

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- Draft guidance on timber specific to Bangladesh on timber use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 is 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 these 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 the 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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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





