SUSTAINABLE RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION —
FROM CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK INTO OPERATIONAL REALITY
SYNOPSIS FROM WORLD URBAN FORUM II & III

Introduction

1. For more than 10 years, UN-HABITAT has been operating in humanitarian and crisis situations, supporting national governments, local authorities and civil society in strengthening their capacity to manage and recover from human-made and natural disasters and mitigate future disasters. Understanding the discontinuity within the international aid community between the short term humanitarian imperative, and longer term reconstruction and development priorities, UN-HABITAT has engaged and offered its perspectives on bridging this divide.

2. Conceptually, disaster management and reconstruction encompass many dimensions; exploring the roles of various institutions at civic, municipal, national and international levels, addressing the impacts of natural and human caused disasters from the perspectives of reducing their impacts, and assisting in the sustainable reconstruction of settlements following disaster. The Disaster Management Programme of UN-HABITAT has focused on its normative responsibilities, using the Agency’s experiences in the field, forging alliances with key partners, and engaging in dialogue as a means of refining and defining the role of the agency in the arena of humanitarian response and vulnerability reduction.

3. When hazards turn into disasters or a struggle for political and economic control turns into an armed conflict, it is always human settlements, people and property that are worst hit. The cornerstone of UN-HABITAT’s strategy is to leverage investment in the emergency and recovery phases into the longer term development of human settlements. Through UN-HABITAT participation at the earliest stages, we ensure that human settlements interventions, either immediate emergency or transition recovery, are linked to longer-term development strategies in disaster hit countries.

4. Paradoxically, disaster can also be an opportunity. Recovery phases offer a unique chance to revisit past practices and rewrite policies affecting future development in disaster-prone areas. A range of mitigation measures can be incorporated during recovery to promote vulnerability reduction. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical development long after a disaster — that is, to build its own sustainability.

5. UN-HABITAT is in deed in a strong position to act in a technical advisory function in two key areas: the development of local capacity for managing and mitigating disasters and supporting capacities of outside actors to provide operational response within a sustainable development context. In recognition of this contribution, in April 2004 UN-HABITAT was invited to bring to the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) its perspectives and support to international interventions within the context of shelter and human settlements.

6. UN-HABITAT will use this operational experience to generate normative products to be recycled into future disaster response, including vulnerability reduction, preparedness and mitigation in general. UN-HABITAT will continue drawing on practical experiences and extracting lessons with a view to continuous learning both internally as well as in support of sister agencies and humanitarian actors. These normative products will be integrated in future response strategies for human settlements in crisis.

7. Through its involvement from the outset of the crisis as a supporting partner in reconstruction, shelter, infrastructure and governance, UN-HABITAT is in a crucial position as an institutional partner to help humanitarian agencies, local and national governments and most importantly the affected and most vulnerable communities. Through this approach the recent emergency response activities have made a mark
throughout the affected countries, and UN-HABITAT has managed to introduce the perspective that short term humanitarian support to human settlements in crisis can and should be used in a manner that promotes and facilitates longer term gain and reduces future risks.

The process

8. In response to the deliberations of the 19th session of the Governing Council of 2003, and its recommendation for a report on the theme ‘Post conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction’ UN-HABITAT’s conceptual framework entitled Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction has been formulated. This concept, as introduced in the pre-session document HSP/GC/20/5, is derived from key elements of the Habitat Agenda, and the Agency’s experience, methodologies and principles of involvement in support of human settlements in crisis.

9. The development of the concept has been a consultative process, through which the primary elements have been critically reviewed and debated with UN-HABITAT’s partners and colleagues both during the second session of the World Urban Forum in 2004 as well as during the third session in 2006.

10. The Networking Event entitled Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction turning discussions into operational reality during the World Urban Forum III explored a range of issues pertaining to the concept of Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction ranging from land administration in post conflict environ, through the importance of integrating community and in particular women, as well a global issues pertaining to risk and vulnerability reduction. The networking event continued the momentum built up in WUF II in 2004 and during the Governing Council in April 2005, concentrating on operationalising the conceptual framework and the guiding principle of Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction. The event introduced good practices and lessons learnt from the field, all within the context of reflecting and reviewing the precision of the conceptual SRR framework, and further elaborating it. This process also supports the formal commitment of development of a strategic UN-HABITAT Policy on human settlements in crisis as requested by the 20th session of the GC in Res. HSP/GC/20/17.

11. For the way forward, our hope is to obtain a commitment from the partners and colleagues to working collectively with UN-HABITAT to ensure the implementation of sustainable recovery both in prevention and in response to human settlements in crisis.

The approach

12. The changing nature of conflict and natural disasters is leading to re-visioning of traditional approaches to recovery assistance. Natural and human-caused emergencies are increasing in regularity, and perhaps more importantly, their impacts on populations and human settlements are rising alarmingly. This, coupled with cycles of dependency and shortage of resources, all point to the need to develop innovative approaches and re-examine traditional policies on relief, recovery and mitigation assistance.

13. The international community is performing an ever-widening range of recovery and rehabilitation activities. This exacerbates the fundamental challenges of the crisis management and recovery processes; how to bridge the gaps that have repeatedly emerged between emergency recovery and sustainable development efforts, and how to provide national and local government, civil society and business organizations with practical strategies to mitigate and recover from crises, and also to prevent lapsing back into crisis. It is equally critical to build the capacity of national and international aid agencies to deliver rapid response services that integrate a longer term developmental strategy. Based on these changing dynamics in international assistance, it is clear that a new approach is required. Through analysis of these needs, the concept of sustainable relief and reconstruction has emerged.

Disaster mitigation - building a culture of prevention

14. Mitigation is the first step towards a comprehensive approach to managing disasters. Communities are
often unaware of the hazards they face, do not put much trust in mitigation strategies, and rely heavily upon emergency responses from others when the need arises. Sustainable relief and reconstruction encompasses all phases of disaster management, from mitigation to response; with a view to improving communities’ and governments’ capacities to prevent and mitigate disaster events so that needs during response are reduced. Concepts of sustainability and sustainable development offer a crucial framework for integrating vulnerability reduction plans in the context of disaster recovery. Sustainable human settlements development does not necessarily prevent disasters, but it should mitigate their impact. Disaster mitigation and management needs to look beyond the hazards alone to consider prevailing conditions of vulnerability. It is the social, cultural, economic, and political setting in a country that defines the level of vulnerability or resilience, of its people and communities.

15. A better understanding and emphasis on capacity development during mitigation will increase the ability of local actors – civil society, local and national government – to respond effectively to disasters. The cornerstone of the implementation strategy is to build a culture of prevention among society at large. Such a culture will not only save lives but will enhance the economic and social fabric, through working with cities and civil societies to reduce their vulnerability to natural and human-caused disasters, as well as providing sustainable solutions for the re-construction of war-torn and post-crisis societies. Disaster management and mitigation therefore needs to be introduced as an integral part of any ongoing development and poverty reduction plans.

16. It is essential that the community as a whole be involved in developing and implementing mitigation and sustainable development programmes. Civil empowerment is a fundamental complement to any mitigation exercise undertaken within cities or by civil society. Without a common understanding of the necessity for mitigation measures, without the active participation of civil society in execution, and without community sense of ownership, such measures stand a slim chance of reducing disasters or resolving conflicts.

**Crisis response - meeting the long term needs of many, while supporting the emergency needs of few**

17. When conflicts occur or hazards turn into disasters, human settlements - people and property - are the most affected. Therefore, any recovery process irrespective of its short- or long-term planning horizon has to consider, in addition to meeting urgent human needs, the physical infrastructure and human settlements problems that arise, including adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. In many post-crisis scenarios, experience has shown that interventions are most effective when they are designed to begin simultaneously; consideration of long term impacts of short term interventions can add value to the latter, and depth to the former. A process of long-term reconstruction and economic recovery should therefore begin while post-emergency actions aimed at restoring normality for the affected populations returning home or settling in new places are being undertaken. In this manner, strategic investment during emergency and relief stages can contribute significantly to building foundations for development.

18. Post-crisis responses by national governments, bilaterals, NGOs and UN agencies have been characterized by rapid rehabilitation projects including water and sanitation, housing, irrigation, food-security measures and health. These tend to be ad-hoc, palliative and not linked to overall development objectives of disaster-hit countries. Piecemeal efforts that are not connected with the long-term development strategy can not only aggravate precarious social conditions creating dependency on aid, but are a critical waste of financial and human resources invested in short-sighted emergency relief plans. Humanitarian agencies can no longer operate in isolation; instead they require active participation from development-oriented agencies. The real challenge lies in broadening the portfolios of humanitarian and developmental actors and in bringing them together in shared realization of recovery processes for sustainable development.

19. The recovery phase can also offer a unique opportunity to revisit past practices and rewrite policies affecting future development in disaster-prone areas. A range of mitigation measures, for example, can be incorporated during recovery to promote vulnerability reduction, such as land-use, environmental and community planning, improving building codes and construction regulations. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local
organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical development long after a disaster – that is, to build its own sustainability.

The aim

'Ensuring the development, in line with the principles of sustainable human settlements, of a disaster-resistant environment for residents of cities, towns and villages to live, work and invest’.

20. UN-HABITAT’s conceptual framework entitled Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction together with the guiding principles, developed as part of the broader framework, aim to provide a robust framework for action. The concept and principles represent a substantive and achievable set of objectives, culminating in its twin goals of ensuring investments in the emergency and recovery phases are leveraged for longer term impacts, and integrating the essential elements of disaster risk reduction in the process. The development of guiding principles serves to articulate the basic practice philosophy that actors must adopt to ensure that relief and reconstruction assistance is having a positive effect on the sustainable and equal development of human settlements in post conflict and disaster environments. The principles establish important baselines and priority areas of focus considered necessary for the implementation of truly sustainable relief and reconstruction activities.

21. For sustainable recovery to be achieved it will require a shift in thinking about relief, reconstruction and development at all levels. These guiding principles offer a realistic, forward thinking approach to recovering from crisis. Developing these guidelines on sustainable relief and reconstruction is the first step in turning these discussions and debates into operational realities. However, for this to be truly effective, commitment must be sought from international agencies, governments (local and national) and civil society on these guidelines and the direction of change that they represent.

22. It has been our objective to establish a set of principles for approaching humanitarianism in a human settlements context. The next vital step is that these guidelines are translated into action at all levels.

23. Guiding Principles for Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction are the following:

a. Permanent links between emergency relief and reconstruction and the transitional phase of development are established
b. The capacities of local governments to be developed as necessary, to operate as active partners in the process.
c. Building and engaging capacities at all levels and of all actors to be a priority from the earliest stages and throughout the process from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.
d. Utilisation of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making models, ensuring involvement of all actors, women in particular, in all planning and implementation activities.
e. Developing productive economic activities the earliest stages of recovery to assist consolidation of peace and security.
f. Facilitation of safety and security of affected populations as a critical pre-condition of any humanitarian or development activities.
g. Developing broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages ensuring more effective use of emergency resources.

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h. Ensuring the protection of land and property rights of affected populations, and developing longer-term solutions for land and property dispute resolution to reduce potential for (further) conflict.

i. Incorporating vulnerability reduction and disaster management into on-going national and local development and poverty reduction plans.

j. Redirecting the focus on disaster risk reduction and mitigation rather than preparedness and response related strategies in the human settlements context.

k. Operating within a human rights framework, particularly in terms of land rights and security of tenure, and the equal rights of women.

l. The creation of strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels within the relief and reconstruction to development continuum.

m. Decentralisation of responsibility for prevention of, and recovery from, crises in human settlements is essential to ensure appropriate, balanced and sustainable vulnerability and risk reduction.

n. Building a culture of prevention entails a cross sectoral, multi-dimensional approach integrating participatory analysis of risk, implementation of programmes, and development of policy and legal frameworks with all stakeholders including civil society, private sector, local, national and international government, in a gendered and comprehensive process.

o. Effective peace-building requires due attention to clear and understandable legal and regulatory frameworks, effective and impartial land and property administration, a functional interface between local government and its citizens in a dialogue that builds trust and commitment (with capacity building where essential), a common vision, and coordination of international actors.

p. Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement, sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.

The action

'Preventing man-made disasters... and reducing the impacts of natural disasters and other emergencies on human settlements, inter alia, through appropriate planning mechanisms and resources for rapid, people-centred responses that promote a smooth transition from relief, through rehabilitation, to reconstruction to development...’ 2

24. Further discussion and debate is necessary to review the proposed concept, principles and means for their operationalisation. How can the implementation of the guiding principles become an operational reality? Is this the right starting place? Who becomes the custodian of the principles and how does one apply them? Do we sufficiently integrate the issues of vulnerability reduction and sustainable disaster management in human settlements development, incorporating them into the national and local policies and actions?

25. The purpose of these principles is to articulate the basic practice philosophy that actors must adopt to ensure that sustainable assistance and interventions. Giving serious consideration in these aspects during planning and decision-making can assist communities, authorities and support agencies to realize that decisions made during the earliest stages of recovery will have long-term impacts on the success and sustainability of the joint efforts in recovery.

26. This conceptual change needs to be backed up with new operational approaches from international agencies, governments, and in communities. Sustainable recovery in human settlements is a process, combining the following key elements;

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a. Bridging the gap between emergency relief and sustainable development

b. Integration of mitigation and vulnerability reduction into sustainable development and recovery

c. Creating appropriate human settlements conditions for facilitating the transition from emergency to sustainable development

d. Building and engaging capacities at all levels, in all sectors and of all actors to be a priority from the earliest stages and throughout the process.

**Partner consultations**

27. The concept and principles have been the subject of scrutiny, assessment, and subsequent shaping with our partners; and capitalizing on their advice, the following sections introduce some elaborated elements and practical recommendations to guide us in formulating our future programming and implementation.

28. The objective of the consultative Networking Events in both sessions of the World Urban Forum has been to draw together partners of UN-HABITAT for an informal, provocative sessions concentrating on both reviewing the conceptual framework and the guiding principles and exploring new operational approaches for implementation sustainable support. The partner consultations have introduced good practices and lessons learnt from the field, all within the context of reflecting and reviewing the precision of the conceptual SRR framework, and further elaborating it towards sustainable realization.

29. As identified, the key thematic areas of Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction are:

   a. Disaster Mitigation and vulnerability reduction
   b. Land and property administration
   c. Longer-term shelter strategies
   d. Economic recovery
   e. Participation and good governance
   f. Partnerships
   g. Capacity building

**Disaster mitigation and vulnerability reduction**

30. Deficient urban management practices, inadequate planning and construction, unregulated population density, exploitation of the environment, dependency on inadequate infrastructure and services, absent or incompetent local governments and institutions all contribute to increasing vulnerability. Disaster is a result of the combination of natural hazards and an accumulation of the above factors. Sadly, it is only after the occurrence of disaster that awareness is raised on the importance of reducing vulnerabilities.

31. When disaster strikes, it ironically provides an opportunity to dimension vulnerabilities, and rethink how to address these during the recovery and reconstruction stages, avoiding past weaknesses within and around human settlements. Recovery efforts supported by the international community, must in any case integrate risk reduction to ensure that reconstruction takes place wherever possible in safer
locations and according to robust building codes and safety standards. Particular attention needs to be paid to schools, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure needs, as well as environmental vulnerabilities. Agencies, companies and professionals who work in reconstruction, need to be trained/advised to understand how recovery efforts can help reduce vulnerabilities and make communities more resilient to disasters.

32. **Building a ‘culture of prevention’** at all levels in society is a challenge often not met until after the devastation wrought by disaster. However, the international aid community, governments, the media, and communities, together in partnership can and should use every opportunity including post disaster recovery programmes for awareness campaigns to create a culture of prevention, and ensure those most vulnerable need not remain that way indefinitely.

33. **Challenges**

   a. Increasing investment in disaster risk reduction - redirecting priorities from visible and short-term development projects to abstract long term potential threats and risks. Finance and planning authorities need also to be sensitized to the importance of investing in disaster resilient interventions as more cost-effective than post-crisis reconstruction.
   
   b. Addressing the root causes of disasters - inadequate development practices increase the vulnerability of communities, and more focus on pre-disaster risk reduction needs to be integrated in all development planning.
   
   c. Translating technical knowledge into action - despite extensive knowledge on hazards and risks, not enough efforts are made to prepare cities and people for their worst impacts.
   
   d. Coordination - professionals are often fragmented, working inside institutional boundaries. Risk reduction and mitigation are a cross cutting issue, requiring coordination mechanisms that bring a sufficiently wide group of stakeholders together.

34. **SRR Guiding Principles**

   a. Incorporating vulnerability reduction and disaster management into on-going national and local development and poverty reduction plans.
   
   b. Redirecting the focus on disaster risk reduction and mitigation rather than preparedness and response related strategies in the human settlements context.
   
   c. Building a culture of prevention entails a cross sectoral, multi-dimensional approach integrating participatory analysis of risk, implementation of programmes, and development of policy and legal frameworks with all stakeholders including civil society, private sector, local, national and international government, in a gendered and comprehensive process.

35. **Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles**

   a. Disaster risk reduction is everybody’s business, being integral part of everyday life. Mitigation is not only a responsibility of experts and disaster managers, and all sectors of the society needs to be involved. Emphasize public awareness as the key to create proper behavior with long term goals in mind, applicable specifically to children as future decision-makers.
   
   b. The SRR Guiding Principles should give more emphasis to the pre-disaster phase and support the incorporation of risk reduction consideration into development planning.
   
   c. Recommendations of the Hyogo Framework for Action are acknowledged as part the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework.

**Land and property administration**

36. One of the major threats to stability in the post-disaster context is the question of housing, land
and property rights within the reconciliation and reconstruction process. Access to land and water resources can be a new cause of conflict following disaster or war displacement. With high potential for destruction and looting of property, secondary occupation of both residential and agricultural land and housing, and the disintegration of the institutions governing and protecting land and property rights, the potential for further conflict, or the undermining of peace processes, are likely as displaced populations return to re-occupy their homes, farms, and properties.

37. Of the numerous housing, land and property (HLP) challenges arising in the aftermath of disaster and conflict, the demand for restitution and compensation are increasingly sought. Restitution mechanisms addressing the rights of displaced persons to return to their original homes and lands have increased considerably in recent years, and these developments have slowly been matched by concrete actions in the field.

38. Protecting housing, land and property rights is always a challenging enterprise as recent attempts have clearly shown. In the past two years alone, structural restitution problems requiring resolution arose following the 2004 Asian tsunami in several countries (most notably Sri Lanka and Indonesia), the 2005 floods in New Orleans (US), the 2005 SE Asian Earthquake (Pakistan) and in a range of other disasters. In terms of conflict, the attempted resolution of housing land and property issues arose during the same period in; Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, while contingency planning work continues on a range of other countries where conflict has yet to come to an end, but where restitution themes loom large over any eventual peace arrangements.

39. Whilst UN-Habitat through its Global Campaign for Secure Tenure, has considerable expertise; globally the capacity of deployable experts is alarmingly low and there is much scope for building and coordinating this. Furthermore, in spite of repeated threats to sustainable peace, indeterminate displacement from disasters, looming conflicts over land and property rights, the issue remains relatively low on the humanitarian and donor agendas.

40. Challenges

a. Inadequate financial and human resources in the field operations to match the necessary capacity for operational credibility and delivery.

b. Lack of political and commitment at both local and international levels remains a fundamental challenge in attempting to secure housing, land and property rights.

c. The scale and scope of HLP issues may dampen the enthusiasm for devoting resources together with the sometimes long periods of time required to adequately address lost rights.

41. SRR guiding principles

a. Ensuring the protection of land and property rights of affected populations, and developing longer-term solutions for land and property dispute resolution to reduce potential for (further) conflict.

b. Operating within a human rights framework, particularly in terms of land rights and security of tenure, and the equal rights of women.

c. Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement, sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.

42. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles

a. The adoption of a comprehensive global Housing, Land and Property Rights Policy for application in post-conflict and post-disaster settings. Such a policy would cover all HLP issues, and not only restitution would help prevent the largely ad hoc responses of the international community in both post-disaster and post-conflict field operations in
addressing the wide range of HLP crises that invariably come about in all such circumstances.

b. Policy-makers need to be given access to information on successful examples of past restitution programmes and how these worked in practice, as a means of removing apprehensions concerning restitution.

**Longer-term shelter strategies**

43. Shelter is one of the most visible and immediate needs in post-crisis settings. Providing shelter and infrastructure after a disaster or post-conflict situation, however, is not as simple as counting the houses lost and building replacements. There are many other issues to consider in the reconstruction of shelter. Relief efforts are often focused on providing shelter quickly, without taking into account the impact of short-term shelter strategies. The format of rebuilding houses has often been to develop cheap, easily transportable prefabricated housing, which can be quickly erected, yet has no bearing on traditional styles of housing of the region. In the planning of projects dealing with providing shelter and infrastructure, it is vital to consider the long-term effects of the programmes.

44. Long-term shelter strategies not only focus on development and implementation of realistic and permanent reconstruction for affected communities, but also assist rebuilding community confidence, and support structure for civic responsibility and urban governance, through participatory planning and delivery of reconstruction processes.

45. Shelter issues are closely bound to mitigation aspects as well, particularly in disaster-prone areas. The development of disaster-resistant housing is a major factor in reducing vulnerability to natural catastrophes. But shelter issues in mitigation go beyond the structural aspect. Rights to ownership and security of tenure make an enormous difference to the development, management and maintenance of shelter, particularly in urban areas. When people have security where they live, they are better able to manage space and invest in safety, and engage in activities that will reduce rather than increase their vulnerability.

46. **Challenges**

a. The demand for speedy response is still dominating over proper planning, detailed consultations, reviews of safety and environmental requirements, quality controls and opportunities for participatory work, i.e. sustainable reconstruction.

b. Permanent reconstruction often remains uncoordinated, inefficiently managed and slow to get off the ground, particularly as local government capacity to plan and participate in recovery strategies is usually limited as a result of a disaster.

c. Unmet demands for professional and impartial support for establishing and restoring property rights.

d. To use the opportunity of disaster recovery to make things better than before - Build Back Better, incorporating risk reduction elements in the process.

e. Inflexible and short-term focused funding resources hinder a smooth and rapid transition to longer-term reconstruction and recovery.

f. Regarding disaster survivors as passive victims awaiting the arrival of assistance can yield a long-term legacy of dependency.

47. **SRR guiding principles**

a. Permanent links between emergency relief and reconstruction and the transitional phase of development are established.

b. Developing broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages ensuring more effective use of emergency resources.

c. Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement,
sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.

48. **Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles**

a. Raise awareness among all players of their roles, inter-dependence within the overall recovery system, and long-term consequences of their actions
b. Facilitate double accountability, upwards to international financial institutions, donors and the government and downwards to the beneficiaries of assistance.
c. Adopt demand-driven approach with continual assessment and monitoring of changing needs and capacities, rather than supply-driven, donor-oriented approach
d. Adopt a development approach while supporting capacity development in all sectors and at all levels.
e. Create a single point of overall responsibility in government, assigning a dedicated organisation at the apex of political power and decision making, with a clear mandate supported by appropriate legislation, adequate resources, direct links to all line ministries and knowledge of the dynamics of the disaster recovery process

**Economic recovery**

49. Natural and human-caused disasters destroy investments, infrastructure and livelihoods. Poverty and lack of resources increases vulnerability, weakens coping strategies and delays the recovery process. A vibrant local economy is one of the key elements in sustainable recovery and development, yet economic recovery is also recognized as one of the most difficult aspects of the process. Despite disasters, many communities have resources that can be tapped such as the availability of local building materials, the existence of a labour force, and most importantly the eagerness of local communities and the private sector to participate in the recovery process.

50. It is necessary to identify and exploit the potential within the community to use skills or resources that are at hand. This not only makes the best use of limited external assistance, but also reduces the risk of external dependency.

51. This is also an important consideration for local organisations and governments, as the redevelopment of their economic potential must be a key priority. Re-establishing small scale production in the affected areas, creating employment opportunities for local entrepreneurs and the community itself both affected and host communities and reinforcing local building sector can have a huge impact on the rebuilding of the economy from a very early stage in the programming. The encouragement of economic activities in a post-crisis situation is a crucial objective in the long-term context of development and rehabilitation.

52. **Challenges**

a. Destruction of infrastructure, facilities and services hampers revitalization of economic activities.
b. Decreased production and buying capacities, weakened institutional frameworks (legal and regulatory) for local economic development, such as judicial systems, business licensing, land allocations, etc.
c. Lack of organizations and institutions specialized in local economy and labor skills development, i.e. micro-finance and credit services, vocational training and public employment programmes, etc.
d. Lack of social capital and stable social structures and dynamics in post-crisis environment, i.e. mistrust, lack of confidence and resources.

53. **SRR guiding principles**
a. Developing productive economic activities the earliest stages of recovery to assist consolidation of peace and security.

54. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles

a. Utilizing local resources for recovery and reconstruction interventions, both material and human resources.

b. Strengthen local capacities to deliver responsive business and technical services to actors in production sectors and enterprise activities with growth potential (technical and business skills training and upgrading, institution/association capacity strengthening, transfer of appropriate technology, etc) and support creative interim delivery of credit to actors in production sector, pending the arrival of micro-finance services.

c. Strengthen the capacity of local institutions and a broad-based representation of economic actors to establish, manage and develop a local economic development process.

d. Assist local economic stakeholders to identify new and improved market opportunities.

e. Rehabilitation of basic services and infrastructure is essential for revitalization of economic activities at any level.

Public participation and good governance

55. Cities are managed and communities interact at the local level. At no time is the opportunity for public involvement in planning and decision-making greater than when a community is faced with post-crisis recovery process. Civil society plays a major role in disaster management, conflict prevention, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction. They are much more than recipients of relief assistance, and must be viewed as such for developmentally focused relief and recovery programmes to be successful. Civil society acts as an important channel for awareness raising and education, for promoting a climate of peace and reconciliation, and for preventing and mitigating conflicts and crises.

56. Empowerment of essential governance actors such as community based organisations, volunteer groups and NGOs is important – empowered civil society can play an active role not only in planning and forming policies for risk reduction and sustainable recovery strategies but particularly during their implementation at the local level. It is crucial to address the issues at their root causes. In order to do so, an assessment of vulnerability of communities to hazards and disasters is crucial. An effective disaster risk assessment will identify activities to reduce the likelihood of a threat event as well as activities to reduce the impact of a threat event.

57. Inclusive decision-making, including women in particular, is a key element in a strategy in building consensus among difference participants in the emergency phase, ensuring an active participation of affected populations, community groups, and local authorities also in the subsequent recovery phases. Ownership at the local level in response and recovery is important if these activities are to contribute to the longer term development and reduction of vulnerability of the population. However, truly participatory involvement of all segments of people is not simple. It is a process that requires substantive support to local governments in strengthening their technical and institutional capacities and in understanding the main principles of people’s participation and good governance.

58. Challenges

a. Most of the capacities created and resources invested in disaster management are lodged with professionals, who leave once their project is completed. Sustainable relief and reconstruction requires substantial investments in capacity building of local communities and processes that look beyond the project framework.

b. Women’s participation does not necessarily follow when there is a mandate for community participation. Women’s contribution to disaster management is usually informal and
invisible, thus unrecognized and un-resourced in policies and programmes.

c. Insufficient capacities of authorities in facilitating the consultative dialogue between private and public interests.

59. **SRR guiding principles**

a. The capacities of local governments to be developed as necessary, to operate as active partners in the process of recovery and reconstruction following crisis.

b. Utilization of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making models, ensuring involvement of all actors, women in particular, in all planning and implementation activities.

60. **Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles**

a. Mobilize a critical mass of affected people to take on multiple roles and active leadership in rebuilding their communities and play active roles at all stages of disaster management

b. Gain greater understanding of communities as the key drivers, playing multiple roles: as planners, problem solvers, information providers and in implementing and overseeing risk reduction and recovery initiatives.

c. Strengthen the mandate for women’s participation in disaster recovery and reconstruction, by making women’s contributions visible, allocating clear roles and responsibilities to women, and strengthening grassroots women’s capacities to advance their priorities in risk reduction and recovery.

d. Building mechanisms for dialogue with government, local authorities and civil society, strengthen accountability and build partnerships.

**Partnerships**

61. The human settlements component is integral to post-crisis solutions, from refugee settlements planning to development of strengthened municipal and national institutional capacities, good governance and reviving local economy.

62. However, in order to develop an integrated approach to sustainable rehabilitation of human settlements, limited resources must be better coordinated to achieve the maximum possible effect. The multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary nature of disaster reduction and response requires continuous interaction, co-operation and partnerships among related institutions and stakeholders to achieve global objectives of disaster mitigation and sustainable post-crisis recovery. Solutions to insure sustainable recovery are interwoven in such a manner that activities cannot be implemented in isolation.

63. Building strategic partnerships among all stakeholders; civil society, national/local governments, private sector, media and national/international support agencies, is therefore a shared challenge and responsibility. In combination, this contributes to the development of a coherent framework for sustainable recovery of human settlements in post-crisis situations.

**Capacity building**

64. Post-crisis activities provide unique opportunities for increasing capacities among all national and local actors involved in the recovery process.

65. At the national level this may require strengthening policy making capacities and formulating legal instruments for implementation of national vulnerability reduction plans that promote sustainable development. Municipality authorities can be introduced to the sustainable rehabilitation and recovery process, re-directing the focus from technical and conventional response actions towards incorporation of mitigation measures in disaster management plans, introducing proper land use planning and building
regulations, protection of land and property rights, effective project management and improved governance, among others, all within the framework of longer-term reconstruction strategy. Along the process, national professionals at different levels improve their technical and managerial skills and know-how; civil society and communities are empowered through their active participation in recovery efforts and development of a self-sustaining process; local small business, building contractors and organizations have the opportunity to grow and gain experience; and individuals, women in particular, can be trained in income generating activities in the housing and infrastructure sector.

**Conclusion**

66. **UN-HABITAT Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction principles, the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as International Recovery Platform all confirm the importance that governments join forces with both humanitarian and development actors to achieving sound and sustainable recovery. These good practices are unfortunately too often overlooked when the support actors are faced with pressure to deliver short-term, visible quick fix recovery solutions, at the same time when it is widely known that sustainable recovery is a process of several months in its minimum.**

67. **The partner consultations during the two sessions of the World Urban Forum, among others, is a cause for optimism, however, as a clear shift in thinking is starting to take shape among some of the key players of the international community. The Pakistan and Yogyakarta earthquakes, for example, are affirmative cases that serious effort has been put into trying to improve our collective track record.**

68. **Further, the recent Humanitarian Reform and its new cluster approach framework is a strong effort to make the post-crisis response more predictable, effective and accountable through establishment of nine clusters where significant gaps in the humanitarian response had been identified, including early recovery and improved disaster preparedness. In the new humanitarian cluster system, it envisaged that UN-HABITAT will add value through its comprehensive and specialized knowledge, expertise and experience in shelter, land and property. UN-HABITAT is in a principal position to propose coherent response frameworks, which can help close the continued gap between emergency shelter and shelter in recovery and longer-term development, combining the unique capacities of the agency as both humanitarian and development actor.**

69. **Resilient communities may bend but don’t break when crisis strikes by adopting policies which make livelihoods more secure, vulnerability reduction part of everyday life, institutions more responsive, public-private partnerships more effective, communities more sustainable and poverty less prevalent, resiliency of our settlements are dramatically enhanced. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical development long after a disaster that is, to build its own sustainability.**