

Peer review minutes

Second peer review of the guide on timber in humanitarian response

Date: 11 January 2008

Time: 14.15-17.30

CARE International, London, UK

Participants:

Blanche Cameron, Reset:
 Dhanya Gangitano, Reset:
 Sarah Kent, Reset:
 Ian Pearce, Habitat for Humanity:
 Gordon Browne, Solent University:
 Theo Schilderman, Practical Action:
 Tim Foster, Wash Cluster consultant:
 Shaun Halbert, Independent:
 John Taylor, British Red Cross:
 John Kirkby, TRADA:
 Jason Garrett, Word Vision:
 Michael Lyons, London South-Bank University:
 Jennifer Swan, CARE International:

Elizabeth Babister, CARE International:
 Graham Saunders, IFRC:
 Sam Woodbridge, A4A:
 Beth Davies, Buro Happold:
 Stefanie van den Brandt, A4A:
 Mossaraf Harrim, Muslim Aid:
 Matti Kuittien, Kombi, Finland:
 Antonella Vitale, Shelter Centre:
 Tom Corsellis, Shelter Centre:
 Rick Bauer, Oxfam:
 Jo de Silva, Arup:
 Jon Fowler, (facilitator):
 Joseph Ashmore, (facilitator)

Agenda

Second humanitarian timber peer review lead by Jon Fowler and Joseph Ashmore

- 14.15 Welcome and introduction to the project: Lizzie Babister (CARE International) & Graham Saunders (IFRC) followed by facilitators Joseph Ashmore and Jon Fowler
- 14.20 Project overview
- 14.30 Discussion on the booklet title
- 14.30 Discussion on the idea of timber 'principles'
- 14.45 Breakout groups: 1) Planning; 2) Use; 3) Specification and logistics
- 15.40 *Coffee*
- 16:00 Report back by group and discussion
- 16.45 Tools and 'expert consultancy' wishlist
- 17.15 Summary and close
- 17:30 *Close*

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

- First Draft of Timber guide (7 January 2008)
- Timber principles as a mini, fold-up book
- Minutes from the first peer review in Indonesia (29 Nov 2007)

Key points

- The title should be simplified to 'Timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations'
- The proposed principles require significant revision
- There needs to be a better balance in the document between the sustainability of timber as a renewable construction material versus the impacts of deforestation.
- There should be more focus on design to that timber can be reused in later phases of reconstruction.
- Simple fact sheets should be included in the annexes.
- Each chapter should have a checklist containing the key points in the chapter.
- There should be improved referencing of information that is not included in this booklet.
- Some form of timeline illustration of timber procurement and use would be helpful

Title

Current title: *'Timber: a guide to the planning, use, procurement and logistics of timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations'*

The discussion focussed on ensuring that the title explained the contents of the document as well as being simple and clear. There was also discussion over individual words in the title.

- "handbook" was not popular as it indicated a book than a booklet.
- "Timber" does not encompass bamboo, and wood derivatives included in the booklet.
- "Wood" may lead to confusion as to whether firewood is included.

It was also agreed that this is a **"guide" and not a "guideline"**. The word Guideline implies rules for organisations to stick to when they already have enough to do.

Revised title: *'Timber as a construction material in humanitarian operations'*.

Other options discussed: 'A guide to timber in humanitarian operations', 'Timber handbook for humanitarian operations'.

5 principles for the use and purchasing of timber-

Proposed principles from draft 1.0 under discussion

- 1) Consider alternative materials to new timber.
- 2) Use timber efficiently.
- 3) Timber should be legal and sustainable.
- 4) Keeping timber dry.
- 5) Use safe treatments.

The proposed principles need to be revised. They should include the following points:

- Timber from emergency /transitional shelters can be re-used in permanent reconstruction. There could be a principle regarding reuse of timber at different phases of reconstruction.
- There should be a note that that timber is a valuable commodity and economic resource.
- Principle 1) needs to be re-written. Wood is a renewable construction material and works as a carbon sink. This needs to be balanced against deforestation etc.
- The first three principles should to be broadened. Should other materials be considered?
- The fifth draft principle needs work. Care is required when recycling or burning treated timber.
- The first three draft principles are very general, the last two are overly specific.

It was suggested that the principles should include; community involvement, accessibility and the relative safety of timber in seismic areas.

Booklet overall

- There should be more clarification on audience and scope (is it going to be used by project managers or by people who want to build with timber?)
- The point should be made that timber is more complex a material than it may seem initially.
- There should be a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of using timber.
- There is currently no mention of climate in the booklet.
- Right at the beginning of the doc p 6- has some designs of kinds of buildings. The booklet could use these to restrict it to simple 'small building' construction designs
- There should be a lot more focus on fixings and jointing - Front cover could be hammer and nail.
- The issue of how much technical detail should there be in this book was discussed. It is not a construction manual. However, some pull out sections (or annexes) could be added which go into much more detail on specific issues, such as timber properties or particular species of trees.
- There could be a section on risk - earthquake, flood, fire etc- what you can do to mitigate risk when using timber.

Chapter A - Planning

- Assessment questions should include how timber fits in with the local construction industry, culture and environment.
- P12-13 Thinking before you buy and build. The stages of the design process and stages of project cycle could be compared in two parallel boxes, instead of the architectural and technical explanation that is currently illustrated using familiar language of the humanitarian project cycle
- Section A.1.2, should come before A.1.1. 'Is the project necessary' should be clarified.
- There should be the question 'why use timber?', to include positives, negatives and context.
- Project feasibility. Something should be said about what you should do if the timber is not up to specification. Is using recycled stuff safe to use? What guidance can be given on using poor quality timber which is common practice?
- An illustration of project timelines and how timber fits in would be useful.
- A.2. the illustration is not a decision making diagram and should be altered.
- A.2.2. there should be a drawing of a building to illustrate the alternative material options.
- A.3. The time implications of legal/ sustainable timber in terms of costs and delays should be clearly noted. Options for sustainable timber should be thoroughly explored locally.
- A.4 Construction projects. This section is very general and vague and is not specific to timber. It could be renamed monitoring construction projects.
- A.4 Who's involved in monitoring? This is oversimplified. Everyone should be involved in monitoring and evaluation.

Chapter B - Use

- The use section should be better integrated with the processes in the planning section
- Shift focus to how to support beneficiaries in reconstructions rather than how to directly implement
- There was a suggestion that this section should restrict 'use' to small buildings.
- The use section should be looking at standardised elements rather than standardised buildings
- P24 diagrams of ways buildings collapse- should be more details and explanation.
- There should be a lot more focus on fixings
- Section B.3 (reduced timber construction) should state that timber (can be) a sustainable material.
- Although this is not a construction manual there was agreement that there should be more illustrations of the jointing details, such as metal straps and hurricane resistant details
- Advice for using poor quality timber, or salvaged timber. How does salvage timber perform and what can you do if you receive poor quality timber?

Section C - Specification

The specification needs some simplification and clarification so that those who are not aware of the details of timber specification can read it more easily.

- There should be clearer separation of international specification and local procurement. A case –study of how to solve problems in local procurement might be useful.
- Checking what you have procured can be challenging – it is not usually possible to send back containers of wood once they have arrived. Maybe some advice on dealing with lower quality shipments would be useful.
- It would be useful to state which wood should be used for which purpose. (simplify description of hazard classes)
- Different specifications may be required for different kinds of timbers, such as salvaged and recycled wood.
- Specification needs to cover what the timber will be used for as requirements are very different depending on whether it is for structural or non-structural use
- There could be more information on negotiation with suppliers.

annex i - Tools

- Additional detail should be added as annexes or kept as a pull out.
- Checklists would be useful but should be associated with each chapter.
- Further additions should include bamboo, boards and coconut lumber (agreed from Indonesia peer review), more detail on properties of timber and types of timber.

The next peer review of the humanitarian timber project will most likely be April 2008, in North America or East Africa. Venue to be decided.