A.16 Somalia, Somaliland - 2009 - Conflict / drought

Case study: Urban shelter upgrade

Full case study

Disaster:
Somalia conflict.
Displacement sites in Hargeisa.

Disaster date:
1991 onwards.
Project implementation 2008

Number of people displaced:
Over 60,000 people in Hargeisa in settlement sites.
Total population of Hargeisa estimated at 600,000

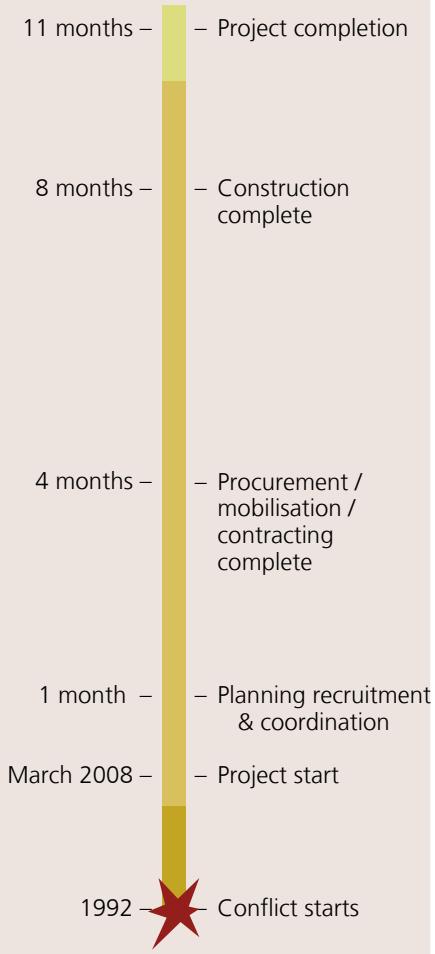
Project target population:
634 shelters constructed in two temporary settlements.

Occupancy rate on handover:
Very high. Many families were also seen to improve their shelters.

Shelter size:
16m²

Materials Cost per shelter:
620 USD per shelter

Project timeline



Summary
In dense urban settlements in Hargeisa, 634 transitional shelters were constructed in two temporary settlements. The project was implemented by two local partner NGOs. The construction was accompanied by improving site planning with access roads and by sanitation activites, implmented by other organisations.

Strengths and weaknesses

✓ Provision of appropriate shelters and materials that allowed upgrade. Many families were seen to make improvements to their shelters.
✓ Accompanied by programmes to clear access roads and improved sanitation
× The project was limited in scale due to funding limitations.
× Delays in materials supply.
× Shelters had some structural weaknesses and were in need of improvement.
- There was no follow on funding for 2009, as transitional shelter construciton was not seen as part of the donor's 2009 emergency priorities.
- Shelters were made so that the materials could be re-used or relocated, allowing them to be built on temporary sites.
- This programme focussed on those living in dense urban temporary settlements rather than those living with host families, who remain an unknown number. It is not clear if in so doing, it created a pull factor, attacrcting people to these sites.
- Community mobilization to enhance ownership, and information sharing and networking with all stakeholders was key to the programme
- Selecting the most vulnerable was challenging as all IDPs claimed to be vulnerable. Being able to cover the entire settlements would have reduced some of the pressure on selection.

Left: Timber frame and corrugated iron shelters built during this project
Right: Self built shelters next to improved access road
Photos: Joseph Ashmore

Somalia context

Hargeisa is the capital of Somaliland, relatively the most stable of the regions of Somalia. Hargeisa has a population of over 600,000 people and a displaced population estimated at over 60,000 people living in sites dispersed across the city. These people had been displaced by a combination of conflict and drought over the previous 18 years. The main concentration of displaced people is in three settlements that were initially formed as temporary measures.

There is a widespread wish by authorities and land owners that temporary settlements do not become permanent. Each settlement has different pressures regarding how long it will be able to remain.

There have been limited relocation programmes, and more are planned for the future, giving families permanent entitlement to land on new sites on the outskirts of Hargeisa. Previous programmes have included the construction of durable housing, and this has led to individual family members remaining in the camps to continue to claim the benefits of camp residency.

Most of Somalia has significant issues with deforestation. However timber, either sawn, or in poles, is the key structural element for the shelters. If sourced locally there was a risk of increasing local environmental damage, whilst if imported from uncertain (non-certified) sources, there was a risk that the environmental impact would merely be spread to other unknown locations.

Programme overview

This programme:

- developed a profile of the displaced people through a large scale survey.
- distributed shelter materials kits (wooden poles, ropes, canvases etc) to 280 families to improve their shelters
- constructed timber and corrugated iron shelters for 634 families. For the two targeted IDP settlements
- established firebreaks and improved sanitation in the project site.

Beneficiary selection:

Following an inital registration exercise, some of the selected households were found to be the same or similar. This created suspicion that the committees selected a number of households from the same family. Further verification had to be undertaken on families falling into this category.

Beneficiary selection criteria were developed in consultation with the shelter cluster, IDP settlement committees, line ministries and local municipality. They were households

- with many children and one or more people with disabilities, where the head of the family cannot take proper care or usually unemployed.
- headed by a woman with many children and no income.
- with children and elderly parents, insufficient shelter, unable to work and without space to build additional shelter.
- with many children and headed by either a brother or a sister who can not support the family.
- who were in need of urgent improvement of shelter, and who were hosting other families displaced from South Central Somalia.

Settlement Selection:

In coordination with the Somaliland IDP Working Group, line ministries and local municipalities it was agreed to support the two temporary settlements with highest and the most congested population in Hargeisa.

Daami area had been considered one of the poorest quarters in Hargeisa as long ago as 1988. Most of the current residents had settled during the early mid-1990s.

The settlement contained people from Southern Somalia displaced by conflict after 1997, Ethiopian refugees & immigrants, minority clans from within Somaliland and other minority groups.

Stadium settlement contained over 17,000 people, and lacked any infrastructure or social services.

Technical solutions

The project aimed to improve the living conditions of displaced families in Hargeisa through provision of temporary shelter and shelter kits with a key focus of

enhancing protection of the IDPs. This was based on the strategy agreed upon by the organsiations working on sheltering issues and the local authorities.

The shelters that were constructed had a timber frame made from imported timber, and a corrugated iron roof and walls. The shelters were based on shelters observed across Hargeisa, that had been built by low income families.

Surprisingly, the structures were not excessively hot in comparison to the previous self-built shelters (Tukuls / buuls) in the camp. Dust was a greater concern to occupants than the temperature. Common upgrades made by families include

- plastic sheet for ceilings
- plastic sheeting, fabric and cardboard for walls
- plastic sheet or lino for flooring.

In some cases families have upgraded shelters by building enclosed extensions and improved flooring.

The shelters used simple post foundations so they can be easily dismantled and removed at any time, with all components easy to transport in case of relocation.

Whether, or when, most sites will actually close is not entirely clear. In the absence of viable alternatives for those living in temporary settlements, there was no immediate prospect of closure for the majority of sites.

Occupancy of constructed shelters was very high, and most families appeared to have upgraded them. They have also blocked gaps to prevent wind from infiltrating. However, although the shelters appear to be well appreciated, families may have prioritised other needs such as food and clothes higher than these shelters.

Given the very low household incomes in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia, even shelter kits (less than 200 USD), are equivalent to a significant amount of disposable income for displaced families. More involved shelter interventions such as durable houses (4000 – 5500USD) constitute a handover of physical capital that may be equivalent to over ten years of disposable income for the families that receive them.

Shelter quality

Although the occupants expect the shelters, with maintenance, to last for more than 10 years, there were several quality issues with these shelters:

- Roofing timbers are thin. What were initially supposed to be 50mm thick timbers are closer to 35mm thick – leaving very slender structural members (a result of cutting 130mm timbers into three rather than two pieces).
- Roofing timbers were not very well tied down to the walls.
- Sump oil / diesel mix was not universally available during construction. Providing it would have reduced risk of termites.
- Timbers that run around the base of the structure for fixing the corrugated iron sheet should have been raised so that they are at least 100mm clear of the ground to reduce risk of termite infestation.

Implementation

The construction work was divided among two local NGOs. The implementing international organisation providied technical support and monitored the work.

Timber frame structure

Below is the materials list for the timber frames structures that were built in Hargeisa.

Item	Quantity
Hardwood (50mm x 75mm x 6000mm) for vertical	6.00
Hardwood (50mm x 50mm x 6000mm) for horizontal	18.00
Galvanized Iron sheet 30 guage.	36.00
Concrete works	
Slab on Fill (fc' - 2500psi concrete strength)	1.00
800mm x 2100mm flush door	1.00
600mm x 600mm wooden window	2.00
Machine shop	1.00
Nails assorted	1.00
Labour, consumables and tools	

Shelter improvement kit

Below is a shelter kit that was distributed to 280 families in Hargeisa.

item	Quantity
Canvas sheet (6mx4m)	1
Plastic sheet (6mx4m)	1
Timber poles	25
Metal sheets made from recycle tins – locally procured.	3
Metal door (from old oil barrel)	1
Rope	12m
Nails	1Kg

Building a shelter in Hargeisa .
Photo: David Womble

Shelters were upgraded by families
Photo: Joseph Ashmore