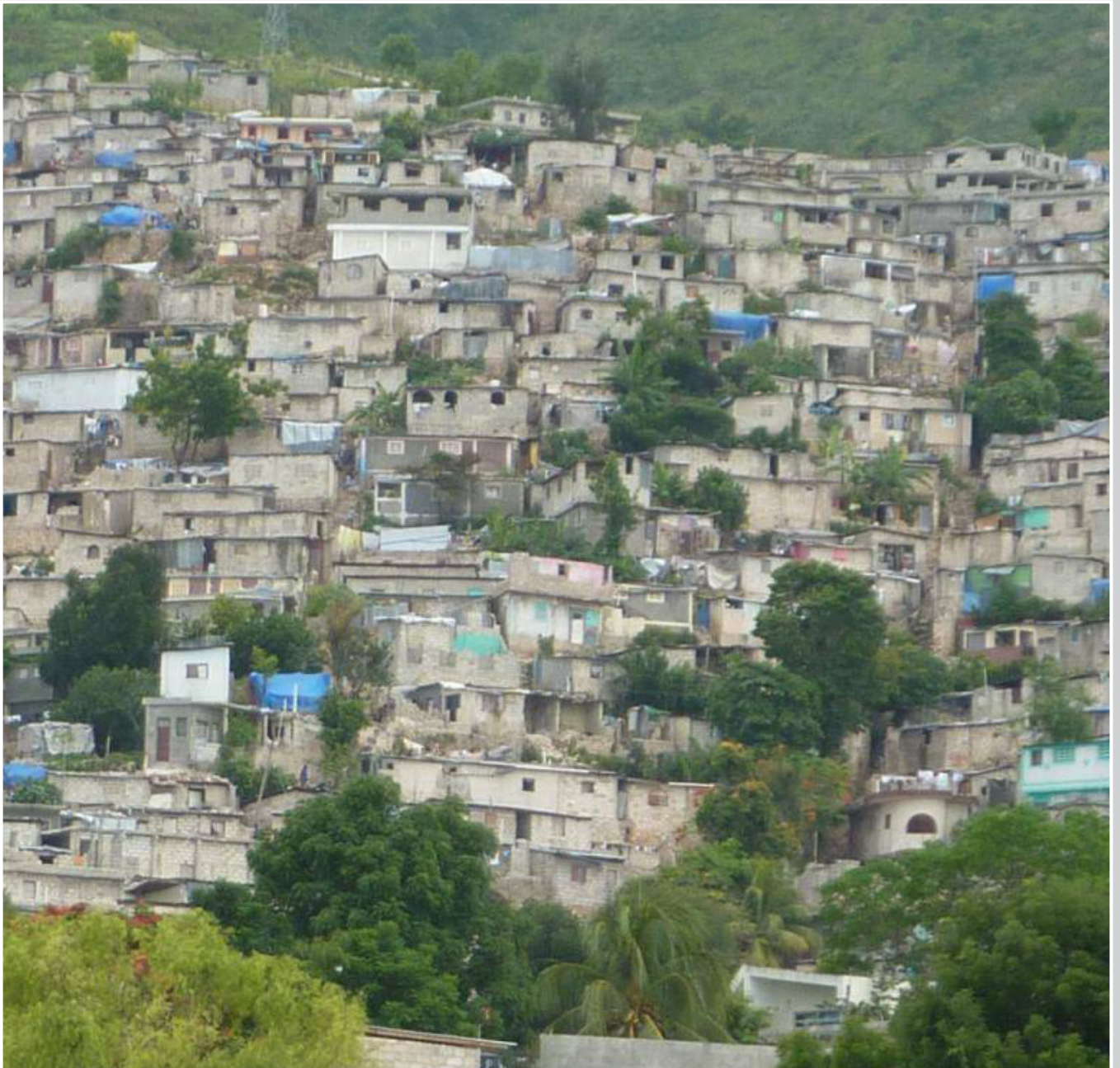


# SHELTER AND HOUSING

UN-HABITAT IN DISASTER  
& CONFLICT CONTEXTS

Haiti 2010, Photo: © UN-HABITAT

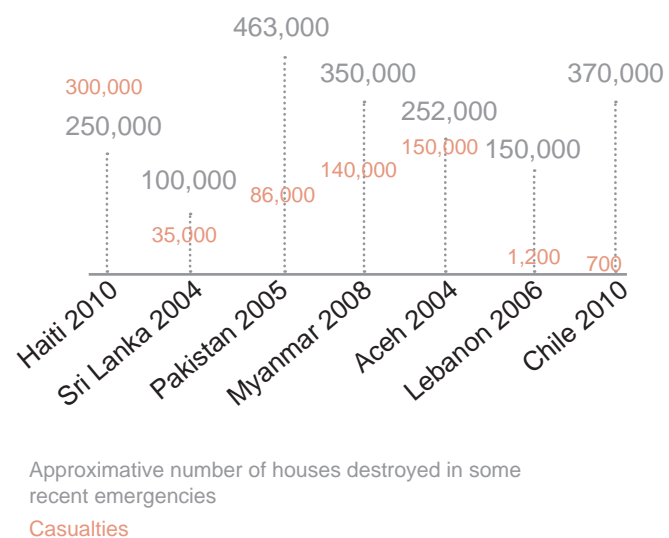


# UN HABITAT SHELTER & HOUSING IN DISASTER & CONFLICT

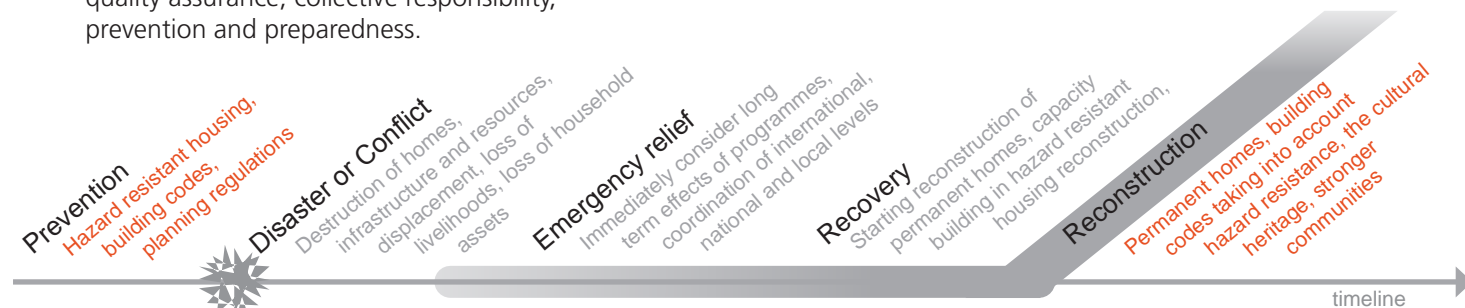
Housing reconstruction enables people to rebuild their lives and their communities. Following a disaster, houses are the most prolific area of destruction. It is not only people's largest asset, but also a huge financial component of the overall reconstruction cost. While a tragic event, disasters also represent a possibility for building hazard resistant homes, for improving human settlements and for strengthening community and government capacity.

Investment in pre-crisis measures to reduce risk is always preferable to reconstruction. When crisis does occur, people will start rebuilding from the first day and the focus should be to enable people to return home safely and to begin permanent housing reconstruction as early as possible. UN-HABITAT works in partnership with, and in support of, local authorities and provide technical advice and capacity building.

Housing reconstruction should build on - and improve - local designs, techniques, building materials and skills, by strengthening awareness, quality assurance, collective responsibility, prevention and preparedness.



Approximative number of houses destroyed in some recent emergencies  
Casualties



While the above process is not linear, UN-HABITAT promotes safe return and the reconstruction of permanent homes as soon as possible.

## Issues

### How to "Build Back Better"

Reconstruction begins the day after a disaster. The geographical scale and distribution of disasters makes overly restrictive guidelines and standards impractical. Appropriate solutions to mitigate the most dangerous hazards should be developed and rapidly communicated. This is also an opportunity to improve water, sanitation, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

### What kind of owner driven approach?

People are the main drivers of reconstruction. In recognition of this the owner-driven approach is generally accepted, but there is still a need to decide on how best to provide financial and technical assistance in a way that involves individuals and communities in decision-making.

### Permanent homes or transitional shelters

While tents may be required in the immediate aftermath, safe return to homes is the main objective. Reconstruction of permanent homes should start as soon as possible. In some cases, the support of transitional shelter prevents investment in more durable solutions.

### Cultural heritage and "modern" design

People will build what they know. Traditional building materials and culturally acceptable forms and technique, are the foundation for reconstruction and should be improved, not replaced.

### Securing land rights

Promoting community-based land adjudication to facilitate housing reconstruction, but not making a final determination of the legal status of land rights.

### Relocation and evictions

Evictions and relocations should be avoided, except in the case of environmental or public good requirements and must conform to international standards.

### Housing as process and product

Housing reconstruction can be a means of empowering communities and help individuals recover after crises. Housing solutions must be complemented by initiatives to address community and livelihoods recovery and local economic development.

## Approach

### People-centred approach

Building on people's capacity, giving access to resources and responsibility for decision making. It is important not to create passive victims. Training of artisans and developing new curricula for hazard resistant housing reconstruction.

### Coordination

Harmonization and coordination of reconstruction initiatives by different organisations is essential for equity and quality control. UN-HABITAT has agreements with IFRC to support the shelter cluster after natural disasters.

### Integrated approach

Multi-disciplinary teams of architects, planners, engineers, economists etc. assisting in trainings to enable quick knowledge transfer to local authorities and other key stakeholders.

### Multi-Hazard reconstruction

Adopting a multi-hazard approach to risk reduction: fire, floods, earthquakes, cyclones etc.

### Finance

Promoting an appropriate mix of grant and loan packages for all income levels.

### Legal/regulatory reforms

Supporting the revision of building codes and planning regulations that take into account hazard resistance, local needs and cultural heritage.

UN-HABITAT's approach will vary depending on the context (see map). In general, we combine policy and technical advice with direct implementation to ensure policies reflect reality. :

- Model houses to influence policy (Mozambique)
- Policy advice that influence the whole reconstruction process (Aceh, Pakistan, Haiti)
- Direct or indirect implantation, for example through private contractors (Iraq), community groups (Aceh, Sri Lanka) or direct construction.

## Examples of UN-HABITAT shelter activities in crisis-affected countries

**Colombia**  
Support in housing, planning and urban governance, capacity building training

**Peru**  
Earthquake resistant housing techniques

**Chile**  
Creation of resource centre to support the community in housing reconstruction

**Haiti**  
Technical advice to local administration on house reconstruction, Community Resource Centres

**South Sudan**  
Urban upgrading and training in improved house construction

**Mozambique**  
Reducing vulnerability to floods and cyclones through model houses to influence policy, capacity building

**occupied Palestinian territory**  
Planning, land and housing

**Lebanon**  
Technical assistance on housing reconstruction

**Iraq**  
Housing and urban development capacity building, shelter access for IDPs and Returnees

**Somalia**  
IDP resettlement housing reconstruction

**Pakistan**  
Policy development to national and local government, technical and training support for reconstruction

**Myanmar**  
Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction, water supply and sanitation recovery, coastal settlements recovery

**Sri Lanka**  
Community Recovery and Reconstruction, shelter support to IDPs

**Indonesia**  
Settlement and sanitation programmes, early recovery shelter assistance after earthquake





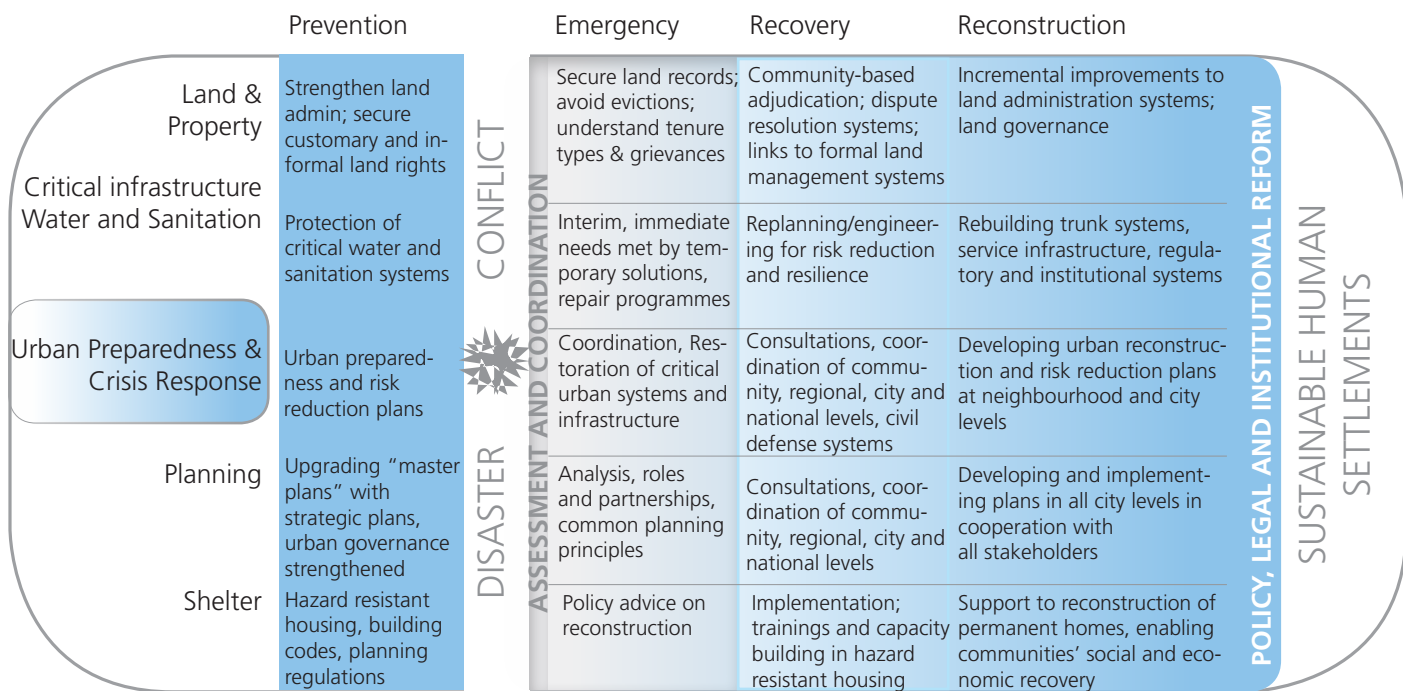
# UN-HABITAT Expertise

- Assessment: damage and needs assessments, housing sector assessments, community assessments, training needs, etc.
- Housing Reconstruction policy development
- Implementing reconstruction programmes (rural/urban)
- Hazard resistant reconstruction techniques
- Training and capacity building
- Finance to support affordable housing programme
- Building regulations and codes
- Community empowerment (eg. People's Process)
- Cultural heritage issues in reconstruction processes

# Cross-Cutting

- Livelihood:** Shelter reconstruction strategies should be designed to create local working opportunities, provide skills and vocational training and promote the use of locally available material and labour.
- Environment:** Reusing salvaged materials (timber, iron, bricks), avoiding deforestation, promoting energy efficient construction materials and stoves.
- Gender:** Women play a critical role in all stages of housing reconstruction, including: housing design, settlement planning, livelihoods, quality assurance, etc.
- Governance:** Community-based reconstruction can also contribute to improved local governance.

# UN-HABITAT



# UN HABITAT

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# Contact

## Networks and Partners

- Inter Agency Standing Committee
- Shelter Cluster
- Emergency Shelter Cluster
- International Recovery Platform
- International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

## Publications

- Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction (SRR)
- Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis
- Shelter Projects 2008 and 2009, IFRC/UN-HABITAT
- Shelter after Disasters 1982, UNDRO
- Shelter after Disasters 2011, IFRC, UN-HABITAT
- Safer Homes, Stronger Communities 2010, World Bank

# Resources