

INDIA WORKSHOP 2011

PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Using the Government Girls School as a focus, the workshop explored strategies for improving the safety and sustainability of the existing school buildings and improving the quality of the learning environment. With the introduction of modern imported materials to the area, many of the construction practices appropriate to the region have been disappearing, and so a key part of the project was researching and learning from traditional buildings and studying and critiquing current building practices. During the workshop we experimented with traditional, salvaged and modern materials with an aim to promote their appropriate use amongst the local community. This ecologically fragile Himalayan region is at risk of earthquakes and flooding. Floods in August 2010 had killed more than 200 people so it was essential that our proposals addressed issues of safety and sustainability in the built environment.

GOAL ACHIEVED

Following on from an intensive study and critique of local building practices and learning environments, the workshop set about producing design proposals and built projects for Leh Government Girls School:

Short term proposal (1 week) - a display and seating area for the school playground exploring and promoting appropriate building materials and technologies for the region. Participants worked within a budget and short timescale to design and construct the bench during the workshop.

Medium term proposal (1 -2 months) - design proposals for replacing the school toilet block damaged during the 2010 floods. This project was implemented after the workshop.

Long term proposal (1-2 years) – schematic proposals to make the school safer, more sustainable and a better learning environment focusing on the upgrading of classroom, hall and canteen buildings. This included looking at a proposal for the provision of an emergency shelter in the hall and canteen buildings.



Date:

July 2011

Location:

Leh, India

ASF Team:

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Partners:

Arup, INTACH, LAMO, SECMOL, SEEDS India and the Tibet Heritage Fund

Donors:

Self-funded by participants

Project type:

International Workshop

METHODOLOGY OF WORK



Week 1: Understanding the context and local issues

A series of interactive exercises with the school children and teachers helped us to understand how the learning environment could be improved. A series of talks and field trips introduced us to issues of safety and sustainability in the built environment, a variety of local approaches to construction, the work of local NGOs, and learning environments in the region. A study of a

traditional building in collaboration with the Tibet Heritage Fund gave us a greater understanding of the local vernacular architecture.

Week 2: Testing, prototyping and developing proposals

The group identified and mapped potential material resources and skills and tested locally available materials and technologies by designing, developing and constructing prototypes. We also developed proposals and strategies for longer term improvements to the school buildings. We presented these prototypes and concepts to the school children, local NGOs and the local community.

An internet blog - learninginleh.wordpress.com - allowed people to follow the workshop online.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

This workshop was the beginning of a process which we hope will make a real difference to the Government Girls School in Leh. The short term project (a bench) was completed during the workshop, and the medium term project (toilets) were constructed shortly after the workshop. The next step will be the creation of a document which we hope will help to secure funding and support for the implementation of longer term proposals at the school. We also hope that the built projects and framework for future improvements at the school will help to disseminate ideas for safe, sustainable, and inspiring learning environments to other schools in Ladakh.