

IOM Presents Innovative Eco-Friendly Shelter Solutions at the Asia Pacific Shelter and Settlements Forum 2024

Manila – The Asia Pacific Shelter and Settlements Forum (APSSF) 2024 successfully concluded on 23 October, drawing over 300 stakeholders ranging from government officials, donors and practitioners to representatives from the private sector, UN agencies and NGOs. Held in Pasay City, Manila, this year’s forum discussed issues of sustainable shelter and urban settlements in the region, focusing on the theme, “Building Towards Inclusive and Resilient Homes and Communities.”

The three-day event was organized by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and the Ministry of Human Settlements and Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Through dynamic discussions and panel sessions, participants explored strategies for building resilience and integrating disaster risk reduction into shelter, such as partnerships and sustainable technologies.

Such technologies include Compressed Stabilized Earth Blocks (CSEBs), presented by Cherry Abila, IOM Nepal Shelter Coordinator, on the second day of the event. Under the Joint Recovery Action Plan with support from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, CSEBs help earthquake-affected communities in Jajarkot and West Rukum, Nepal, to build back better. Made from a mix of soil, sand, water and 5 to 10 per cent cement, CSEBs not only enhance earthquake resistance but also significantly lower construction costs. By utilizing local, readily available materials, they become a sustainable and affordable approach to resilient housing. Furthermore, they offer a resistance level comparable to that of more expensive, traditionally reinforced concrete. The presentation generated various comments, including the types of soil suitable for CSEB construction and the applicability of CSEBs in flood-affected areas. Abila clarified that CSEBs can be made waterproof, but they are not specifically designed to protect against flooding. To address flood risks, it is recommended to elevate the shelter according to anticipated flood levels. Regarding soil types, it is advised to sample from different soil sources and test different mixtures, followed by compressive strength tests. Lastly, participants discussed the possibility of replicating the CSEB technology in the Philippines.

In conclusion, the APSSF 2024 highlighted the transformative potential of sustainable technologies like CSEBs in advancing resilient shelter solutions. By showcasing CSEBs’ cost-effectiveness, use of local materials and earthquake-resistant properties, the forum underscored how such technologies can drive sustainable rebuilding efforts in disaster-prone regions.

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