

Self-recovery from Humanitarian Crisis

GCRF Global Research Translations Award

WHAT IS SELF-RECOVERY?

The majority of people affected by conflict and disaster **'self-recover'**: families and communities rebuild using their own resources with little or no support from outside agencies. In the context of ever-increasing need for humanitarian assistance and grave constraints on humanitarian funding, there is an imperative to **understand how communities self-recover and how best to improve support for that process.**

Research shows that after a major disaster, shelter support aid agencies are likely to **meet less than 15% of shelter need** within the first year, and often less. As a result, rebuilt homes can incorporate the same vulnerabilities, poor building practice and hazardous siting as before the disaster. The opportunity to build **healthier, better ventilated homes** can also be missed. The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC), the Humanitarian Coordination System co-led by IFRC and UNHCR, recognises supporting self-recovery as one of its Strategic Approaches. Consequently, projects and programmes that support survivor-led rebuilding are gaining momentum in the shelter sector. However, understanding of self-recovery processes is still in its early stages.



Supported self-recovery post Padang earthquake, Indonesia (2010)
Photo: Bill Flinn CARE

AIM

To **co-develop best-practice guidance** for the **support of self-recovery** that places the **priorities and agency of individuals, families and communities** at its centre.

OBJECTIVES

- Address key **gaps in knowledge and practice** through interdisciplinary research in order to **improve understanding of self-recovery** after disasters and conflict.
- Develop, test and refine **tools and guidance** that support self-recovery including: context analysis, capacity assessment, implementation and monitoring & evaluation.
- Build better understanding of the **wider impacts of shelter responses**, including on **health, livelihoods and protection**. Shelter and settlement programmes provide not only physical dwellings, but also the stable foundations from which people rebuild their lives - supporting a range of multi-sectoral outcomes.
- Build on the **growing network of multi-disciplinary actors to collaborate on research, development and dissemination** of knowledge, tools and good practice.
- **Disseminate the findings of the research** through existing humanitarian and academic networks, through the global network of partners' country offices, the Global Shelter Cluster and through workshops and conferences.

The best way to support self-recovery remains poorly understood. Despite some notable successes, the sector still struggles to know how best to assist self-recovery in a way that keeps the agency of disaster-affected people at its centre.

(Schofield and Flinn, 2018)



BACKGROUND

In October 2019, the team was awarded a **Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Global Research Translations Award (EP/T015160/1)**. The planned project activities build upon research and learnings from two previous GCRF awards that span from 2016 to 2018. This earlier work led to the formation of the **Global Shelter Cluster's Promoting Safer Building Working Group** in 2018 and the '**Informing Choice for Better Shelter**' protocol, a disaster response tool.

The current Self-recovery from Humanitarian Crisis project will **promote the resilience of communities through research and best practice that will support the inevitable process of self-recovery**. The project runs until September 2021.

The project is led by the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP), Oxford Brookes University, in collaboration with CARE International UK. Other partners include Habitat for Humanity, CRAterre and Catholic Relief Services with further cooperation from the International Federation of the Red Cross, the British Geological Survey, the Overseas Development Institute and a growing community of practice including NGOs, academics and policy-makers.



Self-recovery post cyclone Pam, Vanuatu (2015)
Photo: Bill Flinn CARE

RESEARCH TEAM

Prof Cathrine Brun (CENDEP Principal Investigator), researchers and practitioners from CENDEP, Oxford Brookes University, CARE International UK, Habitat for Humanity, CRAterre and Catholic Relief Services.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Working with crisis-affected communities in longitudinal and action research activities, including:

- Developing technical advice and support for self-recovery programmes in disaster response through CARE International's network of country offices and other local NGO partners.
- Further developing best-practice guidelines for the implementation of self-recovery responses, using evidence gained from field work in Southern Africa and the South Pacific in addition to real-time action research in a rapid-onset disaster.
- Facilitating shared learning about supporting self-recovery with regional workshops involving local NGO responders and other stakeholders.
- Testing and refining the Protocol in Malawi and developing its use as a preparedness tool.
- Developing a methodological guide for local context analysis which will inform the first steps of the Protocol.
- Completing a Shelter Response Profile for Malawi, capturing current building cultures and practices.
- Continuing and widening engagement in international and cross-disciplinary learning, including knowledge of the wider impacts of shelter programming, by participating in conferences, leading workshops, publishing reports and inter-disciplinary peer-reviewed papers.
- Continued active involvement in the work of the GSC PSB Working Group

PUBLICATIONS

Papers, articles and blogs

- [Shelter Self-Recovery in Humanitarian Emergencies Evidence Brief](#) (Oxfam, 2017)
- [Self-Recovery from disasters: An interdisciplinary perspective](#) (ODI, 2017)
- [Whose Recovery? Power, roles and ownership in humanitarian shelter assistance](#) (ODI HPN, 2017)
- [The Case for Self-Recovery](#) (FMR, 2017)
- People First: Agency, choice and empowerment to support self-recovery' (Schofield and Flinn, 2018) in [The State of Humanitarian Shelter & Settlements 2018](#)
- [Barriers to urban shelter self-recovery in Philippines and Nepal](#) (British Academy, 2019)
- [Ethics of Self-Recovery](#) discussion paper (CARE, 2019)
- [Improving our knowledge and practice on shelter self-recovery](#) blog (CARE, 2020)

Reports

- [Stories of Recovery](#) (CARE, 2016)
- [Extending Impact Study](#) (CRS 2018)
- [Soaring High](#) (CARE, 2019)
- [Towards Healthier Homes in Humanitarian Settings](#) (CENDEP & CARE, 2020)