

Peer review minutes

Fourth peer review of the guide on timber in humanitarian response

Date: 21 May 2008

Time: 09.00-13.30

Hosted by USAID, Habitat for Humanity InterAction, Washington DC, USA

Participants:

Charles Setchell, USAID
Erin Patrick, Women's commission
Travis Betz, American Red Cross
Eddie Argeñal, CHF international
Linda Poteat, InterAction
Leah Berry, InterAction
Tim Resch, USAID / AFR

Brett Burkhart, World Shelters
Kevin Choo, Food for the Hungry
Bruce Keleman, USFS / IP
Veronica Taylor, Habitat for Humanity
Jane Katz, Habitat for Humanity
Kris Wansadipurra, Habitat for Humanity
Joseph Ashmore, (facilitator)

Agenda

Third humanitarian timber peer review lead by Jon Fowler

09.00 Welcome and introduction – Charles Setchell USAID
09.30 Case study – Eddie Argenal, CHF
09.45 Discussion of the timber principles
10.30 *Coffee*
10.45 Breakout groups: 1) Planning; 2) Specification and logistics
12.30 Summary and close

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

- Third Draft of Timber guide (April 2008)

Key points

- The cover of the booklet should be green in colour to emphasise environmental issues
- The booklet started as a timber guideline but has increased its scope to include associated shelter, livelihoods, protection and environmental issues in humanitarian response. This is a positive change.
- The booklet should include or reference a market analysis tool to assess the country's capacity for supplying construction materials.
- The booklet currently has more focus on non-displaced populations following sudden onset disasters than on conflict displaced populations. There should be more reference to host populations
- There should be fuller mention of fire risk.
- Impacts include economic, social and protection in addition to environmental (one of the peer review attendees volunteered to draft bullet points on protection in relation to timber.)
- There is some confusion as to the scoping study and the current draft – the scoping study should be removed from online resources.
- There was discussion on beneficiary level guidance. It was agreed that this should not be included with the booklet – instead existing guidance / handouts should be linked on the website.
- There were suggestions that a memory stick containing key the final document and associated publications could help raise the profile of the document
- There was a request that any digital versions of the final document would link in the text to sample documents.

5 principles for the use and purchasing of timber

Suggestions were made for revision of the 5 principles for the use and purchasing of timber that appear at the beginning of the book.

General comments:

- Principles should be **based on sphere** and explicitly recognise it.
- Wording should reduce redundancy.
- Principles should reflect issues facing displaced and host populations as well as those affected by sudden onset disasters.
- Standardisation of shelter design (whether required or not) is part of “think before you build” and forming a strategy.

Specific comments:

- Wording - Is “salvaged” or “reused” more internationally recognised?
- Building codes of many countries are beyond the capacities of people to build, and can prohibit emergency structures.
- Principle 2 can in part be achieved by agreeing Bills of Quantity before programme implementation

General comments

There was a presentation on a shelter programme in Peru, following the 2007 earthquake. It highlighted the following issues that faced during a post earthquake transitional shelter construction programme, using local shelter designs using round poles and woven mats.

- There was a lack of government regulation and enforcement regarding timber harvesting.
- There was a local shortage of timber and woven mats. Both before and after the earthquake they had to be brought in from other parts of the country.
- People were reluctant to use or cut salvaged timber for transitional shelters as they wanted to keep it for permanent reconstruction.
- Costs of timber tripled in the first month. Local procurement became very difficult after the first two weeks of the earthquake, due to a combination of local demands and the purchasing of international organisations.
- Shelters were designed to reduce the amount of timber required.
- The emergency pressures of response made it difficult to monitor quality of timber before delivery.
- There was a request for a market analysis tool.
- A lack of timber availability locally before the earthquake contributed to a change of building techniques which increased seismic vulnerability.
- Buildings were self build – the guidelines should emphasise self build.

Breakout group feedback

Section	Page	Comment
Section A – planning		
A.1	12	Illustration – arrows should be circular not round. Also one arrow points in wrong direction
A.1	12	Illustration - add monitoring to evaluation
A.1	12	Add debris removal and salvage to illustration?
A.1	12	More emphasis on logistics in the planning and design process – make talk to logisticians bold?
A.1	12	Is this the best illustration / flow chart?
A.2.1	13	Add - Phasing of temporary to transitional to permanent?
A.2.2	14	Impacts: must match principles: economic / environmental / protection. Volunteered inputs from Erin Patrick.
A.2.2	14	Reword “do not distribute emergency shelter materials...without considering what will be used for frames.”
A.2.4	15	“Stop” – what other options are there?
A.3.1	15	Check language / translations – salvage / re-use / reclaim
A.3.2	17	Environmental impacts / vs. impacts – consistency with principles
A.4.2	19	Bullet point 3 – improve language..
A.4.2	19	“Organisation constructs” – note that often volunteers are responsible for implementing or monitoring construction projects.
A.4.2	19	Monitoring – reference C.2. also add advice on how to monitor
A5	20	“If in doubt get advice” add- “from technical advisors”
A6	22	Point 3 “set-up” use better language
A6	22	Add land ownership check point
A6	22	Impacts: Add economic and protection questions for consistency
A.6.2	23	Stability – bullet 2 – add the word “risks”
A.6.2	23	Monitoring and evaluation checklist?
A6	22	Add sphere to check lists – or relevant standards in annex?
Section C – specification		
general		The introductory section does not flow and finding information is a little confusing. Add a clear diagram to help navigation within the chapter.
General		Include reference providing advice on how to harvest your own timber
General		Include integration of bamboo palm and composites.
General		The depth of information is good but requires improved illustration and navigation
C.1	36	Re work this section to improve logical flow. E.g. Paragraph 1 should lead into the

		illustration
C.1	36	Weighing scales Illustration is incomplete – should include issues such as long term relationships with vendors and national international advantages / disadvantages for consistency...
C.1	36	Missing word – share in last paragraph
C.1	36	There could be a diagram with handcuffs / impacts of deforestation to show impacts of not buying legally or sustainably.
C.2.1	37	Move Cites web reference to end of paragraph
C.2.1	37	Ownership – include “seek out authorities for advice”
C.2.2	38	Include bamboo and bus poles in this diagram.
C.2.2	38	Last box – text ambiguous
C.2.2	38	What to do if there is no way of verifying
C.2.3	39	Highlight which classification systems are recognised/ free from corruption.
C.2.7	41	Highlight risks of playing into hands of most powerful people.
C.2.7	43	Add check boxes to checklists.
C.2.8	43	Link to sample documents where available in digital versions
C3	44	Consider illustrations for hazard class table
C.4.3	50	Illustrations are good
C.5	55	Wastage – which factors are included in this? Not theft?
Section D – logistics		
		More on how people themselves store timber and distinction between national and local / on site warehousing
D	59	Rename Reception to delivery
D	60	Reference to permits for transportation
D.3.2	64	By boat – clarify difference between national (poor access / road transport) with international shipping
Section D – logistics		
		Add relevant sphere standards as annex
ii.2	70	To avoid changing external links. Consider storing documents at www.humanitarintimber.org and linking them rather than external sites.

Annex – Revised timber principles

Timber principles have been modified based on the feedback from this peer review:

Principles for the use and purchasing of timber

1) Think before you build

OLD:

All construction projects must be part of a wider strategy which takes into account the broader social, economic and political factors such as patterns of settlement; land ownership; maintenance costs and responsibilities; in-country laws and regulations and planned timeframes. (See section A)

NEW:

All construction projects must be part of a strategy which takes into account the social, economic and political factors such as patterns of settlement; land ownership; maintenance costs and responsibilities; laws and regulations; the host community; timeframes; and environmental issues. (See section A)

2) Choose appropriate materials

OLD:

Compare the environmental and economic impacts of using timber with other construction materials. Use materials that can be supplied in sufficient quantity without compromising future environmental sustainability. (See section A).

NEW:

Compare the environmental, economic and protection issues of using timber with other construction materials. Select materials that can be supplied in quantity without compromising sustainability for beneficiaries and hosts. (See section A).

3) Recycle timber wherever possible

OLD:

Investigate all possible sources for timber including timber that can be salvaged or reused. Such timber must be checked for structural safety and for ownership. (See section A).

NEW:

Re-title 3) Recycle wherever possible

Investigate all possible sources for timber including timber that can be salvaged. Such timber must be checked for structural safety and for ownership. (See section A).

4) Buy timber from legal, and ideally, sustainable sources

OLD:

In the absence of reliable verification systems, humanitarian agencies should demonstrate due diligence in attempting to ensure timber is from a well-managed source. Agencies must always follow the law of the country of operation and never purchase illegal timber. (See section C).

NEW:

Re-title: Buy from legal, and ideally, sustainable sources

Content unchanged

5) Design and build using timber appropriately and efficiently

OLD:

Design should be familiar and acceptable to those using the construction and it should be possible to repair the construction locally (in terms of both materials and skills). Technical support training is one way of ensuring appropriate skills are available.

Always design for safety first (following in-country building regulations), then consider reduced timber construction methods; re-usability of timber components; and adaptation of the building by those using it.

Design to preserve timber by the best method – keeping it dry. Ensure all fixings and treatments are safe.

NEW:

Re-title 5) Design and build appropriately and efficiently

Recognising Sphere standards, guidance notes and indicators, design should be specific to the context and based in consultation. It should be possible to repair and upgrade constructions using locally available skills and materials.

Design for safety first, then consider reduced timber construction methods; re-usability of timber components; and adaptation of the building by those using it.

Design to preserve timber by the best method – keeping it dry. Ensure all fixings and treatments are safe.