

Affordable, Hazard-Resistant Homes Worldwide

The Housing and Hazards Group is now in its eleventh year and is more active than ever. Following the highly successful H&H seminar at the Eden Project in autumn 2003, the group has continued its mission to make hazard-resistant housing available and affordable to vulnerable rural communities around the world. With the severe flooding in 2004 the group's expertise is more valuable than ever. Below is a summary of developments since the last newsletter in summer 2003.

NEWS FROM BANGLADESH

Ajit Ray's Mud-Stabilised Block Success

In 2002 Ajit Roy, one of Housing and Hazard's key members in Bangladesh, constructed a prototype cement-stabilised mud house in the village of Sunderban. The house has been a great success and has now undergone three monsoon rain periods without apparent damage, resisting not only rain but also rats and other burrowing pests.



Ajit and his team during construction of one of the Sunderban pre-schools - April 04

Ajit will build two more pre-schools this year and has been commissioned by a neighbouring Non-Governmental Organisation, BRIF (Bangladesh Rural Improvement Foundation at Ranirbandar) to build a reception centre using mud-concrete blocks. To make sure that people hear of these developments, Ajit has been commissioned by a third local NGO, BSS, based in Bhushirbandar, to take his singing team around the area entertaining villagers with motivation songs encouraging the use of hygienic latrines, water supplies and, of course, stronger housing technologies. Excellent work Ajit!

As a result of his success, Ajit was commissioned in April by Chetonar Dak, the local non-governmental organisation in Sunderban village to build the walls of two small pre-school buildings. These have been completed using cement-stabilised mud-concrete blocks. Like conventional brick construction the blocks allow for reduced construction time and are less affected by rain during construction. However, the cost of a stabilised mud block building is just half that of a brick building, making it far more affordable for a rural community. The blocks also give better stability and better thermal mass than cheap bricks as they are larger. Ajit's view is that his original mass mud house is stronger but the extra time and effort required for construction would make it impractical for many people.

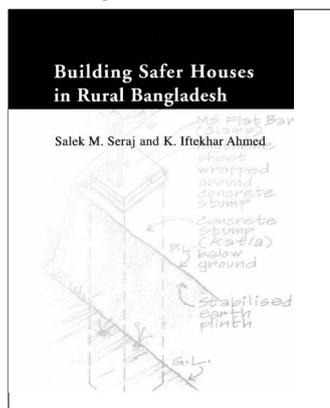


Robert Hodgson with a very happy pre-school teacher and class outside the completed pre-school 3 - Dec 04

Housing and Hazard's Building Techniques Adopted by UNDP

Group Member Architect Iftekhar Ahmed has been engaged part-time by UN Development Programme in Dhaka to supervise reconstruction activities following the severe flooding during the summer of 2004. He is working with six national and regional NGOs, including Oxfam and BRAC, who will, between them, build about 13,500 houses using a variety of appropriate techniques pioneered by H&H. The total value of programme is approximately \$3.5m. Building techniques will include treated bamboo and mud-concrete plinths. Most houses will be built in low-lying river-side areas so the emphasis will be on demountable superstructures. Iftekhar is negotiating the contracts at present and we look forward to hearing more as this exciting programme proceeds.

Housing and Hazards Group Members Publish Rural House Construction Guide



The long-awaited text 'Building safer houses in rural Bangladesh', by Salek M Seraj and K Iftekhar Ahmed is now published (by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, 2004, ISBN 984-32-1280-5, hardback) but supplies are limited at present! The book represents a lot of hard work by its editors in amalgamating the contributions made to the three Dhaka symposia on Housing and Hazards into one easy-to-read reference volume. The text covers all aspects of H&H work in Bangladesh from the rural context, through social survey techniques to appropriate technologies and dissemination methodologies. H&H have one copy available for borrowing at present and hope to get more in due course. Iftekhar intends to further condense it into a manual for use by the partner NGOs in his UNDP programme.

NEWS FROM THE UK

The UK branch of Housing and Hazards continues to make new contacts in Bangladesh and support the excellent work that Bangladeshi members such as Ajit and Iftekhar are carrying out in the field.

Catherine Morgan, previous newsletter editor and active member of H&H has moved to a new town and a new career – best of luck Catherine, thanks for all your work and we hope to keep in touch.

PERSPECTIVE ON 2005

There is a great deal to be done in 2005 to ensure the work of the Housing and Hazards Group continues to disseminate across Bangladesh. The United Nations' adoption of Housing and Hazards building techniques is tribute to the group's work and provides a framework for projects in the coming year. More help is needed! H&H are always on the lookout for volunteers to work with Bangladeshi group members in the field.

Funding – Can You Help?

The Housing and Hazards Group's work is gaining increasing recognition but we need financial help to continue these vital projects. This year the group needs money for:

- Support of our own evaluations of the UNDP project
- Commissioning of further pilot projects with Ajit Ray

If you can help, either financially or as a volunteer, please do not hesitate to contact us via the contact details below.

Thank you for your continuing support and all the best for 2006

Sponsors

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Thank you!

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