Urban Housing Reconstruction and Land Management

Ensuring Connectivity between Housing and Reconstruction

Tuesday May 10, 2011
CICG Level 1 Room 7+8
Geneva, Switzerland

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World Reconstruction Conference
Recovering and Reducing Risks after Natural Disasters

Summary

- Many agencies see reconstruction as a one-off activity and fail to look at the context
- Reconstruction is not so different from ‘normal’ housing (except for its urgency and scale)
- Reconstruction has a lot to learn from the housing sector
- An example from Peru can highlight that

Housing in Peru

- Much analysed since the 1960's
- Turner: "Housing is a process, not a product"
- Influence at the 1976 Habitat Conference
- Subsequent housing strategies see users as the key actors, and government and agencies as "enablers"

Strengths and Weaknesses of Housing in Peru

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Social capital and mutual aid; 70% is owner-built, with the help of others and some artisans • Incremental development: quality and size improve over time • Empowerment • Some vernacular technologies (quincha)are disaster-resistant • Design incorporates livelihood needs	• Lack of secure tenure • Poverty limits ability to improve or maintain houses well • Some housing is built on risky sites • Some vernacular technologies (adobe, tapial) are much less disaster-resistant

Impact of the 2007 Ica earthquake

91,000 houses were destroyed, mostly belonging to poor people. This was due to:

- Poor quality materials (adobe) and construction
- Location on risky sites
- Poor maintenance
- Precarious water and sanitation systems

The Official Response

- Government relief as cash for all affected
- Government cash for reconstruction targeted at registered owners
- Vast majority of the affected could not prove ownership; government scheme was halted
- Most aid focused on urban areas
- Tenants were neglected

Practical Action's Response

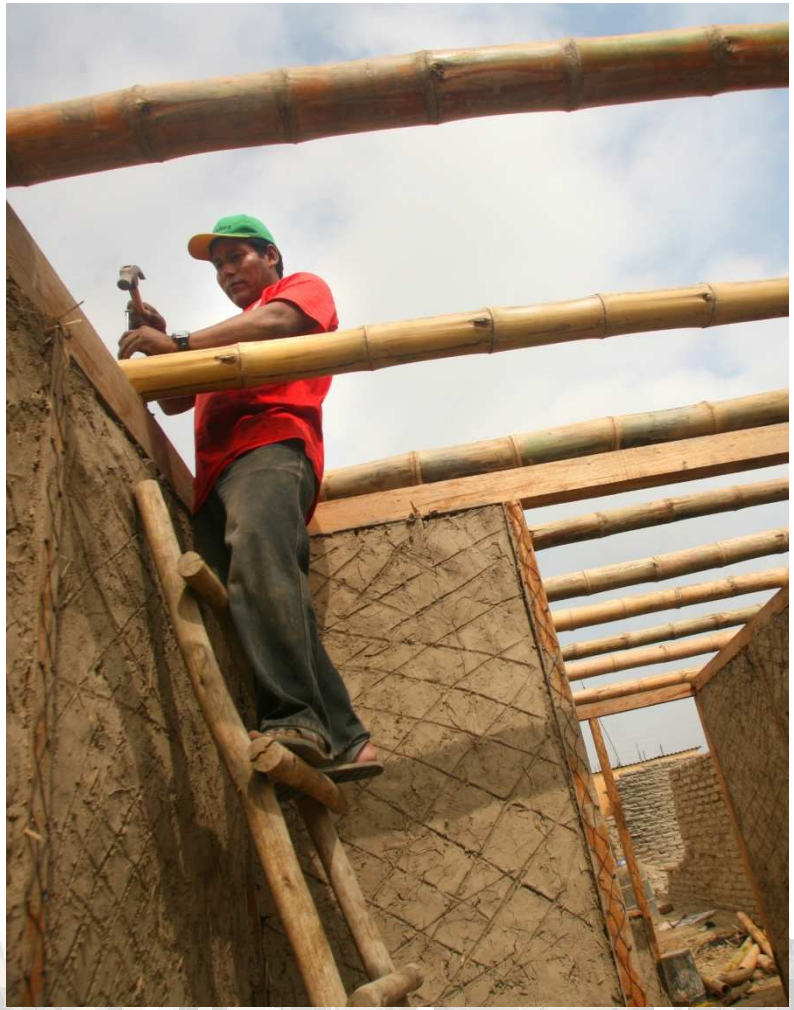
- Use the strengths of 'normal' housing
- Ensure inclusiveness
- Make people participate early on
- Select appropriate technologies
- Get the standards right
- Think of reconstruction as a process
- Make people resilient, not just their houses

Reaching All

- Focus on the poor, often migrants and tenants
- 70% single women-headed households
- Focus on neglected smaller settlements (El Carmen and Sunampe)
- Negotiated with the State to donate safe land
- CBOs achieved title registration and access to basic services

Early Participation

- Making use of existing social capital (neighbourhood or livelihood based groups)
- Involving them in decisions around design, technologies, finance etc. early one
- Building capacities of residents and artisans where needed, e.g. to improve on vernacular technologies/skills
- Empowered CBOs took the lead in getting titles or basic services



Appropriate Technologies

- Using familiar technologies makes reconstruction easier and requires less training
- Weaknesses need addressing
- We used improved quincha, using sawn timber on solid foundations, and good structural connections
- Others used reinforced adobe (geoplastics, bamboo, butresses)
- They are more likely sustained and replicated

Getting the Standards right

- Is the Sri Lanka post-tsunami response sustainable?
- Low standards can be unsafe
- High standards are unaffordable, can prevent secure tenure and deter owners from upgrading
- Find designs and technologies that perform reasonably well, then address weaknesses and legalise them (improved quincha was approved by law after 2007)

Reconstruction as a Process

- Reconstruction can be incremental
- Where resources are scarce, it is preferable to reach more people with a ‘starter house’ than provide few with a large house
- Our example: 36 m² improved quincha house, costing $2,321 in labour and materials
- >10% of owners have already extended
- Could this process start with transitional shelter? (It did not happen in Peru)

Making People Resilient

- Earthquakes are one of many risks people face
- Daily survival often forces them to live riskily
- Reconstruction needs to consider that wider picture and not just rebuild safer houses
- Rebuilding livelihoods is crucial (training, boosting local economy, shelter design and location, timing of building activities,…)
- Rebuilding and strengthening social capital also
- Good governance helps

Thank You

For further information, visit:

- http://www.practicalaction.org/reconstruction
- http://www.solucionespracticas.org.pe