

Disasters

REALITY, INNOVATIVE IDEAS, AND A TEAM EFFORT CREATE A RELIEF BLUEPRINT.

BY TRACY A. BADCOCK, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, OVERSEAS LEASE GROUP, INC.

2008 PROVED TO be one of the most destructive years documented with over 200,000 fatalities resulting from natural disasters and the aftermath that followed the initial impact. Although the number of natural disasters was less than the year before, the impairment was more intense in 2008. Some of the larger catastrophes include Cyclone Nargis that struck Myanmar in May of 2008 causing over 80,000 deaths. China also experienced a loss of over 80,000 persons to an earthquake that affected Sichuan, while six tropical hurricanes came ashore in the southern United States and Caribbean during the year. Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan succumbed to a brutal cold spell in January causing approximately 1,000 deaths, and typhoon Fengshen killed 557 people in China and the Philippines in June. Floods and landslides continue to hinder India and Bangladesh each year as lives, homes, and food sources are washed away. Millions became homeless with no shelter to shield the elements in consequence of Mother Nature's wrath. Subjected to an increased spread of disease from the lack of potable water and disrupted sanitation practices, more lives unfortunately are lost. While natural disasters grow in intensity, man-made disasters are on the rise in conflict and post-conflict areas struggling with the same issues concerning shelter, water, sanitation and food source destruction. Whether climate change or warfare is to blame, the Millennium Development Goals ("MDGs") are affected with each disaster incident and its aftermath.

First-line response to natural or man-made disaster is rescue and evacuation of a threatened population. Retrieving persons trapped or

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Dr. Lin Wells, STAR-TIDES,
National Defense University

those in need of medical assistance along with the deceased demands a team effort. Local authorities, government, and NGO field operatives must labor collectively with survivors inside the distressed community. At this time, it is also the norm to prepare an assessment of the supplies that will be required to provide rapid relief response. An estimate of the shelter, water, and food situation is prepared so these rations may be orchestrated and implemented. Critical to survival, shelter must be part of the first wave of response as protection

from the elements and disease, security, personal safety, privacy and the preservation of each individual's dignity is essential. Tarpaulins, tents, or hard walled shelters can be brought into an afflicted area for shelter. Complete camps are often set up for displaced populations that provide tents for temporary housing, and a secure group safe zone. It is determined early whether a displaced community must leave the area of their original home to a safe area, or if it is possible to begin setting up their temporary shelter on the land they know as their own. It is always preferable to keep sight of the land rights of suffering families.

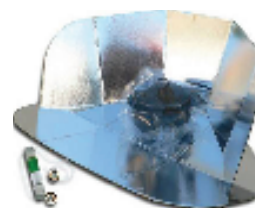
According to Ryan Hudock of WorldWide Shelters, "Utilizing Transitional Shelter is a growing trend." Transitional Shelter is easy to assemble, provides an immediate sanctuary that is durable, and has long-term capabilities. Transitional Shelter is typically upgradeable to a permanent structure with the utilization of local resources such as timber and bamboo. An added cultural value is the potential for the local residents to rebuild their own dwellings with tools provided by Aid Organizations or Shelter Companies and other materials they are accustomed to



WorldWide Shelters Relief Tent



Solar powered lighting



Integrated Solar Cooking Unit



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utilizing. Dr. Lin Wells, a Research Professor and the Transformation Chair at the National Defense University, reminds us “no one solution is good for every situation. Cold or hot weather environments, flood areas, and local wildlife issues such as snake ridden regions impact the determination of proper shelter structures.” Transitional or temporary, these factors determine success in the field versus solutions that do not account for the local regions terrain, weather patterns, and some characteristics may make the damage worse. Dr. Wells discusses the Cyclone that affected Myanmar, “The people working on the ground said they did not need tents and imported shelters because they have bamboo. They requested saws and fasteners to build shelters.” As unwanted tents arrived to the locality, the gear they asked for did not arrive. Saws and hardware could have been delivered in a timely fashion to cultivate rebuilding with bamboo. Drawing on local resources such as lumber and bamboo support the local economy to further stabilize the region.

In an effort to solve Transitional Shelter issues, WorldWide Shelters produces a tent that comes with galvanized steel frames for use in the second and third stages of rebuilding lost domiciles. Their highly durable tent product is mildew, UV, fire resistant, with fiberglass screen windows. By means of a five-year usage span, this product allows for a bridge between initial displacement situation and the continuation of stabilization efforts of long-term housing design. Worldwide Shelters has several models of relief shelters to endure cold weather while different variations to adhere to the indigenous surroundings of any region. Transitional Shelter is suitable when there will be a significant length of time between displacement and the reconstruction of permanent shelter. In some circumstances, it is difficult to prepare and pre-plan Transitional Shelter alternatives until assessments are made.

As discussed previously, the most appropriate method of response is determined by various issues including land rights, the natural habitat, use of local resources and knowledge of further natural or man-made threats. Transitional Shelter is a strategy supporting communities back to permanent accommodation, lessen displacement, and take into consideration human rights, dignity, land possession, local economy, security, and cultural aspects. For an in depth look at Transitional Shelter visit www.sheltercentre.org. Based on the website description, The Shelter Centre is a “non-governmental organization registered in Switzerland which supports the sector of humanitarian operations that responds to the transitional settlement and reconstruction needs of populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters, from the emergency phase until durable solutions are reached.” Their informative website provides detailed information regarding Transitional Shelter inclusive of guidelines, prototypes and standards.

Along with the immediate need for shelter succeeding a disaster of any kind, is the call for potable water and food. Acute flooding and severe storms cause contamination of the drinking and cooking water supply.



WorldWide Shelters “Tent to Home” Transitional Shelter

As water sources diminish and become polluted, the door opens for disease to spread. Ultimately, without food and clean water, casualties increase. A product called a LifeStraw®, is a low cost filtration system utilizing a microbiological filter to prevent common diarrheal diseases. This portable unit can clean as much as 18,000 liters of water. LifeStraw® Personal and LifeStraw® Family are complimentary point-of-use water filters from Vestergaard Frandsen. Other forms of water purification products in a tablet form are also used in an immediate relief situation.

Sanitation and hygiene play a major part in the clean water supply. Food supplies come in various forms, initial emergency relief foods usually include rice and other grains, energy bar supplements, freeze dried foods and many more items drawing on food-stocks of NGOs, World Food Programme (“WFP”) and the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (“UNHRD”). Once again, determining the individual situation is critical to determine what items are needed. If crops and food sources are weakened, a plan to subsidize the sources on an immediate and extended term basis becomes part of the preparation and stabilization planning.

Critical to survival, shelter must be part of the first wave of response as protection from the elements and disease, security, personal safety, privacy and the preservation of each individual’s dignity is essential.

Due to the unfortunate probability that natural and man-made disasters will continue to escalate and multiply, preparations and planning will make a difference concerning the Millennium Development Goals. Disasters are a set back to all of the current relief programs in motion to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development. Innovative ideas and teamwork will prove to be the strong points moving forward in 2009 and continuing beyond the 2015 MDG timeline. Last November, I visited the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy where the UNHRD stockpiles



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Spherical Mirrors Solar Cooking Unit



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rapid response food supplies, equipment and survival items as well as organizes emergency shipments. This operation functions on a 365-day 24-hour basis to service disaster response in a crisis mode. There are warehouses with long aisles and shelves layered with food, medicines water solutions and equipment reaching above 25 feet. It is amazing to see what the UNHRD and team of participating NGOs has coordinated for immediate deployment. In addition to the UNLB Brindisi location, there are four more HUBS based in Dubai, Malaysia, Panama and Ghana to have disaster relief stocks closer to regions often requiring aid. Without the teaming of the UNHRD and various NGOs, the current rapid response would not be possible. Mr. George Fenton, Head of Emergency Logistics for World Vision International ("WVI") affirms, "Globally it makes sense for shelter and supplies to be located in Brindisi, Dubai, etc. with the capability to be flown out to a site immediately." Mr. Fenton adds, "Locally we need to be more prepared and innovative by focusing on known disaster prone regions. Working directly with local governments and finding ways to be successful with pre-disaster education, training and preparedness." Due to continual massive floods, Bangladesh and Mozambique are both territorial candidates for this type of motivation and WVI has been implementing a pre-planning foundation to accomplish local stockpiling of relief goods, in addition to the community readiness for post-flood response. "Bangladesh is one of the best prepared countries involving the government and pro-active community based warning mechanisms for cyclone and flood activity," comments Mr. Fenton. Additionally, the local community in Bangladesh is prepared with shelters on stilts and procedures to communicate to the population under distress. Mr. Fenton remarks, "Global prepositioning is expensive to transport while local programs are more cost effective." Commercial companies are also very active in disaster preparedness globally and locally. Jan Karlsen, Managing Director of NORMECA A/S, and disaster management specialist verbalizes their focus "Based on NORMECA'S experience in disaster management, a Global Disaster Management Team should be established to go out immediately to consult with local authorities and government. Overcoming a lack of leadership in the first few weeks following a disaster will save lives, reduce human suffering and increase the cost efficiency ratio." NORMECA A/S is among the world leaders in the supply of disaster and preparedness solutions and services. Their disaster units are modular in design, from treating surgical injuries sustained in disasters or armed conflicts to health preparedness services in rural areas. NORMECA A/S ensures support at the disaster scene 24 hours after they receive the first call

New innovative products and solutions sustain relief mechanisms in the field. In addition to being a distinguished Research Professor and the Transformation Chair at the National Defense University, Dr. Lin Wells focuses on a program that provides us with innovative products to offset disaster-affected populations. The STAR-TIDES

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project -- Sustainable Technologies, Accelerated Research ("STAR") and Transportable Infrastructures for Development and Emergency Support ("TIDES") is a broad research project focusing on sustainable, affordable, support to distressed populations including worldwide post war, post-disaster, and the impoverished. STAR-TIDES promotes knowledge sharing to support both decision makers and those in the field. Three goals are in the forefront of the program: enhancing ability of civil coalitions to work in stressed environments, extending military inter operability and economizing with low-cost logistics and supply chain rationalization. STAR-TIDES also concentrates on public-private partnerships and seven infrastructures of Shelter, Water, Power, Sanitation, Integrated Cooking, Cooling/Heating/Lighting, as well as Information and Communication Technology. For instance, integrated cooking and solar cooking devices allow families two hot meals a day in addition to having a third meal kept warm over an extended period of time. With the capability of this technology expanded to a large population, the system could contribute to over 38,000 meals a day while providing the supplementary ability to dry fruits and vegetables for consumption. The STAR-TIDES project amplifies the importance of sanitation solutions that do not upset the populations' water supply,

LED lighting that works everywhere, and the use of solar/wind powered energy units. Dr. Wells insists, "the combined efforts of public, private and field teams are necessary for the success of each project". For an in-depth view of the STAR-TIDES program, visit www.star-tides.net.

The teamwork must go beyond NGOs, planning and Commercial Companies providing products and services. A tight union of all sides will enhance our abilities to accomplish the MDGs as we are thwarted by disasters. George Fenton, WVI specifies, "the wall needs

to come down between NGOs and Commercial Companies. NGOs and Commercial sectors working together to lessen the barriers to accomplishments." Bringing NGOs and the Commercial side jointly to network neutrally and solve issues we face in the disaster arena is imperative for success. Companies such as NORMECA A/S, Worldwide Shelters and Verstergaard Frandsen are representative of the dedication to saving lives and teaming with NGOs in the disaster preparedness field. Overseas Lease Group, Inc., has created a Disaster Preparedness Package program. The program allows for the NGOs to lease a menu of vehicles, transport equipment, recovery camp kits including infrastructure, Transitional Shelter tents, hard wall shelters, water purification devices, mobile hospitals, semi-permanent hospital solutions, mobile forensic medicine centers, mobile quarantine hospital systems and other leasable assets. NGOs could stockpile more assets in more places locally, and have a combined set lease payment for the items. Overseas Lease Group, Inc. welcomes any suggestions and comments from NGOs and other commercial entities to serve the purpose of finding and implementing solutions.

AUTHOR



Tracy A. Badcock

Vice President of Marketing and Communications
Overseas Lease Group, Inc.
110 East Broward Boulevard, Suite 1700
Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA 33301
Ph: 1 954 315 3862

E-mail: tb@overseasleasegroup.com
Web: www.overseasleasegroup.com