CASE STUDY

CHAD 2018–2020 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, Integrated programming, Transitional shelter

CRISIS	**Refugee influx from the Central African Republic into southern Chad**
PEOPLE AFFECTED	Approx. **22,000 people** from the CAR displaced to Chad (March 2018)*
PROJECT LOCATION	Goré and Moissala districts in southern Chad
PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY THE PROJECT	**2,290 HHs** (13,790 individuals)
PROJECT OUTPUTS	**2,290 transitional shelters**
SHELTER SIZE	**14m²**
SHELTER DENSITY	**2.8m²** per person on average (varies due to family sizes – large families could still only occupy one shelter, while other shelters had a single occupant)
DIRECT COST	**USD 267** per HH
PROJECT COST	**USD 900** per HH (this figure covers all aspects of the integrated program)

* Source: UNHCR Briefing Note (March 2018)

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project provided transitional shelter for refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), meeting an urgent and fundamental need, and enabling refugees space and time to start addressing their other requirements, such as establishing livelihoods, focusing on education and training, and meeting food needs. Supporting community dialogue, conflict resolution through committees, and complaints mechanisms, ended up playing an important role in fostering social cohesion. In this regard, shelter support formed part of a project that addressed the so-called 'triple nexus' of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding, with the linking of project activities both meeting immediate needs and addressing underlying root causes.

Dec 2013: Pronounced increase in refugee influx from CAR following an increase in violence.

1 **Aug 2018:** Proposal submitted.

2 **Aug 2019:** Rains started.

3 **Oct 2019:** Delays caused by flooding.

The shelter component of this project was designed as part of an integrated approach that aimed to address the three aspects of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at a very local level. This image shows some households using the space around their shelters as kitchen gardens (Silambi refugee site, Moissala).

CONTEXT

Surrounded by countries experiencing internal strife, Chad's border communities have, over the last decades, hosted hundreds of thousands of people fleeing deprivation, persecution and conflict. Since 2014 there has been a pronounced increase of refugees in the Lake Chad Basin area and in the south of the country. By the end of 2019, it was estimated that there were over 451,000 refugees living in Chad, almost 72% of whom had come from Sudan. The next largest group originates from the Central African Republic (CAR); around 22% (99,000 refugees) and a further 4% from Nigeria and 2% from other countries. In addition, some 117,000 Chadian nationals and 'third-country nationals' whose families originated in Chad but migrated to neighboring countries, often generations ago, have had to flee violence and return to Chad. Many do not have citizenship in the country to which their parents migrated, nor do they have documents that prove their Chadian nationality by birth, so they remain in the limbo of statelessness. Chad's population also faces its own challenges, including a deep socio-economic crisis, insecurity, and inter-communal conflicts.

LIVING SITUATION

Refugees from CAR had arrived in an area with which they had historic trade links, where there are linguistic and cultural similarities with local host populations, and similar patterns of rural settlement in grouped village communities. Most refugees were first displaced to self-settled sites within host communities, and then relocated to planned camps neighboring existing host communities, where they were provided first with emergency shelter and then transitional shelter. Lands and natural resources are therefore shared by the refugee and host populations.

Refugees had initially been housed in basic, emergency tarpaulin shelters, in which they lived for 18 months or more, even though the emergency shelters might only have been expected to last for about six months. This increased their sense of vulnerability, fear and trauma over time, with thefts and GBV associated with the easy-to-cut shelters and exposure to the elements, as well as other risks occurring (rain, flooding, rats, snakes) as the tarpaulin sheet material and lightweight structure deteriorated.

PROJECT APPROACH

This project formed part of a multi-sectoral humanitarian program for newly arrived CAR refugees in the sites of Bekan 2 (Goré) and Dilingala (Moissala) and their surrounding host communities in southern Chad. The project aimed to support safe and secure living environments.

The project design identified the risk of food insecurity and negative coping strategies due to a lack of income and livelihoods for the refugees, as well as an increased risk of GBV as a result of competition for and conflict over scarce resources. The deteriorating quality of the emergency tarpaulin shelters was also highlighted as a priority given their negative impact on health, safety and security. As a result, the project proposed an approach where:

- Shelter would contribute to safety and security and meet a basic humanitarian need;
- Agricultural inputs, training, Income-Generating Assistance (IGAs) and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) would strengthen livelihoods and food security and improve resilience; and
- A range of community-led conflict resolution mechanisms, including GBV reduction, would be established or supported to encourage social cohesion and a peaceful environment.

An emergency tarpaulin shelter of the type used before the construction of the semi-durable shelters (Dilingala refugee site, Moissala).

The project therefore aimed to address the three aspects of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at a very local level. It considered conflict mitigation and mediation between communities to be part of the peacebuilding process so that many of the project activities performed multiple roles in both meeting immediate needs and addressing underlying root causes.

COORDINATION

There was limited involvement of the Shelter Cluster with the response in southern Chad as its priority was focused in the Lake Chad Basin area, north and east of the country where ongoing active humanitarian emergencies were unfolding. The shelter design, project and site planning and implementation of this project was coordinated with and through the site planning agency and the National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees (CNARR) as part of a standardized response.

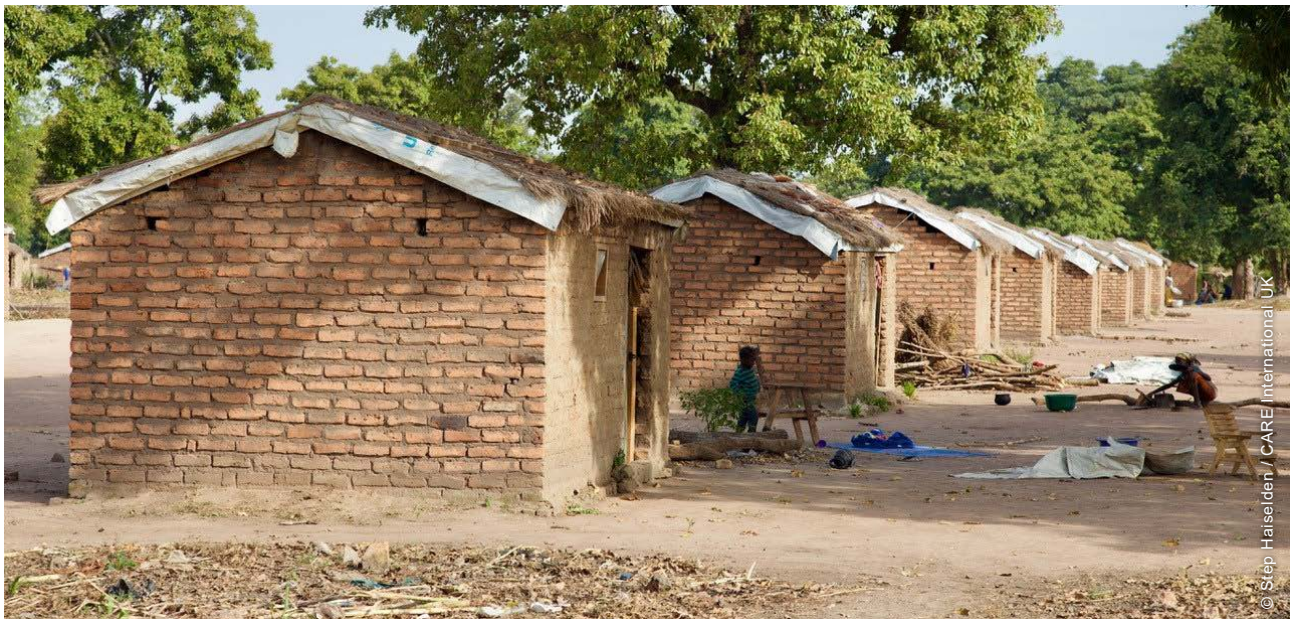
SITE PLANNING

Government land was allocated for each of the refugee sites although there were sometimes conflicts over land use with historic or customary use of land by the host community for rites and rituals, agriculture and grazing. The refugee sites bordered existing host communities. A plot of land around 300m^2 was allocated to each household. Refugee households signed the documents allocating plots of land for their shelter and space for other household functions (such as an outdoor cooking area and kitchen garden) but did not receive a copy to keep. At each of the project sites the shelters were arranged in an orthogonal layout provided by the agency responsible for site planning. While this arrangement met planning standards, it did not engage the affected population in a participatory manner so missed the opportunity for building a sense of project ownership, as well as mitigating protection risks (such as GBV) and strengthening social support networks within the refugee community. The layout and orientation of shelters also did not respond to localized site variations and constraints such as the prevailing wind direction, topography, vegetation and trees.

SHELTER DESIGN

The shelter size and design - consisting of a 4m x 3.5m (14m^2) single space with a double pitched roof, with one window and one door - corresponded to the model agreed with CNARR, the site planning agency, and shelter partners working in southern Chad. The shelter design was similar to that of the homes that the refugees lived in CAR and similar to those of the host communities in southern Chad, with load bearing fired brick walls, timber framed roofs, and a compacted earth floor often rendered with cement. The refugee shelters were roofed with tarpaulin, while homes in local villages often used corrugated galvanized iron sheets or thatch.

A pilot study was implemented before the start of this project, which showed the shelter design to be capable of withstanding seasonal rains, despite the limited lifespan of the tarpaulin roofs, as well as being more durable and cost effective when compared to the emergency tarpaulin shelters. Through a strong process of monitoring, evaluation and reflecting upon lessons learned, the details of the shelters evolved over time in response to user feedback and observation. For example, the floors of early shelters were flush or very slightly raised above ground level; in the shelters constructed later in the project, the shelter floor was raised several brick courses above ground level to prevent water ingress. NFIs did not form part of the project despite being expected by the households, so complaints about the lack of mattresses and blankets were common.



Shelters have been arranged in rigid, orthogonal grids to donor requirements rather than in consultation with the community (Silambi refugee site, Moissala).

MATERIALS AND SUPPLY

Fired bricks were obtained from the local area. Tarpaulins were received from a pipeline stock managed by another agency. The durability of the tarpaulin roofs would have been strengthened with the inclusion of locally available grass thatch covering the external parts of the roof. Masons and carpenters were identified and hired from both the refugee and host communities around the refugee sites. On many occasions, the artisans undertook both masonry and carpentry work, with general laborers assisting with manual work such as carrying bricks and excavation. Training to masonry/carpentry artisans and laborers was provided in some sites and not in others. Where training was included, the quality of the shelters was higher.

COMMUNITY-LED MEDIATION

Implementation of the shelter component was strengthened by community engagement approaches employed as part of the wider project, such as the conflict resolution committee, GBV committee and complaints mechanism. When issues arose, they were quickly reported by individuals or the community to these community-led structures which then followed collectively agreed protocols to encourage dialogue, mitigate tensions and resolve conflict. Committees were elected by community members and were representative of the different interests and groups – for example, in terms of refugee and host population members, farmers and herders, women and men. Committees were provided with regular training on principles, dialogue and conflict resolution, and provided with the tools and materials to assist their mediation activities (such as cameras, stationery, visibility and furniture). Thus, tensions and conflict that arose over the use of host community land for refugee settlements, and the subsequent harvesting of natural resources by both refugee and host populations, were addressed through these established mechanisms, reducing the risk of inter-communal violence, fostering shared understanding, and strengthening local integration processes.

A family group outside their semi-durable shelter. All families received the same size of shelter, irrespective of their family size (Silambi refugee site, Moissala).

MAIN CHALLENGES

Lack of flexibility in shelter provision. While meeting the Sphere minimum standard for covered living space for a 'typical' family of four , the fixed size of the one-room shelters was not able to be adapted to suit larger household sizes, nor was more than one shelter able to be allocated to very large households. This was because the project design had been agreed in coordination with other organizations and could not be amended, meaning that one shelter would be expected to house anywhere between a single person and a family of twelve.

Shelter allocation. Families were moved into completed shelters in a haphazard way due to the onset of heavy rains towards the end of the construction period. As a result, there was little or no consideration of pre-existing community connections or support networks between households or how these connections might have improved the overall outcome of the project.

Lack of contingency funds. This meant that there was limited flexibility to address issues arising during implementation. In one of the project sites, the rigid budget meant that there were insufficient funds to cover all of the households within the planned geographical area of the project and that a few households had to be excluded.

Flooding causing delays. Shelter construction was delayed by unexpected flooding during October 2019.

WIDER IMPACTS

Shelter construction provided **safety and security**, particularly for women and girls and those at risk of gender-based violence, as well as **contributing to dignity and psychological well-being.** The project removed a major source of anxiety and risk for vulnerable refugee households, allowing them the opportunity to focus on other longer-term needs such as education and vocational training, health and livelihoods.

The project **fostered interactions, understanding and shared interests between host and refugee communities.** The similarity of the shelters to construction norms within the host community meant that potential conflict over unequal provision of assistance was avoided.

Typically, appointed committees were able to **mediate conflict** between agriculturalists and pastoralists or between community members in cases of GBV. The election, establishment, training and work of these representative, community-led committees was central to strengthening a peaceful and cohesive society, for which building a shared understanding of the needs, interests and concerns of other groups in the wider, shared settlement area was crucial. Feedback on the project highlighted that the different groups involved emphasized this sensitization as a key tool for developing mutual understanding and fostering a cohesive society.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

√ **Durability of shelter.** The semi-durable shelters were a vast improvement on the temporary emergency shelters. They are expected to have a far greater lifespan and brought a welcome sense of safety and security.

√ **Personal security.** The shelters provided personal security for the inhabitants and their assets and this is reported to have contributed to improved health, comfort and dignity. The 'safe shelters' contribute directly to a reduction in the risk of gender-based violence, as described in detailed community feedback and formal evaluation and learning processes.

√ **Locally appropriate shelter design.** The design and construction of the shelters were appropriate for the locality and relatively easy to be maintained with local materials, knowledge and skills.

√ **Integrated approach.** The inclusion of a humanitarian shelter component within a multi-sectoral relief and resilience approach had a significant impact in supporting other activities in the program such as generating income, farming, seeking education and training. In short, the program helped to kickstart the process of self-sufficiency within the communities.

√ **Social cohesion.** The shelter component of the project and the accompanying access to land and natural resources provided an enabling environment for social cohesion, local integration and the peaceful coexistence of returnees and the host communities.

WEAKNESSES

× **Inflexibility of shelter design.** No allowance for large families, who would ideally have received an expanded or double shelter. The specific needs of vulnerable individuals and groups were also not directly addressed.

× **Leaking roofs were a common complaint in the project.** Tarpaulins supplied to the project as an in-kind contribution from another agency proved to be of poor quality as they had probably been stored in sub-standard conditions for too long. The project lacked a quality control procedure to verify their condition.

× **No training on repair or maintenance.** The project did not train households to repair or maintain their shelters or provide any tools to the community to support this.

× **Women and adolescent girls and boys were not involved in the process of shelter construction,** which was a missed opportunity for training and skills-building, especially as these groups expressed a lot of interest to learn construction, as an income-generating opportunity as well as for practical maintenance reasons.

× **Lack of construction training.** Not every site where shelters were constructed trained the masons and carpenters in detail, missing an opportunity to build skills and knowledge in good building practices.

× **Basic NFIs not provided as part of the shelter assistance package.** Very few families had the resources to purchase these items.

× **Lack of community engagement in site planning, layout, shelter orientation and shelter allocations**, resulting in some issues relating to wind and flooding as well as a missed opportunity to strengthen support networks, encourage ownership and buy-in, and mitigate additional safety and security risks (such as GBV risks).

LESSONS LEARNED

- Active conflict-reduction mechanisms, such as the committees that were established as part of the project, complement other measures taken to reduce the opportunities for conflict and tension to arise or be exacerbated.
- Community engagement in site planning and shelter design processes is important to include from the outset of projects to ensure that the inputs of affected communities are taken into account.
- It is important to include assistance for households to purchase basic non-food items when moving into new shelters, particularly through the use of cash or vouchers where markets are favourable, in order to strengthen comfort and dignity.
- On-the-job training during shelter construction as well as training in maintenance and repair techniques would build skills, improve the sense of ownership of the project, and increase the quality of completed shelters. Community toolkits would need to be made available to support maintenance activities.