

	Disaster-affected population	Aid workers
<b>What happens immediately?</b>	<p><b>Left to their own devices, people:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find or improvise temporary shelters.</li> <li>Start rebuilding their permanent homes as soon as possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>On arrival, aid workers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply emergency shelters e.g. tents, poles-and-tarpaulin (response phase).</li> <li>Provide transitional shelters: light structures with a short lifespan, used while permanent houses are built (early recovery phase).</li> <li>Help rebuild permanent housing (reconstruction phase).</li> </ul>
<b>What to consider?</b>	<p><b>Design:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vernacular/traditional.</li> <li>Copying the design of the house that was damaged or destroyed in the disaster.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collected or salvaged from the rubble of their destroyed houses.</li> <li>Natural alternatives: wood, clay/mud, straw, lime, etc.</li> <li>Construction materials are purchased when absolutely necessary e.g. cement, iron bars, roofing materials etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Labour:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People provide all the basic labour they can, borrow tools and learn from more experienced builders in the process.</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety – Disaster risk reduction (DRR):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even if DRR is a consideration, people may not know how to build more resistant houses.</li> <li>Financial constraints and inexperience may translate into ‘cut corners’ or mistakes that weaken the building structurally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard designs meeting strict criteria are agreed between governments, donors, aid/development agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantified then bought through procurement procedures.</li> <li>Mostly modern construction materials with little room for salvaged or recycled options.</li> <li>Natural construction materials are receiving more consideration lately.</li> </ul> <p><b>Labour:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varies from using external building contractors to cash-for-work models employing local craftsmen and labour, or cash grants to home owners who manage construction themselves.</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety – Disaster risk reduction (DRR):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DRR is an essential criterion for post-disaster reconstruction.</li> <li>House design, construction materials and technology is placing increasing importance on DRR.</li> </ul>
<b>How to rebuild?</b>	<p>People rebuild permanent houses, starting with a core structure, which they improve and/or expand as needed and when they can afford it. This process, known as ‘incremental sheltering’, suits people’s needs and resources.</p>	<p>Aid agencies tend to use a fixed design and provide a finished, standard reconstructed house — but it is not always easily expanded or modified. It is often built all at once, by contractors or the community. However, there is growing adoption of the incremental shelter model, with core structures that owners can later expand.</p>
<b>How long does it take?</b>	<p>Self-build projects are not time-bound. Once the core structure is in place, it continues to be modified, improved and expanded.</p>	<p>Aid agencies follow fixed timelines, to meet donor requirements and relatively short funding cycles.</p>
<b>Where to rebuild?</b>	<p>People tend to rebuild their homes where they were before, and as close as possible to their livelihoods or source of income.</p>	<p>Aid agencies sometimes suggest or support relocation for safety reasons or legal and political considerations.</p>
<b>Who are homes for?</b>	<p>The process of rebuilding will invariably mirror the resources and resourcefulness of each member of the community.</p> <p>These resources include assets, assistance from relatives (e.g. in the diaspora), and the strategies and connections people use to get back on their feet.</p>	<p>Selecting ‘beneficiaries’ remains a major preoccupation of shelter agencies. It requires good contextual knowledge and understanding of community dynamics. The way beneficiaries are selected can influence the success of a reconstruction programme. It can also raise ethical questions — for example, to what extent does the reconstruction reinstate pre-disaster inequality, injustice and vulnerability?</p>