The Role of property and construction professionals in major disaster management

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Introduction

Why does reconstruction after major disasters seem to take so long and what happens to survivors after the humanitarian aid providers move on? These questions were asked by professionals in the property and construction industries following the boxing-day tsunami. This resulted in the formation of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' (RICS) Major Disaster Management Commission (MDMC) and research to identify the apparent gap between humanitarian disaster relief and the re-establishment of normal living conditions post disaster (Lloyd-Jones 2006). It is clear from numerous examples world wide that the aid community is very efficient at mobilising humanitarian aid immediately following a significant natural disaster. What has become apparent through a detailed gap analysis is that in the period post disaster the reconstruction of essential services and buildings is much less efficiently addressed. The lack of pre-disaster preparedness and planning are key aspects which contribute to the gap. This lack of planning is more prevalent in developing countries where skills and expertise in the built environment are scarce.

The risk of natural disasters is increasing. With climate change the occurrence of extreme heat days and increased cyclonic activity will lead to increases in climate related events (BRANZ 2007). Current projections for climate change over the next 40 years suggest major impacts such as rising sea levels, reductions in habitable land area and population migration (Lynas 2007), which are likely to disproportionately affect developing countries.

Each year of the past decade 258 million people have suffered from disaster most of them in developing countries an increase of 184 million from the 70's (Christian Aid 2006) The skills of Chartered Surveyors in construction, regeneration, geomatics, property, and project / programme management are uniquely able to fill the knowledge gap of aid organisations and ensure a faster and more organised return to normal life. The ability to establish property special data and title, determine the safety of damaged structures and

establish risk management strategies to ensure business continuity of essential services all help to efficiently rebuild a better built environment than existed prior to the disaster.

The RICS, in fulfilling its Royal Charter obligations to act in the public interest, has built up a dialogue with major aid agencies in Europe. The objective of these linkages is to bring about a 'coalition of thought', seeking the best way forward in implementing disaster reduction strategies (Owen & Dumashie 2007).

To deliver on the strategic planning objective a detailed disaster management process protocol is being developed, which outlines best practice regeneration and construction methodologies throughout the reconstruction phase (University of Salford 2005). The objective is to utilise a structured, disciplined approach to ensure that future disaster relief achieves the objective to 'build back better'. Utilising the resources of the RICS and its 130,000 members world wide the organisation is establishing a global aid advisory service which will provide advice and guidance to international aid organisations and NGOs in the process of evaluating reconstruction projects and in undertaking risk assessment surveys in disaster prone regions.

The next phase in the work of the MDMC is to role out the advisory services on a global scale and through regional groups of property professionals raise awareness of the build back better objectives. In addition, work is commencing on the establishment of a global charitable organisation, Build Aid, which can deliver expert building advice, contribute to the reconstruction of communities and develop strategies to minimise the impact of disasters in those regions hardest hit by natural disasters. The development of a future strategy to work with humanitarian agencies and charities such as Build Aid will form a significant part of the implementation programme moving forward.

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Author's Biography

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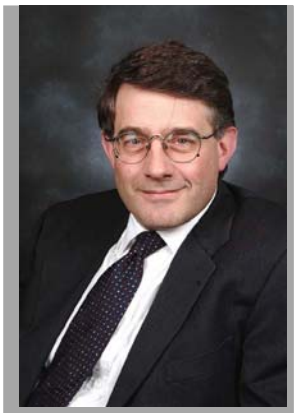
Dr Clive Warren BSc (Hons), M.Prj.Mgt. Grad Cert Ed. PhD (Qld), FRICS, FAIPM, AAPI

Clive has over twenty years experience in the property industry working in a number of geographical locations and in a range of professional areas. He began his property career as a valuer in London before moving to Cornwall to work as a valuer and corporate real estate manager within both the private and public sectors of the UK.

In 1990 Clive migrated with his family to Brisbane where he became portfolio manager of the Commonwealth's commercial property estate. He also completed a Masters Degree in Project Management at QUT and began lecturing in real estate and asset management at both QUT and University of Queensland. In 1996 he joined the Reserve Bank of Australia, managing the Banks Queensland facilities.

In 2001 Clive left the Reserve Bank to undertake research in facilities management and to become head of the University of New South Wales Masters programme in Real Estate and Facilities Management as well as lecturing in the construction management undergraduate programme in areas of development management and ethics. In 2004 he moved to the University of Queensland to run the property economics and project management courses offered at both undergraduate and masters levels. He has a PhD in property service procurement.

Clive is a Fellow of the RICS and represents the Oceania region as Commissioner to the Major Disaster Management Commission. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Project Managers and is also an associate of the Australian Property Institute and member of the FMA.



Graham Matthews BSc, MBA, FRICS, FRSA

Until recently Graham was a Senior Equity Partner of EC Harris LLP, an international firm of property and construction consultants, based in London. He is a Commissioner serving the RICS Major Disaster Management Commission and now lives in New Zealand.

He was previously Global Head of Workplace Solutions at Accenture, where he had responsibility for property and facilities strategy and consulting, focusing on the delivery of corporate real estate assets.

Prior to Accenture, Graham was a Director of BAA plc where he had various roles including Divisional Finance Director,

Development Director for Heathrow Express, and Group Project Services Director. These roles focused on improving the delivery performance of BAA's £450m pa capital programme.

During the 80s Graham was Project Management Director of Lynton plc, a property development company, where he had responsibility for delivering a wide range of commercial and retail property developments across the UK.

Graham has extensive experience in property development and regeneration, programme and project management, facilities management, supply chain management and logistics.