A.18   Sri Lanka - 2007 - Conflict returns

Case study: Update - Core shelter

Project type:
Transitional shelter construction

Disaster:
Civil Conflict in Sri Lanka

Number of people displaced
520,000 families were displaced by the conflict in Sri Lanka by the end of 2006. 238 houses were destroyed in Karukamunai the community where the NGO was working.
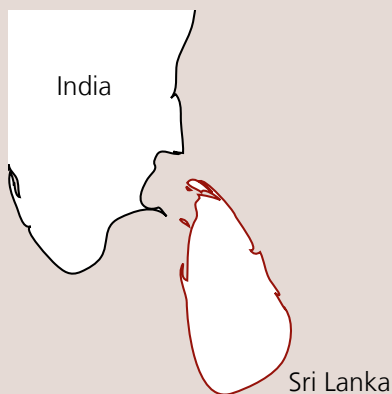
Project target population:
In 2006, over 300,000 people were displaced. This project targeted 213 of these families. The project design and methodology was taken on by other NGO's providing shelter in the areas of return. In total over 1100 of the shelters were built.

Occupancy rate on handover:
100%, with 83.5% of families making adaptations to their shelter after moving in.

Shelter size
18.6 m^2 (200 ft^2) - or 27.5m^2 (300ft^2)in later models

Project timeline

- 3 years – – 1100 core shelters built by different organisations
- 18 months – – 213 core shelters complete
- 13 months – – Project start date
- 1 year – – Families return to villages
- 2006 – – 300,000 families displaced
- 1970s – – Conflict starts

Summary:

This project built core shelters for families returning to their villages after being displaced by conflict. The construction was owner-driven, allowing families to later expand the shelter as their circumstances allowed, for the same initial costs as less durable 'semi-permanent' shelters. Expansion and adaptation of the shelters happened very early on amongst the majority of beneficiary households.

The project was later copied by other organisations working in areas of return and over 1000 of the shelters were built.

Left: completed shelter. Right: shelter with upgrade by family
More than 80% of the families used personal resources or their own time and effort to upgrade their core shelters.
Photos: Jake Zarins

Above - the revised core shelter designs were also upgraded by their new owners.
Photos: Varatharajah Ramesh and Glenn Costes

Update: background

Between 2006 and 2009 many thousands of families were displaced in both East and Northern Sri Lanka by a renewed and ultimately final conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers. Fighting was initially focused in the eastern districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Once these previously rebel held areas had been liberated, displaced families were allowed to return by the government.

This project initially focused on the construction of 213 'core shelters' in a returnee area employing an owner driven approach which promoted high levels of participation and adaptation by beneficiaries in the construction of a more permanent shelter solution at a similar unit cost to the transitional shelters built in the area following the tsunami.

Update: project approach

The approach used by the NGO during this project was considered a great success and quickly received the backing of both local authorities and beneficiary communities due to the more permanent nature of the Shelters provided and the income generation opportunities promoted in the methodology. Following feedback from families living in the shelter, the design was adapted during later phases of the project and it was found that through alterations in layout and

material usage it was possible to provide a fully masonry enclosed 200ft2 area for the same cost as the original design. Orientation of the roof pitch was also altered in the design to facilitate future expansion of the building to suit the needs and economic circumstances of the family.

Update: adoption of core shelter approach

The 'core shelter' design and methodology was taken on by other NGO's providing shelter in the areas of return. In total over

1100 of the shelters were constructed across Trincomalee district by five different organisations. The design has further evolved to meet the demands of the government in regard to the resettlement in the North of the Sri Lanka. These were to provide 300ft^2 (27.5m^2) of covered space whilst retaining the possibilities of future expansion by the beneficiary families. Over 90 of these 300ft^2 (27.5m^2) models were built during 2009 in the northern districts of Sri Lanka along with nearly 300 of the original 200ft^2 (18m^2) design.

Different designs of core shelter were offered to families
Photo: Varatharajah Ramesh