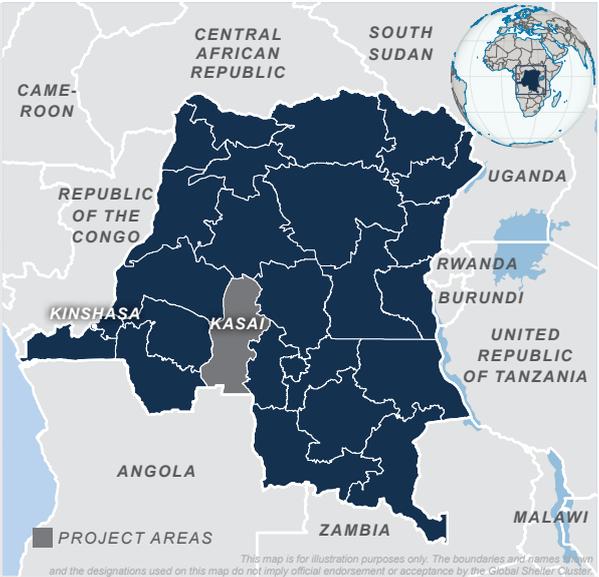


CASE STUDY

DEM. REP. OF THE CONGO 2018 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Emergency shelter, NFI, Vulnerability scorecard, Local construction techniques

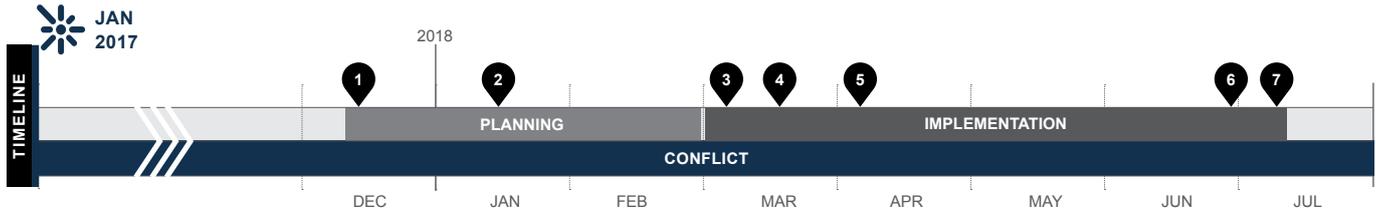
CRISIS	Kasai conflict, January 2017–onwards
PEOPLE IN NEED*	870,000 in Kasai province and 3.8 million in the whole of Kasai region, as of Dec 2017
PEOPLE WITH SHELTER NEEDS	83,740 in Kamuesha health zone. 4.7 million in the whole country*
PROJECT LOCATIONS	Two villages in Kamuesha health zone, Kasai province
PROJECT BENEFICIARIES	630 households (3,150 individuals, 60% female and 158 individuals with disabilities. Including 40% returnees and 10% host families)
PROJECT OUTPUTS	200 shelters built via conditional cash grants 630 NFI kits distributed 4 training sessions on shelter construction
SHELTER SIZE	20m²
SHELTER DENSITY	4m² per person on average
MATERIALS COST	USD 140 for the shelter USD 120 for the NFI kit
PROJECT COST	USD 360 per household (shelter + NFI kit) USD 164 per household (NFI kit only)



PROJECT SUMMARY

The project provided non-food items kits to 630 displaced, returnee and host community households and built 200 shelters for the most vulnerable amongst them using local designs and materials. Shelter solidarity committees were established to oversee the design and construction process, which was driven by the affected households themselves. Vulnerability scorecards were used to prioritize beneficiaries based on NFI and shelter materials conditions, combined with additional socioeconomic and vulnerability criteria, designed together with the community.

* Humanitarian Response Plan, 2018.



- 12 Dec 2017: Shelter-NFI needs assessment conducted by the organization in Kasai province.
- 13 Jan 2018: Assessment report presented to national Cluster and donor.
- 4 Mar 2018: Beneficiary selection process using scorecards.
- 15 Mar 2018: Four trainings on shelter construction conducted to a total of 100 people forming shelter committees. Community construction tools distributed to these committees.
- 4 Apr 2018: Shelter material collection completed. Construction begins through the shelter solidarity committees.
- 30 Jun 2018: Construction of the 200 shelters completed.
- 1-7 Jul 2018: Handover of shelters and distribution of NFI kits.



A total of 200 shelters were built for the most vulnerable in the communities thanks to the support of solidarity groups covering about 20 families each.

- STRENGTHS**
- + Use of local materials, house typology and construction techniques.
 - + Cash was injected into the local economy.
 - + High involvement of the community.
 - + Effective targeting process.
 - + Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

- WEAKNESSES**
- The project mistakenly assumed that community members would help new arrivals.
 - Limited capacity and experience in cash-based interventions.
 - Communication challenges with armed actors and the communities.
 - Shelters were built without latrines.

CONTEXT IN KASAI

Against a background of insecurity and protracted displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, tensions in 2016 over the recognition of traditional leaders led to an escalation of conflict between the national army and local militia in the Kasai region. About 1.4 million people were displaced in the first half of 2017 across the region. In October 2017, a six-month system-wide Level 3 emergency was declared to respond to the scale of the crisis in the country.¹

SHELTER NEEDS

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) were identified amongst the key priorities in multisectoral assessments conducted in Kasai province. Despite the acute needs, the Shelter-NFI Cluster remained the most underfunded sector in the country in 2018 (less than 10% funded).² Only 36 per cent of the people were reached by March 2018 and very few humanitarian partners were implementing shelter activities.³

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The shelter working group strategy in early 2018 centred around four main interventions:

- Collective centre upgrades (USD 50 per household);
- Emergency shelter kits for displacement sites (USD 120 per kit/household);
- Conditional cash support for families hosting IDPs who cannot return (USD 120);
- Materials distribution and/or conditional cash transfer to support return (max USD 450).⁴

The working group advocated for inclusive processes, focusing on capacity-building and owner-driven construction, as well as the use of local materials and housing typologies.

VULNERABILITY SCORECARDS

A scorecard approach was used in the country to target beneficiaries given the acute gaps between needs and available resources. Developed in 2007 within the NFI Cluster, the approach initially used a ranking from 0 (no need) to 5 (extreme vulnerability) based on set criteria. For shelter, the scorecard was developed in 2014. Criteria for each household were selected from drop-down lists in a spreadsheet that calculated the final scores.

Criteria were grouped into five categories:

- Humanitarian situation (see opposite table);
- Density / privacy within the shelter;
- Location (incl. tenure arrangement);
- Roof conditions; and
- General shelter conditions (incl. foundations and walls).

Depending on the conditions of each household, criteria were assigned a score representing the severity of the vulnerability. Scores for the criteria in a given category were then multiplied and weighed. The average amongst the five categories was taken to represent the shelter vulnerability of each household.

¹ 2017-2019 Humanitarian Response Plan: 2018 Update.

² Financial Tracking Service, 2018, <https://fts.unocha.org>.

³ NFI and Shelter Cluster Factsheet March 2018.

⁴ The strategy is available at <https://sheltercluster.org>.

EXAMPLE OF SCORES USED IN THE PROJECT WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION CATEGORY		
Criteria	Criteria options	Scores
Displacement status	Internally displaced / Refugee / Disaster-affected	1.00
	Returnee / Local non-displaced, host family	1.25
	Local non-displaced, not vulnerable	5.00
	Local non-displaced, vulnerable	2.50
Protection incident	GBV / Fire / Damaged and looting	0.50
	No violence	1.00
Special needs	Female headed / Child headed / Elderly / Disability / Chronic illness	0.50
	No special needs	1.00
Time factor	0–3 months without shelter / new displacement	1.00
	3+ months without shelter	1.25
	0–6 months with emergency shelter	7.00
	6–12 months with emergency shelter	1.50
	12+ months with shelter	1.25
	10+ CGI received / kit / transitional shelter	15.00
	Less than 10 CGI received / NFI kit	2.50

EXAMPLE: For a returnee household, with no incident of violence, no member with special needs, that has been for over three months without shelter, the score for the humanitarian situation category is calculated as follows:

$$5 / (1.25 \times 1.00 \times 1.00 \times 1.25) = 5 / 1.56 = 3.2$$

BENEFICIARY SELECTION

The organization applied additional vulnerability criteria to the Cluster scorecard. This reflected a focus on specific vulnerabilities, including safety, gender, age and disability related. A team of five enumerators was employed to conduct the initial assessments. In the target areas, the organization identified average scores of 4.8/5 for shelter and 3.8/5 for NFI. IDPs, returnees and host community members were all targeted.

The selection process was conducted in consultation with local community leaders and affected people to reduce tensions over the prioritization, including the definition of the selection criteria. Some issues did arise due to beneficiaries trying to register multiple times, or people who were not targeted claiming to be eligible. However, these issues were generally addressed by continuous communication with community leaders and the establishment of committees to address complaints, which were composed of local leaders, displaced and returnee community members, as well as field staff from the organization.

The scorecard approach was also used after project completion, to measure the impact of the intervention over the shelter vulnerabilities of beneficiaries. Scores decreased to around 2.5 for shelter and 2 for NFIs.

The scorecard methodology was revised in 2018 after this project ended, to adjust some of the criteria and adopt a scoring system from 1 to 20 to have a more nuanced disaggregation of the distinct levels of household shelter vulnerability.⁵

⁵ The revised methodology as of Nov 2018 is available at <https://sheltercluster.org>.



Shelters were cost-effective, as materials were locally available and labour was provided by the affected families themselves.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project provided NFI and shelter support to 630 and 200 households respectively. It was implemented by a team of nine staff from an international organization, supported by 18 occasional workers for the distributions.

The shelter component was implemented using conditional cash grants distributed in three tranches using mobile money transfers. For those who did not own a phone, cards redeemable at any transfer shop were distributed. The first tranche (40%) was transferred after the completion of the foundations, the second (40%) after the walls were completed and the third (20%) once the roof was constructed. Following an owner-driven approach, selected households were responsible for the collection of materials and the construction of the shelters, with the support of a team of four engineers from the organization.

Shelter committees or “solidarity groups” were formed from the beneficiaries to oversee the process, each representing 18–20 households. Each committee was composed of five people (generally three women and two men) and was responsible for organizing the procurement, transport and storage of local building materials, supervising construction and supporting vulnerable households where needed. It was found that women were more engaged than men (even though housing construction is traditionally an activity conducted by men), which explained why more women were represented in the committees.

Four trainings on shelter construction were conducted by the organization at the start of the project, to provide the committee members and local community (100 individuals in total, including local authorities and village leaders) with the skills needed to build safe structures and support new arrivals and the wider community in the future. Construction tools were distributed to the committees after the trainings. The tools allowed people not directly targeted by the project to also conduct repairs to their damaged homes. Awareness sessions on health, environment and gender were also conducted in the targeted communities.

After the construction was completed and shelters handed over to the beneficiaries, distributions were organized for the household NFI kits to the larger group of 630 households.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The solidarity groups were set up with the intention of supporting most vulnerable houses in the construction process and train new arrivals on the construction techniques learned. However, it was later found that only two per cent actually did help new arrivals. This was mainly due to other daily priorities such as collecting food or, to a lower extent, taking care of small businesses.

The committees nonetheless played a vital role in defining the shelter design, requesting for additional space, two separate rooms and a covered veranda for cooking in the front. The design had to be modified and presented to the national Cluster twice before the community agreed on the size and layout.

Women had a lead role in collecting local materials, such as sticks, ropes, palm leaves, soil, reeds, etc., while men often prepared the materials before construction. Both men and women shared the tasks of building or rehabilitating shelters.

Given the lack of experience of the organization in cash-based shelter interventions, as well as the novelty of the approach within the targeted communities, in the beginning there was confusion amongst beneficiaries as to how activities would be implemented. Continuous communication and the signing of an agreement between the organization staff and the beneficiaries, outlining roles and responsibilities, helped overcome these issues.



The selection process was effective thanks to the use of the Cluster scorecard approach and the involvement of the affected community. Along with the shelter intervention, the project provided NFI kits to 630 households.

SHELTER DESIGN

The shelter was designed based on local construction techniques and available materials, mainly a wattle and daub or mud-brick structure with thatched roof. On one hand, this allowed a smoother implementation, as target households had access to the local markets where the organization did not, and ensured that the cash was injected into the local economy. On the other, it also helped mitigate the risk of tensions with surrounding host communities, as the housing typology and size was very similar to the existing conditions in the area. The simple layout included a shaded veranda for cooking and storage, connected to a living area, and an additional sleeping space only accessible from the living room.

COORDINATION

Activities were coordinated with and monitored by the sub-national Shelter-NFI Working Group, which conducted several visits to the project sites. Collaboration with other humanitarian partners ensured harmonization and complementarity of the response. Coordination with local authorities was essential to guarantee security and access, as well as in the harmonization of needs assessments.



Communities actively participated in the design process. Thanks to their inputs, the shelters were expanded and a shaded veranda was added.

MATERIALS LIST FOR ONE SHELTER

Kit	Items	Total cost (USD)
Walls	Sticks and reeds	15.00
	Rope	
	Mud and mud mortar	
Frames	Sticks and reeds	5.00
	Rope	
	Bamboo	
Roof	Thatch or straw	5.00
	Palm leaves	
	Rope	15.00
	Plastic sheet	
Door and windows	Door, 86x90cm	52.00
	Windows, 40x40cm / 40x50cm	
	Hinges	
	Padlock and lock	
Shared community toolkit (two for each 20 households)	Measuring tape	48.00
	Handsaw	
	String	
	Mason square	
	Spade	
	Hoe	

MAIN CHALLENGES

Access was a major challenge during military operations, so adopting a people-driven approach improved implementation, as often the organization could not reach project locations.

Tensions between two target villages escalated after the killing of one village chief. The establishment of solidarity groups from the two communities and the training on construction helped reduce these tensions and re-establish dialogue between the neighbouring groups.

The presence of military forces and militia in the area also caused issues when prioritizing beneficiaries, as both armed groups had relatives in the target areas and requested assistance. It took significant efforts and several briefings with both groups to explain the humanitarian principles behind the intervention and be allowed to proceed with an impartial selection.

WIDER IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The training to the local community enabled to reach a wider group, also thanks to the distribution of construction tools. This, combined with the use of local materials and techniques, allowed others to replicate the interventions in the area.

The addition of a covered veranda to the design had the advantage of reducing indoor cooking practices, which reduced health and fire hazards. More households in the area also started to apply the veranda to their shelters.



Shelter solidarity committees were formed and trained to conduct construction activities. After the training, they were given construction tools to be shared.



Other members in the communities were observed replicating some of the features and techniques proposed in this project, such as the outdoor veranda for cooking.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED



Women had a leading role in collecting materials and during construction of shelters, challenging traditional social norms.

STRENGTHS

- + **The use of local materials, housing typology and construction techniques** – coupled with training – allowed to keep the costs low, minimize negative effects on the environment and ensure replicability.
- + **The injection of cash into the local communities** led to the creation of new businesses.
- + **High involvement of the community** and the selected households throughout the project (incl. selection and construction).
- + **Effective targeting** by combining the sector scorecard approach with additional vulnerability criteria defined together with the community.
- + **Gender mainstreaming.** Women were empowered in taking roles traditionally held by men, awareness raised on gender and reproductive health issues, and women and girls supported with distribution of hygiene kits.

WEAKNESSES

- **The project mistakenly assumed that community members would help new arrivals**, while findings showed that only two per cent actually did.
- **The organization had limited capacity and experience in implementing cash-based interventions**, which led to communication challenges and confusion with the communities at the start.
- **Several communication challenges** with armed actors and the communities themselves arose during the implementation. Although community briefings were conducted and a complaints system was set up, these issues could have been better addressed with clear communication from the outset.
- **Shelters were built without latrines**, as activities were not coordinated across sectors within the organization.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The organization started working more closely with the solidarity groups to improve their role in supporting vulnerable households in future projects.
- Shelter-NFI and water and sanitation interventions should be implemented jointly.
- The use of owner-driven approaches, local materials and house designs allow for higher sustainability and cost-effectiveness, especially when people can access local markets.