

**Bangladesh. Emergency Response to Cyclone SIDR.
DER WASH Cluster Submission to UN sitrep.**

02nd Dec 2007

Water sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) overview

1.0 Overview

The scale of the crisis has attracted quite a significant level of national and international attention, which in turn has brought numerous organizations that are contributing to assistance in WASH activities. There remains a challenge to bring all these efforts together to work in a way that is coordinated with the efforts of DPHE and complements where they have less capacity and focus, but elements of this are now starting to fall into place.

Overall figures for people affected need to be further refined to understand which sections of the population remain at high risk to water borne diseases and efforts need to be more focused on these people. Further resources are required for this and donor support is being sort to enable the most effective WASH cluster coordination and specifically to identify focus locations and steer efforts towards these.

The water availability crisis in many areas that was evident or perceived in the first days/week after the cyclone is mostly past due to the urgent attention this was given by the government, with assistance from numerous other organizations and because the affected people themselves have found their own ways to deal with the situation. There are undoubtedly small pockets that remain with water availability problems, but these have mostly been identified and further measures are being put in place. Other key WASH aspects that need concentrating on are purchase and distribution of hygiene items, sanitation in communities living in temporary situations, often along road sides.

(Note detailed accompanying data and discussion documents are being prepared that describe the situation in much more detail. These should be consulted for those interested.)

2.0 WASH cluster/coordination

The national level national coordination mechanism has been initiated through a meeting forum consisting of a co chair of the WASH cluster coordinator (UNICEF staff Richard Luff) and DPHE (to be officially confirmed). This has met on 21st , 25th and 28th Nov in the UNICEF offices in Dhaka and a spreadsheet containing WASH organization activity has been compiled, is available on the DER website along with a WASH Google group and these are being updated regularly. Contacts of key agencies have been gathered, shared and further linkages are being made at national and district level. Technical guidance, e.g. on a proper way to clean ponds, from DPHE and UNICEF is also being shared.

The next steps for the national WASH cluster are as follows;

- The national WASH cluster agreed on 28th Nov that the overall group should meet once a week and efforts should be made to identify/support sub national coordination mechanisms.
- Smaller working sub groups need to be formed around particular aspects of WASH work and those agencies active in these areas invited to join and coordinate around these issues.
- To consider how the cluster might link work into a longer term government recovery plan.

Currently the main government emphasis on sub national coordination is at the UNO level with relief supplies passing through the UNO or them being aware of what others are distributing. However much of WASH activity is a little more involved and requires some specialized support to maximize public health and longer term benefits. For this reason a WASH specific mechanism at district level would be valuable to support WASH work in both the short term, but certainly the medium term. Specifically the national WASH should undertake the following;

- Encouraging formation of district level WASH meetings, probably on weekly basis.
- Keeping all parties known to be working at district level in touch with each other and having bilateral conversations.
- Provide an independent and supportive overall monitoring and programme quality overview for all agencies.
- Provide translation support for documents so these can be used by all agencies at the national level.
- Ensure key e-mail hubs are identified and used to have rapid information transfer between national, division and district levels and between districts.

3.0 Details of current emergency WASH activities

Short term/Temporary bulk water supply

Various organizations are involved in provision of what can be described as short-term temporary bulk water supply, through bottled water, from water trucking, water treatment from mobile water treatment plants and water delivered by trawler/boat, organized by civilian and military authorities and private efforts. There is an immediate need for this in some locations, though total requirements are not likely to be huge as real water crisis spots are not extensive. Bottled water is incredibly expensive per unit of water delivered, while water treatment and trucking is less so, but still requires substantial funding. There is some speculation that this short term temporary water supply may need to be in place for up to 3 or so months, perhaps more, but this will be dependent upon availability of other sources. There is an underlying water scarcity in some of these areas in normal times, so the point at which water availability has returned to pre cyclone levels will be hard to tell. In such a situation, there is a risk that very high cost temporary solutions may become prolonged, thereby depleting limited funding resources, though it is appreciated that these may come from different funding sources. It is therefore critical that information or progress of work on the permanent sources is linked to the temporary water supply, then such that temporary supplies can be reduced and stopped as appropriate.

In conclusion very urgent needs in many locations that were being witnessed in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone appear to have either dissipated or been satisfied by the short term measures in place. The UNICEF survey team have identified several areas that need urgent water trucking and have been in discussion with DPHE about these areas. At this stage therefore the challenge is not whether there are locations faced with acute water availability problems, but how water quality can be improved through various means and how to optimize water production and delivery mechanisms, given known challenges to sustain such means and costs. This will be the work of key WASH actors at district level to examine and resolve. Further reports and analysis will be forthcoming.

Short term/Temporary sanitation

More two weeks after the cyclone many people temporarily displaced have now returned to the remains of their homes. In these locations the work is already underway to support them rebuilding houses, their livelihoods, and also their latrines too. However there are limited numbers of people remaining in what is best described as temporary locations. In these locations, typically along roadsides, they may either live there or they may be moving there during the day (and back to their homes at night) to be better placed to receive ongoing relief assistance. The duration which they may remain in these locations is very unclear and it appears as if such people are already reducing in numbers even over the past few days. However these people are likely to be particularly vulnerable to diarrhea diseases as they are likely not to have access to adequate sanitation due in part to their temporary displaced status. (It is understood that water availability is not a major concern for these people, but household water storage and use may be.)

There appears to be a need for work to be undertaken for the people on the road South of Barguna and at this stage there does not to be any agency considering sanitation activity here. Both Patharghata and Sarankhola appear to have some activity in hand between DPHE, and Oxfam. DPHE who have submitted funding proposals to UNICEF, may need some additional funding support. As noted above, DPHE would be best placed to deal with or at least assist NGOs where government land ownership /public places make this an issue only Government agencies can resolve. The shanty type areas around Barisal may need work undertaken but numbers of people, condition and how what responsibility Barisal municipal authorities are bearing is unclear.

WASH related NFI supply, distribution

Many organizations distribute packs with key WASH items such as WPTs (water purification tablets) water containers, hygiene items such as soap, toothpaste and cloth for women's menstruation and these may be incorporated into general NFI packs. However distributing WASH as part of general NFI kits makes estimating which items have been distributed and where very difficult. Further information from agencies is required to fill in gaps.

What is known at this stage is that there are potentially up to 340,000 water containers that could be in the supply pipeline over the coming couple of weeks, i.e. enough for 1.7 million people if 1 water container is distributed per family. (Of these nearly half, i.e. 160,000 that might be purchased by IFRC are funding dependent and would need to be called down if IFRC/BCRS see a need.) This would cover needs of many of the severely affected and quantities being purchased would appear to be sufficient in quantity. The

WASH cluster must ensure that as these arrive that they are targeted at those locations that have most problematic water availability, access and quality problems, rather than just put into the general relief item distribution pot that may well allocate on pro rata basis according to official figures of those affected.

Household water quality is likely to be a major concern for some time. While DPHE has made available around 3.7 million WPTs, along with those supplied by other agencies, distribution mechanisms have not particularly focused on those facing greatest public health risks and there has not been the necessary accompanying messages about WPT use and benefits. The general distribution mechanisms being used for WPTs are not suitable and will not target those at risk, instead just seeing these as general relief items to give out. As a matter of priority a more considered approach to how we enable communities to have better household water treatment needs to be developed and UNICEF is in discussion with key NGOs about this.

The quantities of basic hygiene items such as soap and material for sanitary napkins is much less and this needs to be looked at. Locations that have poor sanitary conditions such as those people living in temporary conditions along road sides need to be prioritized first. While the quantities of such items are less, it seems likely that the purchase of such items may be made through the local market and thus could be imitated somewhat faster than international procurement. UNICEF will look at prioritizing hygiene items for those in urgent need but will need NGO assistance for this distribution capacity.

Immediate recovery of permanent sanitation and private/public water supply

In addition to the temporary short term measures described above, work has of course been underway to help restore public water supplies. The latest DPHE report (2/12/07) informs us that out of 12,136 damaged water points across the 12 affected districts 8,716 have been repaired. At the current rate of progress most immediate work will be complete within another 2-3 weeks. The focus must then turn to ongoing mapping and cleaning of private and public ponds, which is underway, to address water quality and access issues in water scarce areas.

In addition NGOs have been focusing on efforts to clean ponds. However as many of the ponds are private and the activities of many NGOs are still being decided upon, the full picture is still not available. In parallel sanitation programmes that help communities reestablish their latrines are now starting. In both cases the need for adequate hygiene promotions support must be recognized in order that immediate benefits can be sustained. This is another aspect of WASH work that the cluster must focus on to maximize sustainability, to address issues of inclusion, gender and the most vulnerable groups. A more complete overview will be provided for the next sitrep and this built up over the coming weeks once support for monitoring mechanisms can be agreed and these established