

# Rebuilding Uttarakhand: Responding to Shelter Needs

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## Ten Recommendations by Shelter in Emergencies Forum (SIEF) & SPHERE India

### Background:

A joint shelter assessment was carried out in five worst affected districts of Uttarakhand to assess the shelter situation and needs by a number of humanitarian agencies. The findings of the assessment were shared in the meeting of Shelter in Emergencies Forum- - an informal “think tank” comprising experienced humanitarian practitioners, individuals and agencies in shelter reconstruction and rehabilitation.

### Recommendations:

We as members of *shelter in emergencies forum*, would like to call upon the Government of Uttarakhand, Government of India and agencies that are engaged in rebuilding Uttarakhand to consider the following while formulating recovery and reconstruction programme in the State. These recommendations are based on the findings of the Joint Shelter Assessment.

1. ***A comprehensive assessment of housing loss, damage to settlements (both villages and towns) should be carried out urgently.*** This will aid recovery, long term rehabilitation and prevention of damage from future hazards. The Government should initiate such exercise with appropriate capacities built at District Level and transparency of damage categories. Particular attention is needed for communities who have been displaced due to loss of land, along with their living tenements. The assessment of local construction methods is desirable for an appropriate shelter design.
2. ***Range of shelter support.*** Based on the assessment findings a range of shelter options needs to be developed as part of the recovery and reconstruction programme. This includes varying needs - Communities who have been displaced due to loss of land. The onset of winter and hence the need for transition shelter, rental support to those who have alternate accommodation available locally, transit camps if land for shelter in the safer zones cannot be provided immediately, temporary / transit camps should be set up with temporary shelters.
3. ***Recovery and rehabilitation works should essentially be participatory.*** Local communities should lead the process through participatory assessments, decision making, voluntary support and monitoring. It is important that communities are fully aware about any assistance provided by the Government and other agencies, including policies, programmes and monetary support. Establishing a grievance redressal system exclusively for the recovery and rehabilitation

programme would ensure programmes are efficiently executed and reach desired targets in timely manner.

4. ***Minimizing future risks.*** Reconstruction of shelters and settlements, including transitional shelters, must incorporate protection against future risks. The safety of communities against any present and future hazards is a priority concern. Careful selection of building materials, technical expertise for design and capacity to execute will need to be built to ensure local resilience is strengthened. Simultaneously, communities need to know and be aware of safety features in their homes and public buildings.
5. ***Land and Settlement Redevelopment is necessary part of recovery and reconstruction programme.*** We discourage relocation as far as possible. It should be carried out only as last measure, to avoid creating new vulnerabilities and potential tenure related conflicts. However as it is likely to be needed and the area is highly vulnerable to land slide and flash floods, selection of safe sites and where necessary geotechnical stabilization methods will need to be adapted to the existing settlement and the new settlements. Land use and infrastructure planning for rehabilitation should be carried out only after such safe site selection, stabilization and redevelopment works are carried out.
6. ***Recycling and use of building debris.*** As the demand for material in the area will increase during reconstruction, finding appropriate building materials locally should be a priority, and to the extent possible avoid materials sourced externally. We encourage use of material recycled from debris, if carried out with proper technical support and supervision.
7. ***Demonstration buildings*** may be built at District Headquarters and/or strategic locations in the State to guide recovery and rehabilitation works by Government and other external agencies. These buildings would be able to demonstrate construction techniques and encourage feedback for further modifications and redevelopment besides boosting community confidence and ownership on the process.
8. ***Training and Technology Guidance*** to local communities, building artisans, engineers and block level officials should be integrated part of the recovery and rehabilitation programme. Technically qualified agencies and individuals may be retained to provide such training and guidance at the grassroots based on a common syllabus developed for the purpose. Moreover, design approvals at local level should be linked to such training and guidance.
9. ***Design and construction of shelters should incorporate upgradability, reuse, and recycling.*** Design of shelters should take in to account that they should be upgradable, reusable, relocatable, resalable or recyclable. e.g. transition shelters upgraded to permanent shelters, re-

use of the shelter for related purpose may be considered e.g. shops; materials recyclable if future upgradation or alternate use has to be considered.

And finally, we would like to recommend the following *non-negotiable* standards and approaches:

**10. Standards and Approaches:**

- a. Ensure that recovery and rehabilitation programme meets the minimum SPHERE standards for Shelters and Settlements in Disasters. <http://www.sphereproject.org/>
  - b. Reconstruction approach should be owner led. Local communities need to be at the lead of the reconstruction process. Enabling individual cash transfers for reconstruction, facilitating material and skill availability should be part of the approach.
  - c. Shelter constructions to use as far as possible locally trained recourses including communities, skilled building artisans and engineers.
  - d. Each stage of construction should be jointly certified by beneficiary and technical supervising team.
  - e. Beneficiary identification should be inclusive and target the most vulnerable. Clear cut criteria on beneficiary selection has to be evolved. The criteria of selection is to be given wide publicity and finalised list should be accessible to all.
  - f. An independent monitoring mechanism should be put in place to provide necessary assistance , and programme modifications as well timely completion of programmes.
  - g. WASH facilities should be included in site selection and shelter solutions.
  - h. All agencies continue to coordinate to minimise gaps and ensure equality of response.
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**Forum for Shelter in Emergencies**

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