was granted to beneficiaries have, largely, not been documented.
- ① Capacity building on **participatory approaches**. The shelter programme is increasingly connected with livelihood generation. Potentially it could also explore issue of local governance work. Hence the need to invest on sound participatory techniques to engage with individuals and communities.

Monitoring should also feed more solidly into **communication with other stakeholders**. Lessons learned would be useful not only to NRC but also to other actors. The NRC already successfully engaged with clusters to this end: the participants to the Kabul cluster meeting valued the input given by NRC in past meetings presentations. The emergency coordinator also produced a good document about the winterization programme, circulated and well appreciated. But more could be done to share learning, externally and within NRC. A revision of the Shelter Project Handbook - prepared in 2008 by NRC Afghanistan – could be done – aside the strategy process - as a way to incorporate new learning and approaches.

Only little information is fed back to communities. Some *Shura* told us that NRC never gave them a complete list of beneficiaries in the village. They of course are aware of who beneficiaries are, as they have been involved in the selection process, but a full list, to be publicly shared, would help to improve accountability. The creation of accountability based on transparent data sharing

could set an example for the community, and be a practical lesson of good governance.

Points to consider

- ⌚ The outcomes of the monitoring systems currently do not fully justify the investment in it. The data archived often does not feed into analysis: why is it collected if not used strategically? Monitoring systems and processes should be revised to be **streamlined** and oriented more towards **outcomes and learning**.
- ⌚ Information derived from should feed more effectively in communication with other stakeholders, for sharing learning and for accountability. NRC, for example, could create better **accountability mechanisms** within communities as a pre-condition to improved governance.

Increasing accountability, reducing corruption

The monitoring and the procedures in place might have not been sufficient to avoid cases of corruption: we have been exposed, in the course of evaluation to potential cases that will need to be further investigated by NRC. It is key that - when presented with potential cases of corruption - NRC respond promptly and swiftly to, to avoid creating a feeling that corruption could be accepted (or to clear staff if claims were false). In a particular issue presented to the consultants investigations had taken long time to materialize. Details about the issue have been shared with area and senior management in the course of the evaluation and there are positive signs that action will be taken.

One way to prevent corruption is of course to further strengthen internal processes and add controls (for example, Jalalabad office introduced an independent monitoring team). However there is a risk that setting up additional procedures might end up in creating further bureaucracy, and there is also a limit to the extent to which is possible to control the controllers. It is suggested that accountability to beneficiaries is strengthened as the main way to reduce corruption. More transparency about deliverables and procedures and stronger complaint mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that beneficiaries' themselves can be enabled to demand for what they should receive.



*And Illiterate beneficiaries are asked to fingerprint forms that they cannot understand
Who is this form designed for? For the office or for the beneficiaries? Does this form really improve accountability or is it only a bureaucratic requirement?*

Practical suggestions for increasing accountability

The first step to increase accountability would be **clarity of entitlements**. When beneficiaries receive materials or money they sign up on forms that might be translated in Dari, but are still incomprehensible to illiterate people. It is therefore possible that they fingerprint without a clear understanding of what they are signing for. A local government officer expressed concerns that some field staff might have asked resident to sign multiple forms (one about money reception and one about material receptions) tricking them into believing that their were signing two copies of the same form. There is no proof that this had happened, but suspicion that this *could* have happened should caution NRC to put in place stronger procedures. For example, forms / vouchers translated in Dari / Pashtu could include drawings or pictures of the items to be delivered, so that even illiterate people can check that they are receiving what they should.

Purchase and quality monitoring committees including representatives of NRC as well as randomly selected beneficiaries have been suggested as a way to further increase quality control. Random selection should be practices because - by default - purchase committees tend to include elders / Shura members. Over reliance on them, left unchecked, risk to strengthening their power and to open spaces for corruptions. Quality control had been sometimes responsibility of one member of staff only and this of course increases potential for corruption: it is important to ensure periodic independent monitoring.

Complaints mechanisms for beneficiaries are now very weak. Elements – now lacking in the programme – that should be included in such mechanisms are:

- ⌚ Clarity on entitlements: beneficiaries should be clearly informed about what they should receive, and how, in oral and in written form (possibly in local

language and illustrated)

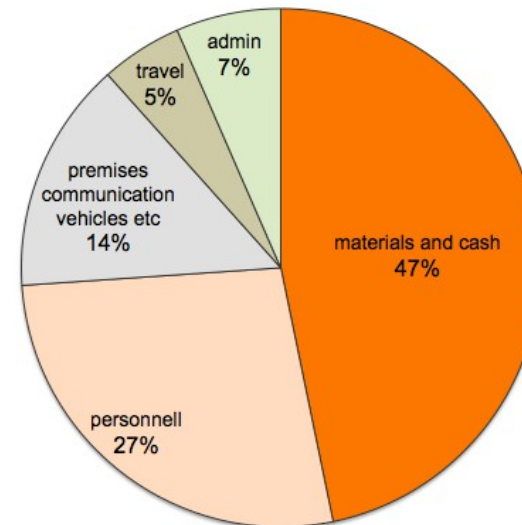
- ① Clarity on complaint procedures: it should be clearly explained to beneficiaries how to complain, and to whom. Also, this information should be left in written form and local language to them. It should be clear to beneficiaries that complaints will be handled sensitively.
- ① Clarity on communication: beneficiaries should be provided with contact addresses / numbers not only for the local office, but also for the main area office and for the Kabul office, linked to staff independent from the project, and with clear instructions on how to record complaints.
- ① Clarity on complaint handling and verification: NRC should clearly set procedures and responsibilities for complain handling and verification.
- ① Feedback: systems to communicate decisions about a complaint to its originator should be in place.

Points to consider

- ① The existing processes and monitoring mechanisms might not have been sufficient to prevent corruption. Some improvements and cross checks could be added. The one element that is likely to have most impact is improving accountability mechanisms towards communities.
- ① NRC should put in place complaint mechanisms and more swiftly modalities to investigate issues of corruption.

The cost of supporting shelter construction

The graph is a rough estimate of the impact of administration, travel, personnel, logistical costs on the total cost invested per shelter. Roughly half of the money goes directly to the beneficiaries. More than one quarter is invested in personnel cost. The latter figure supports the need to step up the value for money of the investment in people. From a modality of work based on monitoring and standardized solution, the programme could move towards interventions delivering more support and expertise to beneficiaries in addition to materials and cash.



Breakdown of the cost of a shelter unit based on the project AFFS0802 (initial proposal). 1500 Euro is the total cost to donor per shelter.

Note: the year of AFFS0802 - is the year the USD crashed against the euro. Financial fluctuations have made comparisons difficult between donors.

Coordination

Coordination within NRC: shelter programme and ICLA

There are obvious linkages amongst the ICLA programme and the shelter one, but the full potential of making the “legal” and “shelter” component working together is not fully tapped in. Sometimes the preconditions for working together are not even in place: there are areas where NRC is only working through one of the two programmes (e.g. in Sar I Pul the shelter programme was active but there was no ICLA work. And, vice versa, ICLA operate in Bamian area but there are no shelter programmes). But we also found cases where ICLA and the shelter programme established collaborations for beneficiary referrals.

The point is that even when ICLA and the Shelter programme interface, they are still seen as quite separate programmes, with different mandates, different management, well defined outputs and streamlined procedures, making use of different skills.

NRC might want to consider - in order to reach the most vulnerable people - to move towards integrated programmes, bringing more coherently together:

- ① the legal component (but looking at expanding the legal work with advocacy and practical implementation of alternative models for tenure for landless, for example and exploring also issues of entitlement to basic services) and
- ① the shelter technical skills (but expanded to tackle not only direct shelter

support, but also enabling approaches to shelter).



A truly integrated programme should also improve the linkages amongst national advocacy and local work (possibly looking at improving the participation / mobilization component of interventions in the field).

Coordination with government

In general government representatives were happy of the frank and open coordination and information exchange with NRC. It was pointed out that NRC maintained a good balance - when negotiating with the government - amongst flexibility and firmness in getting its points thought when adequate. This engagement is of course to be continued.

There was however in instance in a project area (now overcame) where the local government representative could not easily engage with NRC management to denounce alleged instances of corruption. It is recommended that NRC engage with government through various staff members, to ensure that multiple channels for communication are open at different levels.

As pointed out, in the current situation careful thinking should go to the relationship with the government: in unstable areas proximity with government could become a threat to **neutrality** of the organization.

Currently all projects are run in the more secure government controlled areas. But in the future NRC, to respond to the greatest needs, might want to consider response also in **areas de-facto controlled by other actors**. The future strategy should give careful thinking on how to liaise with them and negotiate humanitarian space for response.

Coordination with other actors

The **shelter clusters** are the obvious forum where to coordinate with other actors. Although the consultants did not attend a meeting, the perception they gathered about the shelter cluster in Kabul is that it is seen as not very effective. it meets only occasionally (at most monthly), and is seen as relatively bureaucratic. Currently the main reason for attending cluster meetings in Kabul are limited other than allowing for a degree of advocacy into funding appeals and strategies. Cluster meetings are not documented on the web, and so information is restricted to those attending or on limited distribution lists. There is however a technical working group of the cluster that meets in Kabul, and this

forms a stronger network from which technical lessons are discussed and shared. The consultants had a possibility to engage in it and to discuss issues emerging from the field visits with the colleagues attending: it certainly was an opportunity to enrich and validate our findings with learning and experiences from other contexts and organizations.

There has been positive engagement with the shelter cluster in Kabul in the past, but no active contact person now. In other zones (such as Jalalabad) the clusters are quite weak anyway: active contact persons in NRC engage but not much coming back from this engagement.

Other coordination forums relevant for NRC shelter programmes are also active in field locations. The consultants participated for example to the IDP and protection task force meetings in Herat. They are currently attended by ICLA (not shelter) staff – so it is important that information feeding to and from these meetings continue to be effectively relayed internally, within NRC.

Some of the projects would have benefitted for more engagement across **implementing actors**, e.g. the work on land allocation schemes. Lack of coordination and of mutual accountability amongst actors is a prime factor that caused the failure of schemes such as the Andkhoy. When engaging in LAS in the future NRC should equip itself with the capacity to push for coordination and joint work across implementing partners: it would not be the coordination actor, but it could push the local government to do so more effectively.

Points to consider

- ① The linkages amongst ICLA and shelter programme need to be strengthened. However, a truly integrated programme might require more than better coordination amongst the programmes as they are: it might demand a substantial redesign of their interface.
- ① NRC maintains good relationships with the government, but should avoid that this reduce its perceived neutrality.
- ① Coordination with other implementing actors and with government need to be strengthened for work in the LAS



WAY FORWARD

An internally displaced girl by the tent she painted and where she lives, squatting in Chamtala Land Allocation Scheme

NRC managed to conduct large-scale shelter projects under difficult conditions. They are responding to a clear need and should be continued: the demand for shelter is there to stay, in Afghanistan. Even in the face of a diminished return rate, there is still a backlog of current and past returns to be addressed.

Since the start of its engagement, NRC mainly adopted the UNHCR shelter standard, allowing various degrees of flexibility / experimentation around it in different programmes. This modality of delivery had ensured efficiency, but there is now a danger to plod along the beaten path rather than making a quantum leap in the response. One critical issue not yet fully addressed within the current modalities of intervention is the targeting of the most vulnerable: whilst the programme now certainly responds to the need of vulnerable people, it does not respond to the need of the MOST vulnerable. The landless, by design, are left out.

NRC has a unique set of expertise: around shelter provision, but also in areas – such as legal support, which could complement its shelter programmes. It should engage in a revision of the current modalities of intervention, to perfect the approach employed so far, and to consider if different options for shelter provision could complement it.

Improvement of the existing projects

Programmes based on the current modalities of intervention (shelter delivery to individual returnee households, based on the UNHCR standard) could be improved by:

- ① Revision of **building techniques** for safety (e.g. seismic mitigation), investing more in testing, piloting and rolling out the techniques proposed. NRC might also consider partnering with NGOs and research units currently prototyping appropriate techniques: they might focus on developing solutions that NRC could then implement on a larger scale. Adoption of new techniques could go hand in hand with capacity building and support to local enterprises, to promote livelihoods.
- ① **Adaptation of shelter packages**, based on local conditions. The “hidden cost” of self help (materials / workmanship to be provided by beneficiaries) might be substantial, and it varies across types and locations. For example, it seems to impact more on “standard C” (domed shelter) than on others standards. In some cases the hidden cost could not be paid by the poorest, who were left out from the project. NRC should reassess the real cost of shelter in the locations where it will intervene, and check if adjustment in its provision (e.g. grants or additional materials) should be considered on a location-by-location basis.
- ① Increased **flexibility around the standard**. Variations and adaptation of the

“standards” by individual beneficiaries (e.g. house layout) should be allowed, but agreed and negotiated explicitly with NRC staff. This will ensure that high standards of safety and quality will be maintained, whilst responding better to individual needs and aspirations. A shift towards flexibility would mean that NRC field staff should have a supportive role as “shelter technical consultants” rather than simply a “controller” one. However the question remains if skilled engineering staff can be found for this, especially if seismic resistance is insisted upon.

- ① Further improvements in modalities of **procurement of materials** (towards local procurement and use of small scale enterprises) should be considered. NRC already started to contract building components locally. It also moved toward contracting out delivery through voucher systems. Active promotion of small-scale providers / enterprises should go hand in hand with effective modalities for quality control, to ensure adequate standards across the board.
- ① NRC should continue to accompany shelter projects with **livelihoods**, market support and other activities. It was early to judge the impact of the livelihood component of the most recent shelter programmes, but initial feedback suggests the importance to continue engaging with them.
- ① **Longer timeframes**. The existing timeframe resulted in pressure / withdrawals of beneficiaries who could not complete the house or find the resources needed to do so in the time available to them. A longer timeframe should be negotiated with donors, when possible.
- ① Revision of the **criteria for location of shelters**. This might include: avoiding committing too large number of shelters, too quickly in areas of new settlement (e.g. LAS); avoiding dispersion when operating in rural areas (by targeting strategically and with integrated programmes areas of need).
- ① Create more linkages and opportunities for **learning** across the programmes. Each programme area is currently engaging in experimentations and variations of the programme, but there is limited exchange around these on a national scale
- ① Simplify **monitoring** mechanisms whilst improving **accountability**.

More substantial changes that could be adopted within the current framework of intervention are:

- ① Reassessment of **geographical areas of interventions**. All interventions are currently in government held areas of Afghanistan, a situation that should be re-evaluated (considering implications for security but also for the perceived neutrality of NRC).
- ① Improved processes of **beneficiary selection**, linked to flexible packages.
- ① Stronger role of and accountability to **communities** in the process of selection of beneficiaries, and more participatory decision-making on shelter allocation and linked programmes (e.g. livelihoods programmes).
- ① Increased focus on **transitional shelter**, in connection with the efforts done

by the UNHCR to deliver minimal “transitional” shelter packages, which, in negotiation with the government could also be assigned to landless people squatting on government-owned land. More focus on transitional shelter might help to start reaching the most vulnerable returnees.

Strategic areas for programme development

In the past years the NRC had experimented with different modalities of response. For example:

- ⌚ It explored different degrees of flexibility around the standards...
- ⌚ it worked in different contexts (villages / land allocation schemes)...
- ⌚ it engaged with emergency response...
- ⌚ it started to include additional components to shelter work (e.g. livelihoods)...
- ⌚ it tested different approaches to procurement and distribution of materials...
- ⌚ it started to prototype new shelters...
- ⌚ it explored using vouchers for transport and non-food items...

This has happened in a piecemeal way, expanding the UNHCR approach, but with no shared broader strategic framework for intervention and with limited learning across programmes. Engagement in between shelter and ICLA staff has also been quite limited. NRC has now – through its strategic process around shelter – the opportunity of “joining the dots”, to redefine its current approaches and to look at new options to broaden its impact.



The strategic process should look at linking the work on shelter to the achievement of durable solutions by looking simultaneously at two key dimensions:

- ⌚ Sheltering, i.e. the process through which the beneficiaries are involved in the making of their shelter (looking also at how they realize their rights in the process) and
- ⌚ Settlement, i.e. the aggregate value of multiple shelters, and the linkages with the locations where they are built.

What considerations should guide the strategic process of NRC? In addition to the factors already highlighted in the previous sections, NRC should look at

- ⌚ **Role and positioning** of NRC in Afghanistan. It NRC playing to its strengths? It is reaping the full potential of its skills and existing capacities? This evaluation suggests that by better linking its legal and technical capacity - as well as its capacity to deliver at the local level with the capacity to do national advocacy - NRC would make more justice to its potential.
- ⌚ **Targeting issues:** NRC should look back at its mandate and reconsider its modalities for targeting beneficiaries. The existing programmes seem to respond better to the needs of these who already have valuable assets (i.e. land) than the most vulnerable. It is suggested that NRC tackles the targeting issue as a priority. In addition to respond to planned return to the place of origin, NRC should also consider engaging in situation of protracted displacement and resettlement.
- ⌚ Expanding **options and modalities for intervention.** Targeting the most vulnerable will not only demand adaptations of the existing programmers, but also the development of innovative modalities of work, which could include supporting enabling approaches side by side with delivery options. Issues of land tenure should be central when designing them. Hence the need of strengthening the linkages amongst technical and legal capacities around shelter.
- ⌚ Strengthening the **linkages amongst project work at the field level with advocacy** at the national level, to ensure coherence and mutual reinforcement amongst them.
- ⌚ **Relationship with other actors.** The NRC could reconsider its role and linkages with other actors. For example, it should look at having a more propoitive role with UNHCR – supporting UNHCR in trying and testing new approaches -; it should consider what relationships it wants to build with the communities it works with; it should reassess its relationship with the government and the possibility of engaging with other actors to gain access of areas of needs now out of reach.
- ⌚ **Timeframe.** NRC should frame the sheltering process in a longer-term perspective, especially if tackling complex issues such as protracted displacement or resettlement on land allocation schemes. A two-pronged approach could be followed: advocacy work should be done with donors towards longer timeframes for intervention, and better lineages across short-term programmes could be established. At the same time, the NRC should retain its capacity to operate swiftly and also to respond to quick onset emergencies.
- ⌚ **Management** of shelter programmes. Area management is effective in promoting innovation, integration, contextualization of the programmes. NRC management should nevertheless seek to ensure that: stronger linkages are established across areas; across the field / national dimension of shelter interventions; that a strategic vision of the shelter intervention will be maintained in the years to come.

A dashboard of dilemmas for shelter programmes.

In the course of the evaluation the consultants encountered several “dilemmas” for which there is no straight recommendation: how to tackle them will depend on the context and on the preferred strategic direction of NRC. They are listed here, so that they can be considered by NRC when designing its response.

QUANTITY ↔ QUALITY

Should NRC invest less for each individual shelter and aims to reach a larger number of beneficiaries within his budget, or should NRC invest in better quality housing, materials, and incentives to produce higher standard houses (reducing coverage)? This dilemma is often presented to NRC by government officers which would be keen to see more “good housing” rather than larger number of “low-standard houses”. The scale of need in Afghanistan, and the limited resources available suggest that NRC should rather lean towards increasing quantity. This could include looking at different standards for shelter or also at different packages, supporting people in proportion to their needs.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT ↔ CENTRALIZED

Centralized procurement (and procurement through large contractors) allows for economy of scale, and reduced administrative costs. However, it might reduce the opportunities for small-scale industries and business, located in secondary towns / villages. The NRC is moving towards enhancing local procurement, and should continue to do so, effectively linking shelter provision with support of livelihood at the local level. An issue might remain with timber, given levels of deforestation in Afghanistan, and sustainability of the sources should be carefully checked. Local procurement calls for stronger quality control, to ensure adequacy of provision across many contractors, but also allows to involve more the local communities in such quality checks (e.g. with purchase committees)

STAND ALONE ↔ INTEGRATED

Can shelter be delivered in isolation from other interventions, or should it be delivered as part of a broader package of assistance? And also: should the NRC shelter programme act in isolation, or should it increase its linkages with other complementary programmes – by other agencies? The NRC is currently moving in the direction of a more integrated approach, as it becomes apparent that shelter, alone, is no guarantee that the neediest people will be able to fulfill their basic needs. NRC should also consider enhancing integration with other agencies, especially in these settings – such as the land allocation schemes – that are highly dependent, for their success, in tackling different areas of intervention at the same time. The extent to which integration is feasible – without compromising on the need for speed of response, should be evaluated

on a case-by-case basis.

SELF HELP ↔ LABOUR

This report challenges the assumption that self-help should be – by default – the approach of choice when targeting the neediest (see sheltering section). They might lack the time and the resources necessary to complement the NRC package. They might lack the skills to adequately build some critical components (e.g. ring beams for roofing, as in the experience of UNHCR). In addition to this, self-help might end up shrinking the local economy and the opportunity to support local enterprises. On the other side, self-help does reduce the cost of shelter packages and allows reaching a larger number of beneficiaries. NRC should reconsider when self-help is advantageous and where instead it could hinder the development of an efficient housing sector. NRC should consider, for example, modalities for providing specialized labour within his packages (e.g. through voucher systems).

STANDARDIZATION ↔ FLEXIBILITY

This dilemma applies to the housing model chosen. To what extent the “standard” model of shelter can be changed? NRC tried different options: some projects had demanded strict adherence to standards (with no or very minimal changes allowed). Other projects allowed for considerable freedom, including the possibility of choosing building materials. Standardization simplifies monitoring and assistance to beneficiaries, and reduces the risk for NRC. Flexibility allows beneficiaries to adapt their house to their preferences and needs.

The issue of standardization vs. flexibility should also push the NRC to consider if equity is better achieved through standard packages (in terms of amount of materials and grant provided), or if shelter packages should vary according to the size and wealth of recipient households.

DELIVERING ↔ ENABLING

When a programme is in delivery mode, the main focus is on the delivery of physical assets / shelter kits. As discussed in this report, there are other ways to enable beneficiaries to get a shelter, i.e. by removing the barriers that prevent them to build their own. Such barriers include for example limited access to credit, difficulties in getting access to land / adequate security of tenure, inadequate local standards (e.g. excessively high requirements), weak community support / governance. The NRC should think when it is adequate to work mainly in delivery mode, and where instead the focus should be in removing barriers and increase local capacities – in particular the public sector

capacities - to deliver on housing. This dilemma also calls for a redefinition of the complementarity of advocacy and direct intervention in NRC strategy.

← REPLICATION →

← INNOVATION →

What is the role of NRC? Does it want to be an implementing organization whose primary concern is to follow standardized models? Or does it rather want to position itself as an organization capable to innovate and adapt? To what extent NRC want to replicate solutions, and to what extent does it want to use its technical skills as well as its awareness of beneficiaries capacities and needs to prototype new solutions (to then be shared with other organizations)?

Innovation, obviously, requires more investment in designing and testing new solutions, and a longer-term framework (programmes in Jalalabad and Herat started to pilot new models). NRC should consider, how many shelters should it build based on tried and tested solutions and approaches, and what should be the investment on innovation.

This dilemma does not apply only at the shelter provision level, but also at the programme one. Shelter delivery as per the current process is one amongst many different modalities of intervention. Different mix of activities – towards integrated approaches -or shelter programmes based on an “enabling” paradigm could be tested. Some new model for programmes could be built by modifying the existing approach. Other would require to go back to the drawing board and rethink NRC modus operandi.

← CONTROL →

passive role
of beneficiaries

← EMPOWERMENT →

active role
of beneficiaries

What degree of participation is built in the programme? The issue of standardization vs. flexibility is ultimately linked to the role of individuals and community in decision making. Currently beneficiaries have quite a passive role, and NRC should consider if and how it wants them to become more engaged. Active participation of beneficiaries will become increasingly important if the programme moves towards integrated approaches, encompassing livelihood provision, for example.

More input and agency by individuals / communities might result in the need for local adaptation of programmes. It could even end up challenging the current approach. NRC should therefore consider how best to mediate the need for scale and efficiency and the more resource intensive and challenging process of participative decision-making.

Currently the timeframe of the projects lasts less than one year. This is barely sufficient for house construction. It is of course important to ensure that houses are completed in a short timeframe, however time pressure clashed with the priorities of beneficiaries. A lot of pressure has been put on them to “finish” their homes, even when the proposed timeframe was not realistic.

A short timeframe was also challenging in the context of settlement building (e.g. LAS). At the same time, NRC must retain its capacity to respond swiftly to emergency needs for shelter.

← DISPERSIED →

← CLOSED TOGETHER →

Should the NRC seek to target beneficiaries in villages / remote areas? (and therefore take on the logistical challenges of a dispersed programme). Or should it be better to invest in areas where the construction of critical mass of shelters can also create more pronounced ripple effects? (but being careful not to exceed in building too many shelters at once in new areas such as LAS). The NRC should probably respond to both needs. The point is that dispersion / critical mass opens up different possibilities and might require different approaches, which should be balanced out in the programme.

← INDIVIDUALS →

← COMMUNITY →

In its programmes so far NRC focused in delivery to individuals rather than in looking at communities as a whole. The Shura had been involved in certifying the selection process but did not have a decision-making role. Livelihood programmes are now contributing to shift the focus from individual to looking at the wider benefits and engagement for communities.

← SHORT TERM →

← LONG TERM →



APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Evaluation TORs

1 Programme Background

Programme context and rationale:

Shelter is one of Norwegian Refugee Council's five core activities which form the basis for all programme interventions. The primary objective of Shelter is to contribute to durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and returnees. The specific objectives of Shelter are:

- ⌚ to provide emergency shelter in time to meet both immediate and temporary needs, in order to protect and save lives;
- ⌚ to facilitate durable solutions by supporting the (re)construction of permanent shelter; and
- ⌚ to promote education through the provision of temporary and permanent school construction and rehabilitation.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2002, more than five million refugees have returned to Afghanistan, more than four million of which were voluntary returns in the biggest UNHCR repatriation operation ever. Many returned refugees (returnees) are still struggling to fully reintegrate into the country. Particular problems experienced on return are access to land and shelter, lack of livelihood and access to basic services.

Afghanistan faces massive challenges to meet the reintegration needs of returning refugees over the period of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Despite some positive development gains since 2002, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. During 2008, although there was a steady stream of return from Pakistan, many returnees were unable to return to their place of origin and spontaneous settlements have arisen in Nangarhar province housing approximately 4,700 families. Due to security constraints in Pakistan, the rate of facilitated return of refugees from Pakistan is lower in 2009 than 2008, but the patterns identified in 2008 remain valid for those returning in 2009. The absorption capacity of many communities has reached its limit, which presents a massive challenge for the various Governments and the international community if the expectations of refugees about the conditions that they can expect on return to Afghanistan are to be fulfilled.

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) began operations in Afghanistan in 2003, with an Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) programme which focuses on the legal obstacles that returning refugees face to securing durable return, most often in relation to access to property that they had owned before becoming refugees. In 2006

NRC began Shelter and Schools Construction projects in Faryab province in north-western Afghanistan. In 2007/08 Shelter projects were started in Herat, Kabul, Sar I Pul and Nangarhar provinces. The Shelter projects follow a self-build model, based on the three designs approved by UNHCR and the Government of Afghanistan. To date, NRC has supported the construction of almost 8,000 shelters in Afghanistan, with current projects for construction of a further 1,500 shelters in Herat and Nangarhar provinces. NRC has also constructed 17 schools and rehabilitated a further 3 schools, all in Faryab province.

Eligibility for assistance in constructing a house requires that the beneficiary be a returned refugee or IDP, with access to land on which to build a house. The situation of the household is assessed to determine vulnerability and to confirm the need for assistance. A proportion of the beneficiaries are selected from the most vulnerable in the community who did not flee as refugees. Where title to land is disputed the ICLA team provides legal assistance in order to resolve claims.

Schools construction was undertaken through contracting with local construction firms, in accordance with legal requirements in Afghanistan.

NRC believes that the Government of Afghanistan's Land Allocation Scheme is part of the solution to permit durable return of landless refugees. However, site selection in remote and inhospitable landscapes coupled with failure to provide basic services has meant that many of the sites remain almost uninhabited. In 2007, NRC supported 300 returnee families to construct homes in Andkhoy Land Allocation Site – it is estimated that less than 30% of these houses are occupied on a year round basis.

Due to the high number of landless returnees, NRC is investigating options for locally appropriate temporary shelters, which could be moved in the beneficiary is not permitted to remain in a spontaneous settlement/on family land, but which could also be reinforced as the frame for a more permanent structure.

The Emergency Shelter Cluster operates in Afghanistan and NRC is a regular participant in meetings. The Shelter programme works in close collaboration with the Department for Refugees and Repatriation and UNHCR at field level.

Programme goals:

The overarching objective of the Afghanistan/Pakistan regional programme is: ***To promote and facilitate durable solutions for war and natural-disaster affected IDPs, refugees, returnees and others of concern in Afghanistan and Pakistan.***

The specific goals of the Shelter programme are:

- 6) To facilitate voluntary return and reintegration of returnees in Afghanistan;
- 7) To provide vulnerable returnees (and vulnerable members of the surrounding community) with the means to build their own shelter. The means are training, materials and some financial support. The beneficiaries contribute with labour and locally available materials such as mud bricks;
- 8) To increase access to sanitation facilities (through latrine construction) and improved hygiene practices (through training);
- 9) To build the capacity of national staff in technical construction matters, monitoring and evaluation and the protection of rights; and
- 10) To successfully advocate for the rights of displaced people, including returnees, in Afghanistan.

B. Purpose of the evaluation and intended use

The main purpose of the evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the Shelter programme in Afghanistan, applying selected criteria from NRC's Evaluation Policy. The evaluation results will inform and influence the future work of the Shelter programme in Afghanistan, and possibly other NRC Shelter programmes. This evaluation examines the programme during the lifecycle of the programme. No end point for the Shelter programme in Afghanistan has been defined. At least several more years of Shelter programme implementation in Afghanistan is expected.

Its findings and conclusions shall be shared with NRC Head Office in Oslo, Shelter Adviser, Shelter programme managers in other country programmes, donors and other interested persons engaged in Shelter programme set up, assessment and phase out.

C. Scope of work and methods

The evaluation should review all aspects of Shelter programming implemented by NRC in Afghanistan since 2006. The evaluation should put a premium on scrutinizing the most recent work of the Shelter programme, and the current programme model. Consideration should be given to programme resources, the overall framework for providing shelter to returning refugees (especially for those who are landless) and the availability of means to protect rights to land and housing.

The methodology will include:

- 1) Desk Study: The evaluation team should examine independent country reports, topical/thematic reports produced by NRC, Shelter Adviser visit reports, NRC global and country strategy documents, grant agreements, proposals, donor and internal reports, training documents and any other

relevant materials, including the UNHCR/Government of Afghanistan approved shelter designs.

- 2) Field Visits: The evaluators should study the work of field offices, including interviewing beneficiaries who agree to share information; interviewing other community members; interviewing international and national NRC personnel; interviewing partner organizations including UN Agencies, Local Government, and national or local NGOs operating in common locations.
- 3) Interviews with Stakeholders: The evaluators should pay particular attention to the interviewing of stakeholders, namely NRC national staff, local authorities, and those beneficiaries who received Shelter assistance. Of particular interest will be the synergies between the Shelter programme and other NRC programmes in Afghanistan, most especially ICLA and livelihoods support.
- 4) Interviews with National-Level Ministry of Returns and Repatriation (MORR) Personnel: As the lead Ministry for responding to the needs of returned refugees and IDPs in Afghanistan, the evaluators should interview members of the MORR at the national level.

D. Issues to be covered

The evaluation shall cover the following central NRC evaluation criteria.* The questions are an illustration of the areas of focus.

- 🕒 **NRC mandate and overall objective: protection and durable solutions**
 - How does the programme ensure a rights-based approach to its activities?
 - How does the programme address the protection needs/concerns of the beneficiaries?
 - How does the programme meet the emergency shelter needs of NRC's target groups?
 - How does the programme ensure that the targeted beneficiaries are the most needy ones?
 - How does the programme ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed throughout its activities?
 - How does the project assist especially vulnerable groups, such as SGBV survivors within our target group?
 - Does the programme ensure durable solutions for beneficiaries?
 - Has the experience from the programme contributed to the development of advocacy messages in relation to the protection of persons of concern to NRC?
- 🕒 **Efficiency**
 - How much, in terms of time and resources (material, financial and human) has it taken to achieve the construction of almost 8,000 family shelters?

- Could these results have been achieved with fewer inputs?
- What constraints and opportunities existed or developed which have, or could have, influenced resource costs?
- Were the right staff and materials (logistics and procurement) available in the right place at the right time?
- Does the management structure and administrative framework create an enabling environment for programme delivery?
- Do NRC's staff demonstrate the appropriate level of capacity and competence to fulfil their role?
- Has NRC invested in capacity building with its own staff, with counterparts and with beneficiaries?
- What tools have been developed to guide project implementation and how do these tools adapt to feedback from implementation?

🕒 **Relevance/appropriateness**

- Are the physical regions most relevant to the target groups?
- Have other alternatives been explored?
- How are beneficiaries participating in designing programme activities?
- To what extent are beneficiaries able to contribute to the design of the shelters, taking into account family size, gender mix, available resources, plot size etc?
- To what extent are the most vulnerable returnees (and vulnerable members of the surrounding community) able to fully utilize the shelter program building their own shelter, given the fact that the means are training, materials and some financial support?
- Have periodic assessments been undertaken?
- Are project concepts developed in line with undertaken assessments?
- Do quality/quantity indicators properly measure the relevance of the project, and are there indicators missing?
- Are the different protection needs of the target groups well taken into account?
- Does the shelter design use appropriate technology and materials, and does it take account of environmental considerations (e.g. earthquake, water table etc)?
- Are water and sanitation aspects addressed during the implementation of the programme?

🕒 **Effectiveness**

- Is the programme achieving durable solutions and protection of rights of returnees and IDPs?
- How does insecurity impact on the programme?
- Are HLP disputes that constitute obstacles to access to the Shelter

programme being solved by the ICLA programme, to ensure access of vulnerable returnees to shelter assistance?

- To what extent did the targeted direct and indirect beneficiaries actually benefit from the programme? What do they say about the shelter assistance they received?
- Are there tools in place to assess whether objectives are being achieved?
- Is quality of monitoring being carried out and documented? Are the lessons learned fed back to improve programme implementation?

🕒 **Coordination**

- Has the Shelter programme actively engaged with coordination bodies, or created coordination mechanisms where none exist? Here important to look at NRC strategy to comply with the UNHCR shelter policy for design; to what extent has it been useful or rather an impediment?
- Has NRC's engagement in such bodies influenced or contributed to changes in strategies?
- Has there been any overlap or duplication of activities, or a failure to respond to clear shelter needs, by different actors? If yes, to what extent was this due to a failure of coordination?
- How are the different NRC core activities coordinated to 56isto f56 impact?
- Are advocacy issues documented and used to bring positive change by decision makers?

🕒 **Impact**

- How does the achievement of objectives benefit the target group?
- Are others being harmed as a result of the programme?
- Have the project activities caused change in land distribution at community level?
- Have advocacy efforts led to changes in policy or practices?

🕒 **Connectedness/sustainability**

- What is the likelihood of the results of the programme remaining valid in terms of durable shelter solutions, especially in connection to the type of shelter, self-help approach and beneficiary contribution during and after the construction process?
- What measures are put in place by the programme to ensure that the effects are not just temporary?
- How are capacity building activities, both for NRC staff and external stakeholders, enhancing the durability of the results?

*Please see an elaboration of each of these criteria and key questions to assure capturing of these criteria, found in NRC Evaluation Policy Manual "Learning from Experience".

1 Evaluation team

The evaluation should be led by a person with competence in emergency and transitional shelter, technical construction and appropriate technology in both humanitarian and development contexts. Prior experience in the region is helpful. Prior evaluation experience is required.

If proposed in the inception report (see G below) NRC Afghanistan will seek to recruit Afghan support staff, to be hired for the duration of the project, who will assist in document collection, scheduling, research, interviewing, translation, etc. All team members should be gender aware.

Differences of opinion between team members regarding conclusions and recommendations should be decided among themselves and result in a report with analysis, yet common conclusions and recommendations.

1 Steering committee

An Evaluation Steering Committee will be established, with the following members: Country Director; HO Programme Coordinator; HO Head of Section; HO Evaluation Adviser; HO Shelter Adviser. The Steering Committee will oversee administration and overall co-ordination, including monitoring progress. The main functions of the Steering Committee will be to:

- establishing the terms of reference for the project;
- selecting external evaluators;
- reviewing and commenting on preliminary findings and recommendations and;
- establishing a dissemination and utilization strategy.

The HO Head of Section leads the Steering Committee and decides in case of disagreement among the Committee members. The HO Programme Coordinator is the evaluation manager. The Assistant Programme Development Manager (Assistant PDM) will be the focal point in the field and is responsible to facilitate access to information, human and documentation sources, travel, etc.

G. Time frame and budget considerations

Expressions of interest, including an inception report of max 4 pages and outline budget, should be forwarded to NRC HO Evaluation Adviser (Oddhild Gunther: Oddhild.Gunther@nrc.no) not later than 21st September 2009. The final decision on the

candidate will be taken on or before 25th September 2009. A preliminary meeting will be held in Oslo with the successful bidder in advance of field work. Field visits should be planned from mid-October.

Note: All travel and accommodation in-country will be arranged by NRC Afghanistan in accordance with prevailing security guidelines.

H. Reporting

At the end of the field research, the evaluation team will hold a workshop with the Shelter staff and other relevant staff from NRC Afghanistan to discuss the preliminary findings of the evaluation exercise.

A draft report should be submitted not later than 27th November 2009. The Steering Committee will review the report and provide comments to the evaluator by 8th December 2009. The completion date for the Final Evaluation report will be 18th December 2009, with the evaluator having addressed NRC's comments as appropriate.

The evaluation will be guided by the following ethical rules/considerations:

- ⌚ Openness – of information given, to the highest possible degree to all involved parties
- ⌚ Publicity/public access – to the results when there are not special consideration against this
- ⌚ Broad participation – the interest parties should be involved when relevant/possible
- ⌚ Reliability and independence – the evaluation should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy

The final report must systematically review the programme, offering factual support, analysis of activities, and synthesis of both for purposes of conclusion/recommendations. A final report offering a mere repetition of facts and activities will not be approved.

The evaluation report should consist of:

- ⌚ Executive summary and recommendations;
- ⌚ Main text, to include index, context, NRC mandate, evaluation methodology, commentary and analysis addressing evaluation purpose and outputs (including a section dedicated to the issue of particular lessons-learned), and conclusion/ recommendations which synthesize previous information.

- ① Appendices, to include evaluation terms of reference, maps, sample framework and bibliography.

All material collected in the undertaking of the evaluation process should be lodged with the Assistant PDM prior to the termination of the contract. The Assistant PDM will ensure that the Steering Committee is provided with a copy of all relevant material.

1

2I. Follow up /Management response

A management response, including any plans for incorporating recommendations into the programme, will be prepared by NRC Afghanistan within two months after receiving the final report. It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to ensure that the realization of these plans is monitored and documented.

Appendix 2: Evaluation Plan

[SF]: Silva Ferretti

[JA]: Joseph Ashmore

Zabihullah Ghazawi accompanied the consultants throughout the trip.

3 Nov (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Briefing in Oslo with Oddhild Günther (Senior Advisor, NRC), Øyvind Nordlie (Shelter Advisors, NRC), Ann-Kristin Ødegård 🕒 [SF] Desk review
16 Nov (Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] travel to Kabul
18 Nov (Wed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] arrival to Kabul (late arrival due to flight delays)
19-21 Nov Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 No office activity in Kabul due to presidential inauguration / weekend 🕒 [SF] Plan of evaluation is redone in collaboration with mr Zabihullah Ghazawi, focal point for the Evaluation 🕒 [SF] Initial meeting with Charlotte Esther Olsen (Country Director Afghanistan) / John Stiles (Programme Director)
22 Nov (Sun) Jalalabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Travel to Jalalabad (plane) 🕒 [SF] In the course of the visit to Jalalabad I had talks and informal meeting with Olivier David (Area Manager, East) and Subash Jadhav (Programme Coordinator, Shelter) as well as with technical and field staff in the office.
23 Nov (Mon) Jalalabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Meeting with Alhaj Ab. Rahman, DORR Jalalabad 🕒 [SF] Visit to Chamtala settlement. Tour of the settlement, visits to individual families and meeting with village committee.
24 Nov (Tue) Jalalabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Visit to NRC warehouse 🕒 [SF] Meeting with UNHCR representatives 🕒 [SF] Visit to two villages in Kuz Kunar district. Tour of the villages, visit to individual families, meeting with Maliks and beneficiary selection committee
25 Nov (Wed) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Travel to Kabul 🕒 [JA] Desk review
26-28 Nov Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Eid holidays – office activity suspended 🕒 [SF] Desk review
29 Nov (Sun) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [JA] Arrival in Kabul 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Briefing to Joseph Ashmore / revision of plan 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Review documentation
30 Nov (Mon) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Meeting with Marianne Potvin, Shelter programme manager, ACTED

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with Ted Bonpin, Assistant country director and M. Ashraf, ERRPIPMI, Care 🕒 Meeting with John Stiles (NRC) 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with Yodit Muluqeta (PM herat / former PM Sar I Pul)
1 Dec (Tue) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Interview to Mr Werner Schellenberg, Cluster lead shelter / UNHCR 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with John Stiles (NRC) to firm TOR 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with XXX database administrator NRC 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with Capacity Building Team NRC 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Got access to documents from database
2 Dec (Wed) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Attempted flight to mazar 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Revision of plans / consolidation of work 🕒 [JA] - [SF] Meeting with John Stiles
3 Dec (Thu) Mazar / Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] road travel to Mazar. In the course of the field visits I had informal talks with Richard Hamilton (Area Manager), Shaun Scales (Emergency Coordinator) as well as with technical and field staff in the office. 🕒 [JA] Kabul
4 Dec (Fri) Sar I Pul / Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] visit to <i>Andkhoy Land allocation scheme</i> 🕒 [SF] Visit to houses in Sar I Pul 🕒 [SF] meeting with Abdul Ahmad – Head of DORR in Sar I Pul 🕒 [JA] Visit to Kabul (Shakarwala districts)
5 Dec (Sat) Sar I Pul / Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] visit to Sozma Qala transit camp 🕒 [SF] visit to Sozma Qala village 🕒 [JA] Visit to Kabul (Bagrami district)
6 Dec (Sun) Sar I Pul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] visit to houses in Sar I Pul 🕒 [SF] Meeting with local producers of doors / windows and timber sellers 🕒 [SF] Travel to Mazar 🕒 [JA] travel back to UK
7 Dec (Mon) Kabul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] return fro Mazar to Kabul by road
8 Dec (Tue) Herat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] travel to Herat 🕒 [SF] meeting with Alhaj Shah Mohammad Mohiq (Head of DORR) and Eng. Abdoul Rusol Reehimai (Director reintegration for refugee)
9 Dec (Wed) Herat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Participation to IDP task force meeting 🕒 [SF] Participation to Protection task force

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Meeting with local doors and windows producers 🕒 [SF] Meeting with Abdulkadir H. Jama, Head of Office UNHCR
10 Dec (Thu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Visit to Khosan District Center 🕒 [SF] Visit to Ilan Qala and Ahmad Abad Project area 🕒 [SF] Visit to Taki-Naki Land Allocation Scheme
11 Dec (Fri)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Visit to NRC warehouse
12 Dec (Sat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Visit to Mashlak IDP camp 🕒 [SF] Visit to project area
13 Dec (Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Flight back to Kabul
14 Dec (Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Meeting with technical shelter cluster, Kabul 🕒 [SF] Visit to housing prototype (earthquake resistant) by Afghan Earth Works 🕒 [SF] Debriefing meeting with Charlotte Esther Olsen and John Stiles
15 Dec (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 [SF] Leaving Afghanistan
9 Jan (Sat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 interview with Rob Delany – Former PS shelter, NRC

Appendix 3: seismic resistance

All areas in which NRC have built shelters appear to have significant earthquake risk^{1,2,3}, with the exception perhaps of some of the villages to the north of Herat. It should be noted that compound walls are often taller than shelters and often have limited reinforcement. As such they may also constitute a significant earthquake risk.

The two shelter enhancements in NRC shelters to reduce seismic risk, based on UNHCR designs are:

- ⌚ **Timber triangles:** Use of triangles consisting of three nailed timbers. There are three of these timbers (foundation, middle of the wall and lintel) embedded in the wall at each corner.
- ⌚ **Ring beam:** Timber ring beam on which the roof members rest.

Additionally many families have built tall walls surrounding their shelters (especially around Jalalabad). These are exceptionally dangerous due to their size and length. Addition of regular buttresses would improve their performance.

The timber triangles are minimal (as observed from photographs and design drawings only)

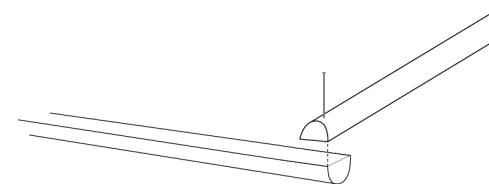
- ⌚ They do not go sufficiently far along each wall to prevent the corners from cracking with an earthquake. The timbers should be longer.
- ⌚ They are held together by nails and not always by joinery. In the case of an earthquake, even if the timber triangles did not pull free of the wall, they would only be held together by one nail in each corner. They would be stronger if they were notched. If the skills are lacking to do proper jointing, consider prefabricating corner braces
- ⌚ Additional triangles would help. Currently there is 1 meter or more between

¹ <http://cires.colorado.edu/~bilham/Afghan%20Earthquake%20Appendix.html> - For a full list of earthquakes in Afghanistan over the last 1200 years.

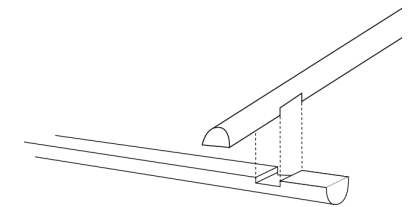
² http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2007/1137/downloads/pdf/OF07-1137_508.pdf for a geological report

³ Note: The Kabul office (and guest house) does not appear to be well designed (multi-storey, questionable construction quality, large openings), leading to serious concerns for staff safety in case of an earthquake.

them.



*Timber jointing as seen in photographs
- weak as relies on the strength of one nail*



*Improved timber jointing
- requires a degree of craftsmanship and additional timber for overlap*

Timber ring beam (potential concerns):

- ⌚ The ring beam is not jointed at the corners – it will fall apart during an earthquake. See jointing detail above for how this could work. Such a detail would require the provision of longer timbers, and cause timber to protrude beyond the edge of the house.
- ⌚ The roofing timbers only rest on the ring beam – they risk falling off in an earthquake. See jointing detail above and consider wire or metal strapping
- ⌚ The ring beam is not connected to the wall

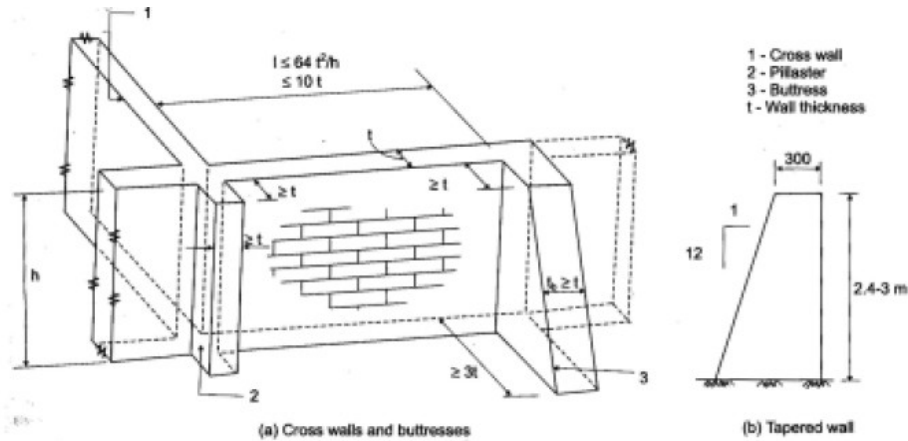
Some simple approaches for improving seismic resistance of buildings

Field teams should consider promoting some simple concepts to improve building resistance to earthquakes. However these are only suggestions and uptake strongly depends upon feedback from those who will be building and living in the shelters.

1) Build in a safe location - not on a steep hill side if at all possible.

2) Stop walls collapsing

- ⌚ Ensure that doors and windows are a minimum 1.2m (4 ft) from walls. In Jalalabad there is a practice of people making doors in the corner of rooms. An option would be to provide two doors in rooms



- ⌚ Consider corner buttresses (these are relatively cheap too implement, requiring additional labour and mud blocks.)
- ⌚ Upgrade corner timbers where they are used. (this will have materials supply implications)

3) Stop the roof from caving in / falling off the wall plate

- ⌚ Consider extending the roof poles beyond the end of the wall plate.
- ⌚ Ensure that the ring beam at roof level is continuous.
- ⌚ Try and tie roof poles more securely into the ring beam

4) Ensure blockwork quality

- ⌚ Where stones are used there should be regular through-stones.
- ⌚ Where mud block are used they should be of good quality - see attached documents for tests and for use of straw etc.
- ⌚ Where mud blocks are used ensure that they are laid so that they tie the wall together across its width.

5) Ensure that there are solid foundations.

Seismic resistance – further reading

NRC staff interested in improving seismic performance are encouraged to look at the following manuals which have some simple improvements that can be made to adobe structures.

Seismic resistance of Simple adobe construction:

<http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/earthquakes/MasonryAdobe/ImprovedAdobe.htm>
http://www.world-housing.net/uploads/WHETutorial_Adobe_English.pdf

For stone and masonry – contains useful details on timber reinforcement for masonry walls. Has applications to adobe construction, but less appropriate to the constructions that we are building.

http://www.archidev.org/IMG/pdf/Battar-handout_English-07-06-04.pdf

For further technical advice (beyond Afghanistan), the following people have proven practical and willing to help: Tom Schacher tom.schacher@adhoc.ch or Randolph Langenbach RL@conservationtech.com. You may also try contacting NSET <http://www.nset.org.np/> for practical advice.

Appendix 4: Materials Consulted

In addition to the documents related to the programmes, the following materials were accessed:

Field reports on shelter programme

NRC-68899 Travel Report Shelter, Afghanistan June 2008.doc
Travel report, Øyvind Nordlie, Shelter Adviser Technical Support Section,

Herat Shelters Dome Report May 2009.doc
Herat Shelter Project - Field Visit Report - Dome Roof Shelters, By Rob Delaney, Programme Support, Shelter

Shelter Sar I Pul March 2009.doc
Shelter Project in Sar I Pul : AFFS0801, Field Visit Report, By Rob Delaney, Programme Support, Shelter

2008 12 15 Kabul shelter.doc
Kabul Shelter Project Site Visit, Rob Delaney, PS Shelter, Date of Visit - Monday 15th Dec 2008

Andkhoy LAS report March 2009.doc
Report on Andkhoy LAS, By Rob Delaney, Programme Support, Shelter, April 2009

2008 08 Sar I Pul1 raghu comments.doc
Field Notes and Observations (internal use only)
Rob Delaney, Programme Support, Shelter, Location of trip: Sar I Pul, North Afghanistan, August 2008

2009-04-21 NRC Market-Based Assistance in Herat.doc
Review of vouchers programme in Herat

Other NRC evaluations / documents

Foley, C and Reed, S. (2009 – Draft). Land and property issues for returnees and IDPs in Afghanistan.

Perce, Martin (2009). NRC Evaluation Report – Information, counseling and legal assistance in Pakistan and Afghanistan

NRC Afghanistan (2008). Shelter project handbook

NRC policy papers:

Gender policy
Evaluation Policy (2002)
Protection Policy (2008)
Shelter Policy

Shelter workshop

Notes from Shelter Meeting.doc
See also accompanying files in “workshop” folder

UNHCR Shelter Guidelines

“UNHCR 2005 Shelter Guidelines” folder
“UNHCR 2007 Shelter Guidelines” folder
“UNHCR 2008 Shelter Guidelines” folder

Project proposals

AFFS0702 HUM Shelter FINAL draft 21.10.06.doc
AFFV0702_Amended proposal pre-final.doc
NRC-20206 AFFS0703_Project Proposal_Narrative_Revised Submission (5).doc
NRC-33204 AFFV0703 Single form revision 3
AFFS0802_ECHO_11 05 08.doc
NRC-84260 AFFM0902 SIDA propal ICLA & Shelter(1).doc
NRC-92661 AFFS0902 NRC shelter assistance in Nangarhar. SUBMITTED.doc
AFFS0904 SIDA Emergency assistance to IDPs in Sozma Qala final.doc
SQTC NRC UNHCR Winterisation proposal.doc

Final reports

NRC-68666 AFFV0703 Final report ECHO.doc
NRC-85566 AFFS0802 Interim Report - ECHO - Final version.doc
AFFS0703 Single Form Final Report draft.doc

OTHER

UNHCR (2008). Land allocation schemes. On line at <http://www.unhcr.org/48722db42.html>