

Workshop report

Humanitarian timber, Barisal, Bangladesh

7th Feb, by IFRC

Introduction

A one day workshop was held in Barisal Bangladesh on 7th February 2008. The workshop was funded by IFRC with support from the shelter working group in Barisal. The workshop was attended by over 90 participants from national and international NGOs, environmental groups, forestry department officials and industry.

The workshop was split into two halves. In the morning focus was pointed at the existing literature and documentation on timber, specifically a review of the current draft of "Timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations", and "shelter programming recommendations", Cyclone Sidr Shelter Cluster. The afternoon focussed discussion on Bangladesh with recommendations on issues surrounding timber. There was also a presentation from Oxfam on community training on shelter.

The timing of this workshop is to coincide with the planning of shelter programmes by various organisations. To meet the shelter needs of the cyclone affectees, as well as in the subsequent reconstruction, the majority of shelter and houses will use timber in some form. As timber is a naturally growing construction material, there is significant variation in size, quality, and types available, and sourcing can have significant environmental impacts. Other materials such as bamboo or bricks may be considered for future workshops.

Workshop aims

- Provide a forum where issues surrounding timber can be discussed
- Draft guidance on timber specific to Bangladesh on timber use
- Review the current draft of "Timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations"

Key recommendations from the workshop

Technical working group

- A small technical working group should be formed to focus on procurement, Logistics, environmental and specification issues for timber.

Summary of timber regulations

- The local forestry department agreed to compile a brief summary of the key documentation to clarifying the legal issues surrounding timber sourcing.

Further workshops

There is significant support for further workshops and training among the NGO community. As an example, out of the 90 participants present, only 7 were aware of Sphere. Technical training should also be considered for the practical use of timber.

Participation of the affected communities is essential in the planning and implementation of construction projects involving timber. Community level training in safe construction and maintenance of shelters should be conducted.

Sources of timber

- A combination of local, national and possibly international timber procurement will be required to meet the reconstruction needs of the affected areas. Smaller projects and self build may take place with timber sourced from local markets. Larger projects and larger organisations may require timber to be sourced nationally or internationally. Separate guidance should be developed for each level of procurement.

Use of fallen timber

Timber fallen as a result of the Cyclone should be used as a priority to support rapid shelter construction. However it should be noted that the lifetime of this timber may not be as long as properly dried and treated timber.

The existing ban on timber extraction from the Sunderbans should be continued. This should include cyclone damaged timber.

Timeframe

- Emergency shelter projects should start as soon as possible. The approaching rainy season in three months creates an immediate deadline which may lead to serious challenges with timely timber procurements.

Project planning

Coordination with stakeholders (forestry, NGO, merchants, transport agencies, warehouse facilities)

A committee should be set up and terms of reference to develop guidance on procurement, Logistics, environmental and specification issues of timber.

Interested parties should be facilitated to coordinate and form this committee.

Consultation

Design of shelters should be based on community culture, traditions, carpentry skills and upon discussions with local people. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable individuals and groups.

During planning and construction participatory approaches should be followed

Construction should be closely monitored and supervised.

Policies of environmental protection should be enforced with training to support implementation

Plantation/ reforestation

Replantation on family plots will be relatively quick as it in the interests of the land owners to maintain them. Tree planting on communal land is to be encouraged but will be a more time consuming venture.

Diversity in replanting species should be encouraged

The coastal green belt should be conserved and consolidated to reduce further disaster risk

Budget

Budgets need to take into account of:

Overhead management costs.

Transportation and treatment costs of timber.

Potentially increasing prices of timber and other materials.

Total number of houses required.

What will be funding source?

Specification of timber

Optimum use of timber

- Types and size of timber for specific purposes should be specified. **The following table should be completed** by the technical working group to relate thee uses for different types of timber

Proposed table to be filled in linking species of timber and required treatments with their appropriate uses.		
Part of shelter / house	Suitable species of timber / bamboo / other materials	Treatments required
Column		
Beam		
Wall cladding		
etc.		
...		

Treatment

Appropriate and safe chemical treatments should be considered to improve thee lifespan of the timber.

There is a need for training on technical issues about traditional chemical treatment (the most common locally available treatments are Indian oil and kerosene which can be conducted on site. Although there is no law governing the use of treatments, organisations should be aware of the potential health risks and risks to aquatic life of some treatments)

Quality (specification, standards)

Clear identification of standards (understanding of timber) should be established before major procurements

Timber samples can be used to aid specification.

Certifications from major suppliers should be requested.

Homestead fallen timber

The use of fallen trees should be minimised to reduce wastage
Fallen timber should be harvested to generate income and employment
Trees should be planted on vacant land.

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Procurement / logistics of timber

Local national international purchase

The following procurement types will be required

Local procurement. Smaller construction projects and self build by affected families may take place with timber sourced from local markets. This will take advantage of windfall timber, but quality and seasoning may be harder to ensure.

National procurement. Larger projects and larger organisations may require timber to be sourced nationally or internationally. National procurement may also be required if local resources do not fit the full demand. This requires specific paperwork for transportation

International timber procurement. This may be required for a few of the largest reconstruction programmes to ensure sustainability and quality. This requires paperwork both for importation (phytosanitary certificates etc.) and paperwork for transportation within country.

Supply (sources, available quantity)

Timber procurement should take place with clear coordination between organisations and in consultation with forestry department.

Authorised merchants should be identified and information shared between organisations to avoid duplication.

Maintain local market (strengthen market / not destroy it)

Set common pricing guidelines

Coordination between different procurement agencies

Distribution (transport / storage)

Centralise warehouses

Agreements on transportation (especially with regards to paperwork and documentation required) should be established before beginning procurements.

Laws surrounding transportation of timber should not hinder fast movement of timber products for relief operations.

Construction

Maintenance

- Households should be trained on the need for regular maintenance of shelters and surrounding drainage before rainy season.

Hazard should be mitigated.

Shelters should be sited appropriately

Timber should be jointed well with strong joints and use of good quality of fixing materials

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Organisation	First Name	Last Name	Functional Title	Phone	Email
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Annex A. Participants List

Mondial Health Foundation	Jahangir	Hossain	ED	01715016072	Mondial_hf_Nal_@yahoo.com
Palli Unnayan Samite PUS	Sahanaz	Akter	Coordinator	01718503005	
Karma Kandro	Md. Mizan	Sahal	PO	01711953166	
Palli Unnayan Samite PUS	Jobeda	Begum	ED	01718503005	
AUS	Md.	Aziz	Coordinator	01711368002	
JKA	Md.	Kamal	ED	1725441040	

The Human Development Society (HDS)	MD.	Sirajul Islam	ED	01915053859	
Metati Seba Porishad	Md.	Ismail Hossain	ED	01913755580	
CYDO, Rajapur	Syed Hossain	Ahmed	Vice-Chairman	01818411407	
ISSRAB	Faridul	Hoque	ED	01721367369	
GDAPS	Shafiqul	Alam	ED	01724218310	
Protibandhi Unnan Shangtha	Shaheen	Alam	ED	01710181145	
Samaj Unnan Kendro	Md.	Aminul Islam	ED	01715442225	
Napoly Engineering Ltd.	Nazrul	Islam	MD	01714094617	Napolyeng@yahoo.com
Napoly Engineering Ltd.	Abul	Kalam	Director	01199841234	Napolyeng@yahoo.com
Polli Jono Samiti	Sahanaz	Parvin	ED	01913021399	
Yes Bangladesh	Rubina	Yasmin	Coordinatoir	01712764222	Rubinayasmin@yahoo.com
VCDS	A Gaffar	Khan	ED	01711585766	
Angikar	Saima	Begum	ED	01919849105	
HDO	Adhir	Das	Adm. Coordinator	01712308122	
Barisal Mohila Kalyan Samiti	Kowsir	Parvin	Director	01717504562	crs_barisal@yahoo.com
Center for Rural Service (CRS)	Sabastine	Sonjoy	PO	01714445474	
Frture Education and Development Society	S. Mizanul	Islam	ED	01715605634	fehds@yahoo.com
DISA Bangladesh	Mostak	Ahmed	Coordinatoir	01711237723	info@mostak.com
Forest Department	Bikash	Kashyape	ACF	01711703232	
Forest Department	Enamul	Haque	DFO	01727311500	
Speed Trust Representative of Concern	Mohammad	Sohel	Program Officer(Advocacy)	01720510527	
Social Economic Development Society	Nabiur Rahaman	Talukder	ED	01711186282	
Surjaday Somaj Kollan Sangtha	Faruk	Talukder	ED	01915482261	
Sunderban Bahumukhi Grameen Unnayan Procalpo	Prosanta	Mandal	MO	01715696393	
SDP	Zahidul	Somi	Director	01721961706	
Institute for Rural Development (IRD)	Hafiz	Rahaman	Director	01711454294	
Agency for Infectious Disease Control and Preservation	Mohammad	Sulaiman	ED	01711162680	sulaiman21@gmail.com
VEDC, Barisal	Muzibur	Rahaman	Director	01711341756	
MAMDO, Barisal	Magibur	Rahaman	ED	01712764132	
Nalchity Model Society	Khalilur	Rahaman	ED	01721430714	
Save the Children-USA	Murad	Khan	Monitoring Officer-NFI	01712274885	
DU JKS	Antra	Das	ED	1735311042	
CHANCE	Monjur	Morshed Khan	ED	01712934035	chance_org@yahoo.com
DMUS, Nalchity, Jhalokathi	Aktheruzzaman		ED	01712174699	
CCEC	Mir	Kamruzzaman	PC	01724264403	ccec.bd@kamruzamman
CCEC	Md.	Ajjiz	PC	01719633372	2
BRAC	Golam	Mostafa		01711809308	
ASED	Sahidul	Islam	Program Organizer	01715635134	
BRAVE	Sukha	Ranjan	Program Officer	01720929161	
AROHI	Rasidul		Program Organizer	0172127312	
JARDI	Nazmun	Jahan	ED	01720225879	
Saint Bangladesh	Kazi	Jahangir	Chairperson	01711132358	saintbd_org@yahoo.com
Peoples Development Organization	Avijit	Sengupta	Coordinatoir	01718812922	
CCEC	Md.	Maksudur	PC	01712868004	ccec.bd@khulnabangla.net

AMUS	Md.	Nasiruddin	ED	01715040775	amusbs/bd@gmail.com
CARITAS	Rashid	Ahmed	FO	01731193415	caribsl@btb.net

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DMUS	Sadhana	Bepari	ED	01727247127	
DJKS	Enayet Hossain	Monir	ED	01715596451	
IVCN	Amin	Rakibul	Program Coordinator	01713034854	
Forest Department	Nirmal	Paul	ACF	01712744223	paulnirmal bgd@hotmail.com
SCOPE	Sarmin	Sumi	PO	01710238761	
GDS	Sobnam	Mustary	Program Director	01718560401	gdsbsl@yahoo.com
RAHC	Muzibur	Rahaman Khan	ED	01718560401	
BVDC	Nazrul	Islam	Coordinatoir	01712105101	
BSUS	AYUB Ali	Mridha	ED	01726599631	
SWADESH	Monir	MR	ED	01715024953	
RDO	Parvez		PC	01718503230	
British Res Cross	Mike	Whittle	Delegate Shelter	0173176910	Mwhittle@dodo.com.au
IFRC	Nick	Murdoch	Logistic Coordinator	01714094944	nick.murdoch@ifrc.org
British Res Cross	Rosy		Shelter	01917561538	
World Food Program	Aker	Hussain	Logistic Officer	01711892229	aker.Husain@wfp.org
CARE Bangladesh	Mizanur Mirdha	A	Infrastructure officer	01711109606	care_srt_bag@yahoo.com
HATIL Complex Ltd.	Bihash	Basu	Consultant for Plywood Making	01713486794	hatil@bdcom.com
ORDP	Md. Zakir Hossain	Pannu	ED	01819677757	
Jalal Furniture Co.	Ziaur	Rahaman	Asst-Manager (Factory)	01718165779	Zia@JFCIbd.com
Sun-Aid	Sabuj	Khan	PO	01915265726	
REDO	Shohidul	Islam	ED	01718272493	
PHEISA-Jhalakati	Noor	Mohammad	Chairman	01712794712	pheisa_jktbd@yahoo.com
Winrock International	Jahangir	Hossain	Team Leader	01713006656	jhussain@winrockbd.org
Eli Furniture	Md.	Babul	Carpenter	01734638190	
Samajik Unnayan Sangstha	Mujibur Rahaman	Sikder		01712557833	
AMUSH	Masum Hanif	Haider	Chairman	01712117723	
PRIME	Ahsan	Murad Chowdhury	ED	01712757946	primebslbd@gmail.com
Social Development Society	Nirmal	Das	ED	01711459235	sds_86@btb.net.bd
Palli Punarbashan Sangstha	Nurul Islam	Manik	ED	01712225667	
DESC	Afroje Sanu	Forhad	Derector	01917532311	
Chandrodip Development Society	Md. Moniruzamman		Program Associate	01711787022	CDS_BSL@yahoo.com
Sumaia Furniture	Md. Mosharaf		Carpenter	01734638190	
	Ashok Nath			01714220202	

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Annex B. Organizing Team

Organisation	First Name	Last Name	Functional Title	Phone	Email
Humanitarian Timber	Joseph	Ashmore	Facilitator	+44 (0)7813672060	contact@humanitarian timber.org

Shelter Coordination Group	Gregg	McDonald	Coordinator	01731676905	scg.coord@gmail.com
Shelter Coordination Group	Dave	Hodgkin	Field Coordinator	01731676904	dave.hodgkin@gmail.com
Shelter Coordination Group	Mujahidurc	Rahman (Emon)	Field Assistant	01711829776	emon191@gmail.com
Shelter Coordination Group	Sharmin	Shafique	Administrative Assistant	01818725444	tushi.shafique@gmail.com
Oxfam	Rumana	Kabir	Shelter Coordinator	01730022322	rkabir@oxfam.org.uk
Oxfam	Ajit	Roy	Community Facilitator Trainer		
Shelter Coordination Group	Michael	Macleod	International Volunteer	01732202253	macleod.michael@gmail.com
Shelter Coordination Group	Ixone	Altube	International Volunteer	01732202253	altube.ixone@gmail.com

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Annex C. Registry of Interest -Timber Technical Working Group

Organisation	First Name	Last Name	Functional Title	Phone	Email
Winrock International	Jahangir	Hossain	Team Leader	01713006656	jhussain@winrockbd.org
Agency for Infectious Disease Control and Preservation	Mohammad	Sulaiman	ED	01711162680	sulaiman21@gmail.com
Forest Department	Nirmal	Paul	ACF	01712744223	paulnirmalbgd@hotmail.com
Speed Trust Representative of Concern	Mohammad	Sohel	Program Officer(Advocacy)	01720510527	
DJKS	Enayet Hossain	Monir	ED	01715596451	
	kazi	Enajet Hossain		01711047113	
Yes Bangladesh	Rubina	Yasmin	Coordinatoir	01712764222	Rubinayasmin@yahoo.com
Angikar	Saima	Begum	ED	01919849105	
DISA Bangladesh	Mostak	Ahmed	Coordinatoir	01711237723	info@mostak.com
FEHDS	S. Mizanul	Islam	ED	01715605634	fehds@yahoo.com
RAHC	Muzibur	Rahman	ED	01710858211	
ORDP	Md.	Zakir Hossain Pannu	ED	01819677757	
CARE Bangladesh	Mizanur Mirdha	A	Infrastructure officer	01711109606	care_srt_bag@yahoo.com
AROHI	Md.	Rashidu	Islan	01712127312	

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Annex D. Guidance to Timber Technical Working Group - Summary of Recommendation s Matrix

KEY QUESTIONS	ISSUES	EXPERTISE REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATIONS -general -specific to agencies with national level programs -specific to agencies with district level programs -specific to agencies with local/upa-zila level programs

should I use timber?	cost efficiency lead time workability training lifespan impact	construction logistics industry environmental	<i>example: -compare suitability of timber against other available building products -note where timber is only considered suitable for specific components of shelters</i>
what timber should I use?	cost efficiency lead time workability training lifespan impact	construction industry govt/legal research environmental	<i>example: -suggest suitable species available on: - international market (large scale procurement) - national market (medium to large scale procurement) - local market (small-medium scale procurement) -suggest species suitable for specific components of shelters</i>
where should I get my timber from?	regulations policies cost lead times product range supply quantities, social benefit fallen timber impact	logistics industry govt/legal environmental	<i>example: -summarise relevant government regulations -note any certification or markings on timber or any other required proof of chain of custody -suggest suitable timber sources for: - large scale procurement (international/national) - medium scale procurement (national) - small scale procurement (district/local)</i>
how should my timber be stored & transported?	regulations policies load restrictions cost speed impact	logistics industry govt/legal	<i>example: -summarise necessary arrangements with Forestry Department to transport timber within Bangladesh -note any restrictions, cost, certification etc</i>
how do I make best use of my timber?	cost efficiency lead time workability training lifespan impact	construction logistics research	<i>example: -suggest construction/jointing methods (or references to existing books, guidelines or other documents) -suggest appropriate seasoning or treatment processes -create working with green timber guidelines</i>

Annex E. Workshop – Photographic Record





