

# Promoting Safer Building

## Improving support to self-recovery

Promoting Safer Building is a collaboration between ODI, CARE International UK, EPICentre (UCL) and BGS. In October 2016, we were awarded a grant from the Global Challenges Research Fund through the Natural Environment Research Council. With this fund we are able to build on initiatives that have already been advanced by CARE International UK and UCL.

Humanitarian experience, as well as substantiated research, demonstrate that self-recovery after disasters is the predominant pathway to recovery. The overall objective of this project is to lay the foundation for, and develop, a long-term programme of multidisciplinary research to achieve resilient homes and communities in countries at high risk of disasters. The team will develop substantive knowledge of, and support to, the inevitable self-recovery process after sudden and slow-onset disasters: communities will be more resilient and family homes will be safer and better able to resist hazards, avoiding injury, death and economic loss.



*CARE Indonesia – A self-recovery programme in West Sumatra*

### Why Self-Recovery?

We know that the majority self-recover<sup>1</sup> - families and communities rebuild using their own resources. We also know that outside agencies, while accomplishing a great deal, do little to support this process of self-recovery. As a result, homes get rebuilt incorporating the same vulnerabilities, poor building practice and hazardous siting that previously led to widespread

infrastructure damage, economic cost, injury and loss of life.

Self-recovery is a relatively new concept in the humanitarian sector and not yet widely understood. However, CARE International has implemented self-recovery projects that suggest advantages that go well beyond the structural safety of the houses. In 2009, CARE Indonesia ran a post-earthquake shelter programme for 3,500 families. The families were supported with cash and technical support. CARE Philippines had a much more ambitious programme of almost 16,000 houses in response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Both examples show that a self-recovery approach can enhance psychosocial and livelihood recovery, can give choice and a sense of ownership to the family, as well as promoting simple technical standards (Build Back Safer). Furthermore, each house is bespoke and tailored to individual needs. The result is a range of homes, expressive of the family's needs and choices.

### Objectives and Activities

This project is seen as the first phase of a longer programme. It will collect evidence and develop research methods with a view to bigger future collaboration. Our objectives are:

1. To take a multidisciplinary approach to develop a joint understanding of how scientific, engineering and construction knowledge currently support the self-recovery process and how this can be improved in future.
2. To identify key gaps in knowledge and understanding of self-recovery after disasters to inform future research.
3. To propose an analysis methodology for understanding self-recovery after disasters that cause widespread damage to housing; this will identify drivers for, and barriers to, self-recovery and inform decision-making about how humanitarian actors can intervene to effectively and meaningfully support self-recovery and construction of safer houses.

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<sup>1</sup> Research shows that the number of shelters constructed by aid agencies one year after a major disaster is likely to be less than 15% of the need, and often in single figures. Parrack, C, Flinn, B and Passey, M (2014) *Getting the Message Across for Safer Self-Recovery in Post-Disaster Shelter*. Open House International Vol39 No3 p 48.

4. To identify and develop implementation tools and guidance needed to undertake programmes that support self-recovery of safer shelter.
  5. To create a strong network of multi-disciplinary actors to collaborate on research, development and dissemination of knowledge, tools and good practice.
  6. To disseminate the findings of the research through existing humanitarian and academic networks, through the global network of CARE country offices and through workshops and conferences.
4. A UK-based conference to conclude this phase of the study and introduce future work.
  5. Technical advice and support to self-recovery programmes in disaster response through CARE International's country offices.



Two carpenters outside a house in the Philippines – one of the 16,000 distinct homes that were part of the CARE Philippines self-recovery project

Specific activities to achieve these objectives include:

1. Two multidisciplinary case studies of post-disaster responses and scope the potential for a third. These will be Philippines (2013 Typhoon Haiyan and 2016 Typhoon Haima) and Nepal (2015 Gorkha earthquake).
2. A series of internal workshops in the UK to set criteria and monitor progress. Although these are internal working meetings, they will also include external stakeholders.
3. Science, engineering and humanitarian symposia as concluding events of the two case studies, held in the respective countries. Particular effort will be made to include participants from the global south.

#### The Research Team

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