

The Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) at Oxford Brookes University offers one of the principle post-graduate courses in Britain for those with architectural and built environment backgrounds keen to get further involved in shelter after disaster.

Director **David Sanderson** outlines CENDEP'S work

Emergency course



The Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) at Oxford Brookes University began life in the School of Architecture in 1985. Since then it has evolved from a Centre concentrating on environmental planning to a one that combines teaching, research and consultancy in chronic poverty, natural disaster, conflict and human rights. While these are wide ranging interests, the ethos, and focus, of the centre is that people are the starting point – for CENDEP, good practice is one that is reflective, people-centred and long-term.

Within its teaching, practice is the central theme of CENDEP's work, ie how can humanitarian and development practitioners navigate effectively the complex and messy reality of affecting good programmes that reduce vulnerability, increase capacity and/or lead to lasting change? This theme permeates within the Centre's three postgraduate offerings: its well known Masters degree in Development and Emergency Practice (DEP), now in its 20th year and winner in 2001 of the Queen's Award; and two newer programmes, a Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Shelter after disaster – believed to be the first of its kind – and a distance learning PG Cert in Conflict and humanitarianism.

A strength of DEP lies in its diversity: each year the programme attracts some 40 people from 20 countries, with an age range between 23–58. Some are new to aid work and plan a career working in the sector, while others may be mid-career field workers looking to reflect on their work so far before returning to work. Others may have come from successful careers in other worlds, and apply their expertise to the knotty questions of improving humanitarian interventions.

Usually around one fifth of the intake are architects, reflecting the programme's roots in architecture. For them, they are exposed to a range of disciplinary approaches, attitudes and understandings that go beyond their prior experience, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of humanitarian practice – students engage in economics, political theory, mediation and anthropology