

CONCLUSION

Housing & Hazards and the workshop process: Realising potential

The first H&H pilot study sought to initiate a *'process'* of growing attention to self-help improved housing within the community. Having revisited that aim during the second evaluation study, it can now be seen that the sustaining of this process will require more than just the initial workshops. The following auxiliary inputs need to be considered :

- Specific types of assistance with materials, closely associated with the workshop technologies;
- Field workers to facilitate the workshops and maintain subsequent momentum;

Together with this, careful preliminary negotiations should be conducted with the community concerned, to:

- establish programme objectives;
- develop understanding of the social, economic and materials constraints prevalent in that community;
- arrive at a mutually agreed plan of action in which the motivators work alongside community based organisations to bring about reductions in hazard vulnerability.

incorporation of these additional measures will require coordination, the training of staff and the creation of administrative structures if the workshop process is to be replicated widely. In return, the process gives a unique close acquaintance with vulnerable communities and a valuable action-research opportunity. The workshops provide the opportunity to draw on information about local situations in terms of community experience of hazards, vernacular housing, building methodologies and local constraints on good building practice. These data are needed by organisations interested in addressing vulnerability reduction and will also be vital in directing the research and development being conducted by the link between BUET and H&H at the University of Exeter.

With such support, a community-driven approach can begin to empower communities to overcome the difficulties which impede self-help housing action. It also has the potential to make significant contributions to the strategies of development organisations working towards a Bangladesh less vulnerable to the effects of hazards.

Fig. 14
Getting results:
A meeting room for a women's group has been built by one of its members - an H&H participant - who has put H&H workshop ideas into practice.



Further work towards realising potential

This report has proposed several recommendations for the development and support of the H&H workshop process. It has identified that administrative and field work structures and resources will be required in order to implement these suggestions. The field- and management-costs of this require evaluation and funding and partnership opportunities will need to be explored. Initial groundwork for providing an organisational route into beneficiary communities has been done in setting up a triangular partnership between H&H, BUET and Grameen Trust. Means for setting up a programme management office are being investigated and would ideally combine with other H&H proposed work in Bangladesh.

In implementing further programmes, the recommendations for developing the workshops' format and facilitation should be considered. The detail of these recommendations is found in Appendix 6.

The development of H&H's workshop approach has been an action-research process. H&H has sought to learn as much as it has sought to convey 'building for safety' ideas. During the impact assessment, an important lesson was that whilst H&H's partner village NGO had been keen to facilitate the pilot workshops, its commitment to conduct follow up activities had evaporated. It became clear that although members of the NGO and workshop participants continued to espouse the value of a low-cost, vernacular-materials approach to hazard mitigation, another influence was ultimately more prevalent in the NGO's management outlook: Bamboo and mud may be affordable, but concrete and steel are the materials that are associated with images of progress and modernity. Consequently, given the opportunity, the NGO would prefer to make one concrete building rather than several good bamboo and mud buildings. With this being the case, a dichotomy began to emerge between those who had faith in the workshops' approach and those who could see H&H's point, but nevertheless had aspirations fixed on more sophisticated horizons.

Dealing with this dichotomy will be a key issue in taking forward H&H's approach. At heart of the problem is the conflict between popular aspirations towards building materials which are perceived as "modern", and the meagre resources available to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. The exacerbation of this problem lies in the confidence and desirability attached to modern materials by many organisations serving the public, despite the impracticability of making these materials accessible to the poor without widespread and substantial subsidy.

Until those working in promotion of hazard resistant housing can find a way to deal with this conflict, many governmental and non-governmental bodies will continue to opt to pursue housing "solutions" which may be technically sound, but are non viable in socio-economic terms. Similarly, groups such as H&H, who seek to promote safer housing using locally sourced and cheap materials, based on vernacular forms, will continue to find that their approach is unattractive to a public aspiring to modernity.

In order to explore how the work of hazard mitigation might negotiate its way through this problem, H&H has put together a proposal for analysing the issue more closely. A summary of the proposal objectives can be found below. H&H is currently exploring funding opportunities for this work, and will welcome any suggestions and support that the reader has to offer.

Proposal objectives.

The study will be the means for appraising how progress can be negotiated through the conflict described, in the interests of the poor.

To make this appraisal, a greater understanding of the issues involved, and an appreciation of the problem in its various contexts throughout the developing world is required:

- The study will primarily focus on learning about the needs, aspirations, circumstances and thought processes of the vulnerable poor. Careful study of the attitudes of organisations working with the poor, to housing, materials and symbols of progress is also called for. From this, a key result of the research will be an improved understanding of the role of public attitudes and circumstances in promoting or impeding real progress in housing initiatives.
- The study of attitudinal issues must be combined with inquiry into socio-economic and technical aspects of the problem: A review will be made of the profile of disaster risks, within countries and internationally. This will describe the varying combinations and severity of hazard types and the consequences of their superimposition upon circumstances of poverty and vulnerability. A critical appraisal of alternative approaches to hazard resistant housing will also be developed, together with discussion of the technical factors which must be considered if housing really is to offer greater protection against hazard. A combined analysis of hazard and poverty profiles together with the merits of different approaches to hazard mitigation and housing, will then produce an assessment of how an integrated and effective way forward can be found.

Based on this appraisal, the key outputs of the work will be:

- firstly, recommendations for reconciling and overcoming factors which currently impede the spread of safer housing among communities vulnerable to hazard;
- and secondly, a methodology, for working with housing programme providers to carry out local level assessments, of how hazard-resistant housing programmes can be appropriately and effectively formulated and promoted.

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