

Peer review minutes

First peer review of the guide on timber in humanitarian response

Date: 29 November 2007

Time: 9:00 – 12:30

Inna Garuda Hotel: Yogyakarta, Indonesia

This first timber peer review was followed by a smaller group discussion on options to develop tools, training and guidelines on bamboo.

Participants:

Naomi Ambarita (IFRC Yogyakarta),
Michael Annear (IFRC Bangkok),
Joseph Ashmore (UN/OCHA Consultant),
Carpataux Berjawin (IOM),
Mikael Adri Budis (IFRC Yogyakarta),
Gian-Reto Capaul (Caritas Switzerland),
Francisco de Carvalho (E. Timor Red Cross),
Sebastian Fesneau (Oxfam),
Nana Fitriana Firman (WWF Indonesia),
Adjie Fachurrazi (Care),
Trinic Bilu Hang (VNRC),
Dave Hodgkin (Independent),
Warwick Inder (IFRC Timor Lest),
Raju Kuppuswamy (IOM),
Afiwan Kunaphinun (IFRC),
Tia Kurmiawan (PMI),

Sandro Kushashvili (IFRC Philippines),
John T. Mamoedi (IFRC Bangkok),
Eric Loyol Matnog (Philippine Red Cross),
Mujiburrahman Thontowi (IFRC),
Kamal Niraula (IFRC Timor Lest),
Utami Purnamasasi (PUPUK),
Nanette E. Rodrigazo (Philippine Red Cross),
Jirokhim Soleh (RC Bantul Branch),
Gede Sudiartha (RC Bali chapter),
Jatmika Adi Suryaerata
(dept. Architecture and Planning UGM),
Corinne Treherne (IFRC-Indonesia),
Imam Triyanto (PMI Central Java),
Miguel Urquia (IFRC),
Joko Yuliantoro (PMI),

Agenda

First humanitarian timber peer review

09:00 Welcome, introduction and project overview (Joseph Ashmore)
09:30 Presentation – IFRC - East Timor (Warwick Inder)
10:00 Breakout groups
 Planning (group 1); Use (group 2) Specification (group 3)
10:45 *Coffee*
11:15 Presentation - Philippines
11:45 Break out groups - feedback
12:30 *Lunch*
13:30 Bamboo discussion
15:30 *Close*

Documents distributed for discussion – available from www.humanitarian timber.org

- Project outline
- Revised table of contents
- Timber scoping study
- Decision making diagrams
- Some copies of plastic sheeting guidelines (downloadable from www.plastic-sheeting.org)

Key points

- Permanent housing as well as emergency and transitional shelter should be included.
- Coconut timber should be specifically included
- Bamboo should be included but in limited detail (i.e. not joints and fixings), as this booklet is a good chance to raise the profile of bamboo.
- Plywood and other types of wood based board should be included
- There should be more emphasis on maintenance and treatments.
- The diagrams on choosing to use timber are too linear. They should be revised to be based on the project cycle.
- There should be a checklist at the beginning of every section
- A CD of further reading should be included at the back of the book
- Ways of including or linking to lists of suppliers should be considered. These would help procurement staff start procurement processes rapidly.
- Interest in the idea of an online forum discussion was limited.

Minutes

Peer review introduction

This meeting is the first peer review for the guide on the use and the specification of timber in humanitarian response. Although UN/OHCA, IFRC and CARE International are taking a lead in the project, it is intended to be for the benefit of the whole humanitarian community and should be seen as a “no logo” product. The more individuals and organisations that participate in the creation of the guide, the more it will reflect best practice. The objective is for it to contain practical information and tools to help organisations to effectively deliver assistance.

Project history

This project build on NRC internal timber guidelines (2006) and the scoping study (UN/OCHA in Feb 2007). The project will lead to the delivery of a freely available booklet. This will be available free of charge, both in hard and soft copy.

Case Study - East Timor – Procurement of Timber

- For a project in East Timor building 200 houses it has proven difficult to gain access to legal timber. There have been significant issues in the purchasing of timber.
- There is no standard measurement of timber in the project area.
- The selected supplier stated that they had been registered by the government, and contracts were signed with the expectation that there will be a certificate from the government. Delay in certificates being provided lead to cutting the timber supply for the shelter program. To date documents for the legal status of the timber have not been produced. No officials appear to want to take responsibility for signing the certificates of legality for the timber.
- Non-certificated timber is commonly available and is used in the majority of construction in East Timor. However international organisations cannot risk using illegal timber.
- Illegal timber in East Timor is a big issue. The programme team is seriously considering importing the timber from Indonesia just to have access to legal timber.
- To ensure the legality of the timber, it was ensured that that the timber harvesting is using selected logging not clear cutting. Unfortunately, it appears that the clear cutting activities continued in the community regardless to the environmental damages that can occur.
- The challenges and delays of obtaining legal timber lead to the population demanding the purchase of illegal timber so there will be an availability of timber in the community.

In the guidelines it is prioritized that timber must be legal. Ideally it should be sustainable but this may not always be possible.

Bamboo does not generally have issues of legality, but harvesting must be done with care to maximise sustainability.

Case Study - Philippines – mixed materials

- The Shelter Program in the Philippines targeted 12000 families using locally available coco (coconut) lumber
- The key issues faced are:
 1. Quantity and availability of suppliers/ resources
 2. Quality Issues
 3. Legal Issues – certificates cut and transportation timber, conditions
- The scale and challenges in the procurement of timber was not foreseen at the start of the project.
- There are over 20 suppliers but they all get their lumber from the same source. This creates price fluctuation and leads to challenges if you need to supply rapidly.
- Suppliers always say they have the materials whether they have them or not. Small suppliers have no idea to handle large quantities. So regular checking and validation is required.
- The supply of the bamboo is also a problem due to limited sources.
- Due to supply issues, the posts are made but the walls are not there.
- Due to materials issues a combination of materials was adopted – including coconut, plywood and woven bamboo sheeting.
- Procurement of bamboo sheets was community based – the local community made the sheets. A standard procurement system was set up. The community organisations supply 2/3 of the of the bamboo sheet. In this way one million sheets were procured.
- An external consultant investigated the locally acceptable traditional of local construction. In rural areas Bamboo is accepted. In the urban societies it is seen as more of a poor man’s material and is less accepted.

The Planning Process

The **drafted diagrams are too linear**. In reality the decision making process is more circular involving ongoing dialogue between programme logistics design and procurement staff.

Diagram 1) – Deciding to construct with timber or bamboo products

- It was questioned about whether the issue of “Is the project necessary?” should be included. In discussion it appeared that such questions are valid but more clarification is required.
- Questions such as “who should take part in the construction / procurement” or “can timber be reclaimed?” should be the start of the planning process.
- There could be a matrix of the advantages and disadvantages of using timber / or alternatives to timber.
- Diagrams must note that changes to the design will impact on the procurement and vice versa – a cycle of discussions between all team members and communities should take place.
- Communities must be informed of procurement progress and expected timeframes.

Diagram 2) – Deciding where to source timber

- The diagram should be consistent – does it contain both timber or timber and bamboo.
- The decision on whether to go with a local supplier and international supplier should be at the start
- You have to look at the market to what is available.
- Each step is independent – so does not fit into a flow chart such as this.
- Distinctions should be made between local supplier or the community, and national suppliers and the government
- Procurement methods should be included taking care not to supersede existing internal guidelines.
- Links with procurement and livelihoods programmes should be included.
- Transport is not included.

Use

- The gap between the design and procurement needs better integration
- Procurement is now dropped as a major heading (to avoid confusion with existing internal guidance that organisations have for their own procurement processes) – should it still be a priority heading?
- Need more advice for substituting materials and advice on alternative materials
- Resource availability should be mapped (if possible!)
- The issues of size and design. Usually it is a one size of shelter fits all - but is this the best approach?
- The flow diagram must refer and go back to the community. Does it fit the needs of the community? This needs to be cross checked.
- The chapter should refer to minimum existing/standard for temporary shelter, privacy issues, access to Watsan, and government regulations.
- How adaptable is the structure? How flexible is it? Are these factors being considered in the shelter construction?
- In the second box the constructions of the shelter should be more logical (foundations, walls, beam).
- Is the construction suitable? What about the life span and pest resistant? – durability issues is of importance
- There should be a separate line for disaster preparedness on future threat and risk.
- The question “Is the timber appropriate for certain construction purposes?” should be asked.
- There is a vast array of species of timber which require different understanding. As an example, there are 25 species of Meranti.
- There should be discussion of the practical needs for speed of production vs. traditional cultural design.
- We need to improve the reference materials
- The importance of building **prototype shelters** should be stressed – as part of a consultation process and to finalise BOQs (Bills of Quantity).
- Should look at practical tool kit type items such as visual grading guide for the community or the warehouse.

Specification

- The guidelines should cover permanent shelter and not just emergency and translational shelter
- Issues related to preparedness – area prone to emergency
- Reference should be made to eco-labelling – national programmes to help identify sustainable timber sources.
- Different certification in the international level and also the national level certification

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- More speciation and verify treatment example timber from England, every batch is different countries
- Legality of treatment bearing in mind what people to. Timber treatment that becomes toxic when in fire.
- Design must be in the dimension of the timber,
- There should be more on quality control and grading.
- More emphasis should be put on coconut:
 - Coconut is cheap, and easy to use. There may be some social acceptance issues in some locations.
 - Specifying it would be different
- Plywood and various boards should be included
 - Generally there are no problems with legality but there are often issues with sustainability
- Efficient use of trees – with some trees (e.g. coconut) you can use everything, whilst with other trees branches and leaves may be left or abandoned
- Life cycle analysis was discussed briefly; comparing the relative impacts of bricks steel and timber (including fuel used in smelting etc.)
- The current specification table should be replaced by a checklist.
- The issue of whether to list suppliers was raised as an issue.

The next peer review of the humanitarian timber project will be on 11 Jan 2008 in London