

HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND

Final Report

- Please try not to exceed 5 pages (Arial, 12pts) excluding attachments –

Organisation Name	University College London (UCL)
Project Title	Communicating Technical Evidence: supporting people making decisions about shelter after disasters.
Problem Addressed / Thematic Focus	This project addresses the need to assemble and analyse technical evidence about hazards, dwellings and the built environment after a disaster. To give humanitarian responders the confidence and competence to innovate in the shelter sector, the gaps in this technical evidence base and the opportunities to harness expert evidence must be recognised.
Location	London, UK
Start Date	October 2012
Duration	6 months
Total Funding Requested	£20,000
Partner(s)	Arup and CARE International UK
Total Funding	£35,015 Arup match £10,000, UCL match £5,015
Innovation Stage	Recognition
Type of Innovation	Positioning
Project Impact Summary	
Reporting Period	Final report: 1 October 2012 – 31 March 2013
Total Spent	£35,015 (100%)

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

- Kick-off team meeting at UCL: 9th August 2012
- Team review at Arup: 3rd October 2012
- Technical evidence review ([90 documents from Haiti, Pakistan and Peru](#)) October 2012-January 2013
- Team review at UCL 28th January 2013
- Recognition Workshop at CARE: 19th February 2013
- Stakeholder presentation (UCL) at UK Shelter Forum Oxfam: 22nd February 2013 ([Communicating Technical Evidence](#))
- After Action Review at UCL: 19th March 2013
- Issue final technical report and policy brief: 31st March 2013
- Stakeholder presentation (CARE) at Shelter Meeting 13a Geneva: 25th April 2013 ([More Than the Sum of our Geeks; Value in Engineering Research and Consultancy Reports](#))
- Development of HIF Large Grant proposal: 31st July 2013
- Stakeholder presentation: launch of UCL Public Policy Unit briefing note 20th September 2013 ([Data, Decision-making and Disasters](#))

ACHIEVEMENTS

Project Objectives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish and present a report on the current state of the art 	Published but renamed: Technical evidence after disasters: a review of documents from Haiti, Peru and Pakistan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Position Paper to the post-disaster donor community 	Published (HIF) and disseminated (hard copy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Terms of Reference for a larger project 	Over-delivered: submitted as a full HIF Large Grant proposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the report and position paper at key sector meetings 	Delivered

Proposed Impact (in original proposal)

This was achieved within the team and a recent follow up stakeholder survey by UCL and Habitat for Humanity on the barriers to alternative shelter responses showed that the gaps in knowledge are about how to get good advice and making decisions in the face of low evidence and high data.

Project Vision (agreed by team in October 2012)

The “critical” component of this process was showing the 3 stakeholders (private sector, NGO and academic) how their work did or did not fit into each other’s work and project cycles. The project process was originally designed to allow each stakeholder to recognise and experience the problem from different perspectives but this model of working through the material together in a workshop format was not possible. This meant that while the review of evidence demonstrated the problems and gaps in innovative, visual ways, the individuals

and institutions engaged in the project may not have some away recognising the problem through a new shared understanding.

METHODOLOGY

The original methodology was based on a problem-based learning and recognition process with workshop sessions including: 60s relay presenting roles; Deployment Stories; Verbal Literature Review; Live Knowledge Management;; Reiteration of the Humanitarian Objective and Tasking the Core Team. This was rejected by the partners and the team reverted to a conventional consultancy model where the review exercise was carried out by 1-2 people. This was the model that the innovation was attempting to disrupt but it failed in this regard.

MAJOR OBSTACLES

UCL's first blog entry commented that "We were already discovering that we'd never had a chance to ask each other these questions face to face in "peace time" and realising just how much data was being generated by Arup and UCL and which bits could not be absorbed into the humanitarian response early on."

However, the After Action Review identified the following obstacles:

- **Staff turnover:** the Project Manager who had led the proposal and kick-off process at Arup transferred to another group and the Global Shelter Advisor at CARE left to join another organisation. **Action:** team was stabilised with new dedicated staff by November 2012
- **No such thing as "peace time":** the AAR reported that "the consortium had not functioned as planned, in itself a reflection of the resource pressures on these organisations even in 'peacetime' that present barriers to collaboration". **Action:** project meetings and reviews organised around availability and emergency deployments
- **Busy Technical Teams:** it is very challenging to squeeze work perceived to be of low value or low priority (non-emergency) work out of high value teams or highly trained, senior technical managers. **Action:** project restructured from a problem-based learning approach (workshops and panels) to a conventional consultancy model with a small team of two taking on the analytical work
- **Size Matters:** small grants or tiny project fees in large organisations rely on "intra-preneurs" or the individuals going the extra mile to make change happen inside their organisation or sector. This has limits. **Action:** identify the change-makers prior to submitting proposal through pro-bono proposal development and bilateral meetings (proposal writer meeting key individuals to assess motivation and interest)
- **Traditional consultancy models, partners or sub-contractors:** sub-contractors have a contract which explains exactly what they need to do. This saves time but does not allow the parties to the contract to work out if they want what they have asked for or will get what they think they have asked for.

This happened in this project but is a reflection of a wider barrier to successful collaborations for innovation between humanitarian, academic and private sector organisations. Valuing the process of reaching the same understanding of the problem as a tangible deliverable is new and sometimes difficult for people used to the pressures of fee-based engineering consultancy or project-funded humanitarian response. **Action:** this was difficult to address but the team built discussion and review time into a limited number of short, well-structured project meetings

BENEFICIARIES/HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IMPACTED

Indicate the beneficiaries as well as the humanitarian interventions that have benefited from the project.

<u>Beneficiaries:</u> strategic decision-makers in the humanitarian shelter sector	The gaps, opportunities and risks in technical evidence were presented to this target group
<u>Groups:</u> NGO Managers and Technical Advisers, Shelter Cluster Coordinators and Technical Advisors and Humanitarian Donors	The gaps, opportunities and risks in technical evidence were presented to this target group
<u>Interventions:</u> humanitarian shelter decision processes (collective and agency level, strategic, planning and programme design) and humanitarian shelter interventions	At this stage of innovation, the project has not impacted interventions but it has led into a bigger proposal to tackle a specific gap identified in the technical evidence.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The project partners were very motivated to work on this problem and work together but the original project management structure changed substantially. Firstly, the most efficient administrative arrangement was to have UCL as grant holder and set up simple sub-contracts with CARE and Arup. This was easy for Arup but unusual/unfamiliar for CARE, usually donor-funded rather than running on fees or cost recovery. This contracting approach meant a strong, early focus by the team on vision and deliverables but at the cost of time spent on realising the problem together. Secondly, the team agreed early that the project management, chairing and document review would be undertaken by the grant-holder, also the lowest cost and most flexible partner (UCL). This was very effective as a way to allow high level (expensive or busy) staff to contribute as reviewers and advisors but it limited the extent to which the partners could:

- **Rethink standard outputs:** so that they might be better adapted to the circumstances of potential clients and affected populations
- **Demonstrate value internally and externally:** persuading groups of NGOs, which have the lion's share of resources immediately after a disaster, to come together and work with their donors to procure services collectively for the cluster system or government ministries seems to be a key strategic step in allowing the organisations that nurture diagnostic expertise to initiate and sustain partnerships with the humanitarian sector. Arup has already achieved

this through framework agreements but there is more work to do inside all of the partner organisations to show that academic research or consultancy services are useful far beyond a single NGO or a single shelter or house design and, communicated in the right way, of direct value to affected populations.

Translate the brief and invest in a shared understanding: the terminology used by the private sector, universities and NGOs is different because the day to day activities, objectives and audiences/peer groups are different. Words like ‘shelter’ or ‘risks’ or ‘vulnerable’ have specific and different meanings for everyone. People who speak many of the languages and work across teams might not be the same people who can evaluate the quality of technical advice. Getting to a point where the team share the same ideas about the problem and response takes time (and money) and requires high level buy-in and consistent, committed leadership in each partner organisation. With the day to day pressures of ordinary “business as usual”, small grants split three ways are not quite enough leverage

DISSEMINATION

Indicate the steps taken to disseminate project findings/outputs to outside stakeholders.

- Stakeholder presentation (UCL) at UK Shelter Forum Oxfam: 22nd February 2013 ([Communicating Technical Evidence](#))
 - Stakeholder presentation (CARE) at Shelter Meeting 13a Geneva: 25th April 2013 ([More Than the Sum of our Geeks; Value in Engineering Research and Consultancy Reports](#))
 - Development of HIF Large Grant proposal: 31st July 2013
 - Stakeholder presentation: launch of UCL Public Policy Unit briefing note 20th September 2013 ([Data, Decision-making and Disasters](#))
 - Journal Article on results of review in progress due for submission 28th February 2014
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TRANSFERABILITY

Product: the visual review and mapping of evidence was innovative and revealing about the “supply” and “demand” mismatches in technical evidence to a combined audience of engineers, academics and humanitarian staff. It illustrated and contrasted different responses, times, types, “levels of zoom” and key questions in the technical evidence after disasters.

Process: This project reverted to a traditional consultancy model and the team would not want this to be replicated since it is a key barrier to adding value to humanitarian response with technical evidence.