

MARIA de IRANTZU (Iru) SERRA-LASA

Washington DC, - irantzuserra@resilired.org - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/irantzuserra-lasa/>

Disaster Risk Reduction, Response & Recovery strategic leader

Cross sectoral technical expertise with 20+ years of combined experience in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) & resilience, post disaster recovery / reconstruction, material science innovation & research, with strong project, budget, risk management, program Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL), Safeguarding, and Quality Assurance (Q/A) backgrounds.

Leading high performing, accountable, strength-based teams; with 11 years of leadership experience in private and non-for-profit sectors. Empowering through delegation, mentorship, and empathy while setting clear goals, performance objectives, and metrics to deliver results and foster growth opportunities.

Global experience Operational experience in LAC, EME, AFR, APAC, & US lived and worked in the disaster / humanitarian / development and/or private sectors in Senegal, Haiti, Panama, Philippines, USA, & Spain. Fluent in **Spanish, English & French**.

SELECTED LEADERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS

Cross-functional leadership ▪ Led COVID-19 pivot efforts and programmatic guidance for response; mobilized over 40 technical experts across HQ, LAC, EME, AFR, & APAC (24 COVID-19 cross-sectoral programmatic guides -English/Spanish- in 6 weeks). ▪ Led institutionalization of Habitat's Disaster Response Playbook, improving predictability and cross-divisional coordination during disasters. ▪ Interagency MOUs signed resulting in 6 joint response efforts serving over 15,400 additional households with early recovery support.

Change management/Strategic planning ▪ Led the Red Cross Movement "Camps and Settlements task force", Haiti 2013. Recommendations resulted in Red Cross re-orienting \$21 million in supporting urban programming, and durable housing solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). ▪ Championed in coordination with regions the Habitat's Strategic Program Framework which reoriented program offerings & branding for the Habitat network through a highly consultative process. ▪ Led Strategic Planning for Habitat's global humanitarian work, "Pathways to Permanence" enabling greater focus on disaster response and recovery programming.

Research, evidence, and MEAL ▪ Pioneered the design of the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) global focal point for research function, hosted by Habitat for Humanity since 2021, which has defined GSC research and learning agenda, to inform humanitarian response through field-based evidence, by partnering with universities, consultants, GSC partners, and USAID-BHA fellows for delivering quality research products. ▪ Fostered development of SOPs for early recovery grants to US Habitat Affiliates and National Organizations (NOs), increasing transparency on requirements for funding, and expectations for implementation. ▪ Increased performance visibility through inclusion of new disaster response KPIs on US Affiliate Statistical Report 595k additional early recovery interventions tracked since 2019.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HOWARD UNIVERSITY, Washington, DC

Dec 2024- Present

Adjunct Lecturer, College of Architecture & Engineering, Department of Architecture

- Developed and delivering a multidisciplinary professional elective course on Housing after disasters and crises at the Department of Architecture within the College of Engineering and Architecture.
- Teaching undergraduate and graduate students about Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements, emphasizing practical applications and real-world scenarios.
- Collaborating with colleagues within Howard and beyond to create engaging and interactive learning experiences, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

ResilireD Washington DC – USA

Sept 2024 – Present

Founder and Lead Consultant

Providing subject matter expertise and strategic advice through consulting services in Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements, Disaster & Crisis Response Management (DRM), Housing, Land, and Property rights (HLP), Social and client safeguarding. Clients to date include:

Sinfranova LLC Developed the Disaster Management portion of the Colombian Government's guidelines Climate Resilient Infrastructure Projects structured through Public, Private, Partnerships.

Safe Organizations LLC Supported the process of assessing Abuse of Power within a large US nonprofit.

Consultant Washington DC - USA

Contracted by IOM to lead a USAID-BHA grant to support InterAction, the Housing Land and Property (HLP) Area of Responsibility, Howard University College of Architecture and Engineering, and University of Puerto Rico School of Law through thought leadership and awareness raising on International Humanitarian response, Shelter and Settlements, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) & Resilience, and Housing, Land, & Property (HLP) programming to engage private sector, academia, and next generation of humanitarians through organizing events and developing a Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements courses for higher education.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL (HFHI)

Jun. 2015- Feb. 2024

[Global] Senior Director Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (DR³) Atlanta GA, Washington DC - USA

Nov. 2017-Feb 2024

Led HFHI's Global Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (DR³) strategic direction for US and international, supporting Habitat affiliated entities and communities prepare for and respond to disasters, while increasing HFHI-wide organizational readiness to respond.

- Coordinated major Disaster Responses: *International-* [Habitat's Ukraine Refugee Crisis response](#) (US\$ 26.5 M) across Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Germany, Beirut Port Blast (US\$ 2M), Hurricanes Eta & Iota, (US \$ 1.5 M) SW Haiti Earthquake (US\$ 5.3 M) . *US- Canada* - Hurricanes Michael, Florence, & Ian (US\$ 5 M); CA, CO, Canada, & Maui Wildfires (US \$ 3M).
- Consolidated programmatic work streams to service US Habitat affiliated network into a single multiyear US Disaster Preparedness strategy, coordinating roster of [Disaster Corps Volunteers](#), Disaster Mobile Response Units, Habitat Affiliate Readiness, [Habitat Ready](#) (Homeowner preparedness), Housing retrofitting ([Habitat Strong](#)), through cross-division collaboration.
- Developed Disaster Response Partnership vetting framework to assess external implementing partners. Signed 5 inter-agency MOUs promoting joint response with peer agencies (American RC, ShelterBox, Rotary Intl., Miyamoto Intl, and CRS).
- Co-led the inception of HFHI's cross functional Core Safeguarding team for 15 months, until global safeguarding role was created; Ensuring HFHI abided by international standards and code of conduct on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

Director Housing & Human Settlements APAC. Manila- Philippines.

Jun. 2015-Nov. 2017

Led HFHI's APAC cross-sectoral technical teams supporting National Offices for development and humanitarian operations (DRR, Urban, Construction, Advocacy, HLP, MEAL, quality assurance, knowledge management and surge capacity).

- Coordinated Regional Disaster Response in APAC; provided direct technical support for response/recovery to operations such as Nepal EQ 2015; Fiji Cyclone Winston 2016; NZ Kaikoura EQ 2016; Bangladesh/Sri Lanka Cyclone Roanu 2016.
- Led HFHI APAC [Habitat III](#) engagements ([APUF Jakarta](#), [PrepCom III Surabaya](#), and [Habitat III Quito](#)).

AMERICAN RED CROSS (ARC) Washington DC/ Haiti / Panama

Jul. 2010-Jun. 2015

Shelter and Settlements (S&S) Advisor, International Response & Programs

Supported field offices in technical components of shelter, housing reconstruction, and Disaster Risk Reduction portfolio in Belize, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Haiti, Panama, Peru, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, and Vietnam.

- Managed transitional shelter and host community programs implemented by external partners in Haiti (\$28 million granted, 7 partners; 6000+ Transitional Shelters built).
- Provided services to IFRC and National Societies in shelter and settlements ([PASSA](#), and [Shelter Technical Training](#), Long term recovery planning, etc.)
- Informed senior leadership decisions for ARC engagement, through evidence based technical analysis of highly political potential programs in Haiti.
- Coordinated, on behalf of IFRC, the first [Regional Forum for Adequate Housing](#), (Bogota, Colombia Sept. 2012) and the [REDLAC Shelter Group](#); while seconded to [IFRC Americas Zone Office in Panama](#), Jul.-Oct. 2012.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE RED CROSS (IFRC) Haiti

Apr. 2010 -Jun. 2010

Shelter Delegate. Haiti Earthquake Operation

Assessed and co-designed a cash transfer and shelter program to support IDPs.

FIIAAP Dakar, Senegal

Dec. 2009-Mar. 2010

Architectural design & site management (Consultant)

Designed, budgeted & supervised the rehabilitation of three professional training centers (€120,000) for the Senegalese Gov. focus on quality assurance & construction safety.

[GRUPO DETINSA](#), Madrid & Huesca, Spain

Oct. 2003-Jul. 2008

Site Construction Manager Madrid & Huesca, Spain

Jan. 2005-July 2008

Site Construction Assistant Madrid, Spain

Oct. 2003-Jan. 2005

Managed construction of 2 residential complexes, €8 Million per site; budget forecast, Cash-Flow, contract agreements, certificates of substantial completion, Quality Assurance.

[B+DU Estudio de Arquitectura](#), Madrid, Spain

Dec. 2001- Oct. 2003

Architect

Collaborated with [Morphosis Architects](#), Los Angeles, CA, in the design phase of [141 social housing units, Carabanchel Alto](#), Madrid.

Education

DEA: Advanced Studies Diploma, part of PhD program. [UPM](#) Madrid, Spain, 2005.

Specialist Postgraduate Degree “Expert in cooperation for development of human settlements”. [Institute for Cooperation on Basic Habitability \(ICHaB\) UNESCO Chair](#). Spain, 2002.

Professional Degree in Architecture & M.Sc. in Architecture & Urban Planning (NAAB Substantial Equivalency). [UPM](#), Madrid, Spain, 2001.

Leadership / Affiliations

Co-Chair at [InterAction Shelter and Settlements Working Group](#) (2021-2024)

Member of [Global Shelter Cluster Strategic Advisory Group](#) (2017-2024)

Friend / mentor of [University of GA, Women Lead Program](#) (2019-present)

Executive Meta-Leadership: Leading through Crisis and Change [Harvard National Preparedness Leadership Initiative \(NPLI\)](#) Cohort XIX (2020-2021) NPLI alumni network.

Change Management, [Experience Point](#), Manila, Philippines (2017)

Staley Leadership Training, [Center for Creative Leadership](#), Atlanta GA, USA (2017)

Registered Professional License in Architecture in Spain through [COAM](#) Madrid, (2001 - Present) License # [13,879](#)

Publications

Flores M. and Serra I. (2011, Vol. 29) [Haiti, reconstruction challenges & opportunities: Moving from emergency and transitional shelter into permanent housing](#). Monday Developments Magazine, Washington DC, USA

Ashmore J., Ferrer C., & Serra I. (2010) [IFRC shelter kit guidelines](#). IFRC, Geneva, Switzerland.