EMERGING ISSUES ON RESOURCING FOR CHRISTCHURCH REBUILD

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SYNOPSIS
Resourcing for the Christchurch rebuild is tested on unparalleled scales. The realities of the in-country resources availability demand an expansion of resources capacity in a strategical manner. There is, however, a lack effort at documenting the mechanism and strategies for innovative resourcing. This research examines dynamic factors influencing resource availability for the Christchurch rebuild. As the resourcing inhibitors are becoming visible over time, a longitudinal examination was administered to understand the competing influences for rebuilding Christchurch. 13 case study organisations agreed to provide access for interviewing, enabling the exploration of problematic resources for the rebuild. The results indicate that the implications of the resources scarcity became recognisable as the rebuild is taking shape. The present status of the rebuild is challenging the agility and resiliency of the construction organisations and businesses, particularly at acquiring adequate resources. It was revealed that the pressures emanate from the workforce supply, the need for accommodation and the relevance of workforce training. These pressures could be exaggerated throughout the rebuild timetables if the issues are not appropriately addressed.

KEYWORDS: Christchurch rebuild, post-disaster reconstruction, resourcing issues, resource management, resources shortage

INTRODUCTION
Rebuilding Christchurch towards betterment stretches the city’s resources and capacity especially when it is linked with the recovery speed, clients’ preferences and project requirements. Chang et al. (2010) characterise the post-disaster reconstruction projects as vulnerable to resourcing bottlenecks. These include the shortage of resources, constraint supply of resources and restricted access to the resources in demand. As the rebuild progresses, Stevenson et al. (2014) reveal that it was the competition for limited resources between rebuild and new builds, residential recovery and commercial rebuild that permitting uncertainties to time and cost of the Christchurch rebuild. Struggles exist at estimating the scale and schedules of the rebuild which then affect on the workforce demand (Cosgriff, 2011). Workforce shortages generate bottlenecks that have an impact on project costs,
quality, productivity and completion time (Gunderson, 2001). Acceleration on the pace of recovery, on the other hand marginalises the desired skills, project preferences and quality of workmanship (Barakat, 2003). Barakat (2003) also articulate that documentation on post-disaster reconstruction philosophies, methods and processes is still lacking. Harmonously, Chang et al. (2010) affirm that little effort has been done to investigate resourcing correlation with post-disaster reconstruction. Therefore, the need for exploring emerging issues on resourcing for post-disaster reconstruction is apt and timely. The relevance of resources availability should not be ignored, as it embraces crucial role at determining post-disaster reconstruction success, besides organisations coordination and human resources (Hidayat and Egbu, 2011). The reliance of recovery pace on the availability of resources (Stevenson et al., 2014), exhibiting the need for balancing the competing influences and employing innovative resourcing.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES
This research is aimed to identify resource availability for Christchurch rebuild, the recovery pattern and innovative strategies that could be mapped into the resourcing domain.

RESEARCH METHODS
The current progress of the rebuild resourcing is investigated by means of a case study and a comparison with longitudinal studies. 11 reports on “Resourcing the Canterbury Rebuild” were reviewed to apprehend the embedded resourcing pattern in rebuilding Christchurch. This covers exploration of the rebuild skill availability, persistent resourcing bottlenecks, accommodation provision and the industry responses in relation to resources shortages. A series of interview with the rebuild professional was conducted to understand the planning of resourcing, problematic resources and the emerging trends that have impact on resourcing. 13 case study organisations took part in this research, drawing out the current resources inhibitors that may prevent industry meeting the current and foreseeable demands.

ANTICIPATED (OR PRELIMINARY) FINDINGS

Workforce Shortage
Professional expertise and trade skill for the Christchurch rebuild remain a scarce resource. The need for recruiting, retaining and developing skilled workforce adequately is crucial to meet the increasing demand for rebuilding Christchurch. Preference on permanent hiring was highlighted; imposing a proper strategy to ensure employment is succeeding. To aid on this, reliance on recruiting agents was made.

Temporary Accommodation
Sourcing temporary accommodation has become a core activity of construction organisations
involved with the Christchurch rebuild, in 2011 and 2012. A major concern imposed was to accommodate the red zones movers and the internationally recruited workforces. The need for further accommodation support becomes essential if the projected ramping up of the rebuild works in 2015 and beyond is to be achieved.

Training and Upskilling
Difficulty in matching labour to skill heightens the importance of training and upskilling. Enhancing skills acquisition, however depends on the capability to financing the training programme and the workforces’ stick-ability. Efforts at retaining workforces, on the other hand requires better remunerations, perks and incentives to avoid workforce poaching.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE
This research is intended to develop a framework of resourcing for post-disaster reconstruction. The framework will be beneficial for the industry to understand the capacity of the construction organisations and firms, filling the capacity gaps, using resources strategically and delivering added value to the development of the construction organisations and firms.

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