

Postgraduate
research news

After the war is Over...

National disasters, war zones or civil conflict, bad enough situations for any human, citizen, government or nation, but what happens post disaster? Emergency measures are put in place, but are they the right measures? Are all the socio economic factors in such situations considered carefully or are measures taken too quickly?

These are some of the issues that Kisanthi Seneviratne, PhD Student in the School of the Built Environment, is examining in her research into socio economic conditions and housing needs within post conflict housing reconstruction.

Kisanthi' who is supervised by Professor Dilanthi Amaratunga and Dr Richard Haigh in the Centre for Disaster Resilience, is researching into post conflict reconstruction of societies, focusing especially on the area of housing. Housing is an essential asset to the well-being and development of societies and housing shortages and inadequate housing constitute a severe and pressing problem for many individuals and governments alike. Housing though in many parts of the world is an extremely vulnerable asset and destruction of homes, or their loss through displacement or dispossession, is one of the most visible effects of conflict. Post conflict housing reconstruction is crucial; as a means of incentive to repatriate and rebuild a devastated area, to rebuild the community and as an essential part of the wider effort to rebuild towards peace.

However it is found that post conflict housing interventions, that are planned and implemented too rapidly pay little attention to beneficiaries' needs, expectations, local conditions, socio-economic or cultural issues. These approaches to reconstruction, pre-fabricated technology, imported materials and professional judgements on what people need are used, in urgency, to produce mass housing units to re-house the victims.

Consequently, the outcome of these initiatives are housing projects that in time need to be remodelled to suit citizens' needs or even become abandoned, wasting time, effort and precious resources.

Kisanthi's research aims to examine the needs of citizens in a post conflict society, not just immediate needs such as temporary shelter, but to take into account all areas of life, to develop a theoretical model which explains the beneficiaries' socio economic conditions and their housing needs, to construct a clear pathway and develop usable strategies to deliver appropriate housing reconstruction post conflict.

This study is mainly concerned with subjective meanings of housing needs and takes a qualitative approach to data collection. Among many approaches of conducting social research, this study selects the grounded theory as the most appropriate research strategy as it is well suited to the needs of qualitative, exploratory, studies of human interaction and small-scale research. Data collection will be done thorough unstructured interviews with beneficiaries who need housing and with professionals, practitioners and policy makers who are involved in post conflict housing reconstruction within the context of post conflict reconstruction.

If you would like to know more about Kisanthi's research contact her at: t.k.k.seneviratne@pgr.salford.ac.uk

