

Meeting Minutes

2nd Peer Review of Plastic Sheeting Guidelines

13th April 2007
at Oxfam House, Oxford, UK

This was the second Peer review of best practice guidelines on the procurement and use of plastic sheeting. Discussion was centred on the first draft guidelines which can be found at www.plastic-sheeting.org. It also made reference to the first meeting minutes (11 December 2006, Oxford, UK) and a summary of email comments received to date. There will be a third and final peer review meeting in Washington DC on 30th April.

Meeting Agenda

The meeting was based about group discussion on the booklet contents. In support of the meeting, there were short presentations on:

- Fixings and flooring (Deborah Hayes and Liam Fowley)
- ITPS (insecticide treated plastic sheeting) (Mark Rowland and Richard Allen)
- Parallel initiatives (tents, timber and shade nets) (Isabelle de Muyser-Boucher)
- Developing consensus guidelines in the sector (Tom Corsellis / Antonella Vitale)

Conclusions:

- Generally more cross referencing through the document and to external sources, preferably through web links given it is available electronically for free.
- The document (and the parallel booklets) will be free from multiple websites. Agreement about distribution (alongside the other booklets) should continue to be sought.
- The decision making diagram needs to include more criteria about when to use PS.
- The themes “Response should not be guided by what is in your warehouse”, and “plastic sheeting and other materials alone are not an entire shelter response” should be covered by the booklet.
- The booklet should include a 2-page photocopyable sheet on fixings / basic structures that could be understood by field staff and beneficiaries.
- The booklet should include a series of illustrations of what can be built with 4mx5m, 4mx6m and 4mx7m plastic sheets.
- To include something on insulation for cold climates.
- The section on ITPS requires revision and clarification.

In addition to the discussion on plastic sheeting guidelines, there was:

- A plea for INGOs to get more involved in the current UN Shelter Cluster given the opportunity for developing ideas for the benefit of the whole sector.
- Discussion on printing fixing, public health or fire safety messages on plastic sheet.

Participants:

Joseph Ashmore
Rick Bauer Oxfam GB
Seki Hirano
Bill Flinn
Lizzie Babister CARE
John Adlam DfID
Jacqui Gavin DfID
Isabelle de Muyser-Boucher UN/OCHA
Richard Allen Mentor Initiative
Mark Rowland LSHTM
Charlie Mason SCF
Robin Aherne

Antonella Vitale Sheltercentre
Tom Corsellis Sheltercentre
Manolo Bedran
Deborah Hayes Southampton Solent University
Liam Florey Southampton Solent University
John Howard Oxfam GB
Daudi Bikaba Oxfam GB
Andy Bastable Oxfam GB
Marion O'Reilly Oxfam GB
Christine Schmalenbach Oxfam GB
Foyeke Tolani Oxfam GB
Lucy Russell Oxfam GB

Apologies: Graham Saunders, (IFRC), Jerome Michon (MSF), Yannick Garbusinsky (MSF), Mark Breton (MSF), Jan vereerterbruggen (MSF), Barend Leeuwenburg (MSF), Rob Kissick (DfID), Mark Burgess, Jake Zarins, Matthew Burns, Mark Buttle, Tim Grimble (Merlin), Enamul Haques (Islamic Relief), WWF, World Vision, James Shepherd Barron, Neil Bauman

MINUTES – 2nd Plastic sheeting Peer review, Oxford

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General points:

1. It was agreed that the booklet should be re-titled to:

'Plastic Sheeting: A guide to the specification and use of plastic sheeting in humanitarian relief'. The title would not contain the word "procurement" to avoid confusion with internal procurement guidelines that organisations might have.

2. The referencing of external sources should be improved. (including electronic links) and sphere.

3. There are now four parallel initiatives/booklets:

- Tents (2004, blue, produced by UN OCHA),
- Shade nets (2006, orange, produced by MSF and Sheltercentre),
- Plastic Sheeting (2007, pink, produced by Oxfam and IFRC, draft) and
- Timber (planned for 2007, green/brown, scoping study funded by UN/OCHA. First run printed by Oxfam).

All are currently free of charge in hard copy and freely available for download from various websites. The meeting discussed the usefulness of putting them into one guide but felt the logistics of doing so were too time consuming. It was agreed they should be available on as many websites as possible (such as shelterlibrary.org) and cross referenced. It was also felt that any print run should be as large as possible, Oxfam GB were interested in publishing and distributing, UN/OCHA could print them but only if they have the UN logo on the front (one suggestion was to have the UN logo and 'interagency publication' like the forthcoming Excreta booklet). Translation options will be explored between UN/OCHA/Oxfam and IFRC.

4 larger and more detailed illustrations are appropriate in many places. Illustrations should include details such as drainage options.

5. After discussion about the recommended size (which often depends on individual institutions' policies) it was proposed to include diagrams of what you do with ie. 5x4m (flat roof only) or 6x4m (with small gable) or 7x4m higher roof and more coverage and excess to enable rope and knot fixing as per A.5.1 which is the strongest. Many present would like to see a 7x4m minimum standard but it was accepted that we cannot impose it on individual institutions, likewise the decision to precut.

6. The booklet must improve coverage of phasing of response – is plastic sheeting still required after 2 years?

7. Options of printing fixing information printed on the PS itself were discussed. Other suggestions for printing on the PS included Hygiene Promotion messages (depending on the pictures used), Fire Safety, or initial handling advice for ITPS. At present the only thing printed on PS is the manufacturer's code, date of production and the 1 m mark. Some agencies include logos.

A1 Planning – think before you build & A2 - Alternatives

There was a proposal to include an addition prior to p9 along the lines: 'If you only have plastic sheeting and tents in your warehouse, do not let it drive your response.'

There was a suggestion that the alternatives to plastic sheeting may be put first or somehow included in the p.9 decision-making diagram.

As part of the decision-making it was suggested to include a table comparing weight/volume/cost of plastic sheeting, PS kits and tents (this came out of a discussion from Pakistan that carrying a 10 kg PS kit would be easier and possibly more useful re repairs than a 85kg tent).

To assist the decision-making process it was suggested to include the changing uses of standard plastic sheeting (and to define 'standard' ie 200gsm, woven or braided, 4m wide).

To try and include criteria for deciding whether PS (or indeed ITPS) is the most appropriate response. Factors such as length of proposed use, cost, climate, beneficiaries location/mobility, (eg. for ITPS whether families are in close proximity or dispersed/isolated – cf. p.32 A.8), and cultural fit (ie familiarity and whether beneficiaries would actually use it or could be persuaded to use it).

p.11 Questions to ask when planning to use plastic sheeting - There was a suggestion to replace the figures asking questions with a pathway type diagram. This might work better visually.

A3 Logistics & A4 Using plastic sheeting

The title for Section A3 should be changed to Logistics and Distribution.

Rope is safer than nails to transport if using helicopters. Ensure that nails are packaged well.

A.3.1 Adding an alternatives table (ie. sea delivery) and cross reference to p.43 or add that part to this. China - Indonesia is around 18 days and China - East Africa is around 25 days

p.17 Distribution with NFIs, cross reference to p.18 shelter repair kits as another NFI

A.4.1 The shelter kits should have pictures, and clarify which is procured nationally and internationally. Axes should not be included, and quality of tools is important.

The section could be expanded to include a box on climate rather than just the sentence at the bottom of p.19.

A.4.3 Infrastructure and other uses should include rainwater collection and how to proceed.

The information on shade net repeats information on B.2.5 p.45 and the shade net booklet.

p. 21 The picture at the bottom of the latrine slab should be deleted. It is only used for latrine slabs where there is nothing else. Replace it with plastic sheeting on top of latrine slabs for simple latrines.

p.22 The picture of the shed is also wrong, take it out and simply refer to MSF (with a web link?). The point being, if you can find a team of carpenters they will know how to build an appropriate shed.

A5 Fixing plastic sheeting & A6 Climate

Although the booklet is not intended for beneficiaries it could have a centrefold or back sheet which was a visual guide to alternative fixings which could be photocopyable to give to beneficiaries, especially where they are unfamiliar with PS.

A5 details to improve are the doubling over of plastic to increase strength and that bottle tops should be sharp edge outwards to avoid cutting the plastic.

There was a discussion as to whether the diagrams such as in section A4 should include 'Ikea-like' detail of the recommended fixing or not. In LF's presentation he explained that the knot in the plastic with a rope was the strongest but has implications for wind and rain (pooling in the creases) so there is a need to balance strength of fixture with the purpose when advising what fixture for what purpose.

A6 p.28 on climate and especially winterisation – perhaps include insulation advice. DH gave a presentation on the use of sand/stones, animal hair, reed matting and straw as possibilities and/or a combination of them. There was a discussion about future developments of plastic sheeting with pockets for insulation materials or double layered plastic sheeting but the depth of pocket would vary. The booklet could benefit from a web link to DH's paper and/or recommendations from the paper. Flooring should be 600-800 gsm, cross reference to B.2.6 in procurement.

Also, perhaps illustrate advice ie. cold climate repair/hot climate repair.

A8 Insecticide Treated Plastic Sheeting (ITPS)

Two presentations were made on existing and current research and experiences of ITPS. Copies that were made of the ITPS presentations can be obtained from projects@plastic-sheeting.org,

One of the major suppliers of ITPS has upgraded it's specification to be in line with those circulated at the previous meeting, with the exception of a black core. The reason for the black core is to reduce Infra-red and visible light transmission for privacy and thermal performance in hot climates. There is currently no test for light transmission by plastic sheeting.

B Section on Procurement

The suggestion was to rename the section to Specification.

Braided specification (same performance as woven but with a braided, not a woven core) should also be acceptable, although most sheeting of an appropriate quality is now woven..

Consensus guidelines

Developing consensus guidelines in the shelter sector is important given the lack of information to date across the various actors. Whilst the plastic sheeting booklet initiative has arisen from an unstructured group, there is the UN Shelter cluster which has a huge opportunity (and budget) to develop ideas for the whole sector but INGOs are not taking the opportunity to participate. All those present were requested to consider how they could engage on the broader level within their organisation and how to engage through their organisation with more Southern stakeholders.