

Bangladesh Emergency Response to Cyclone SIDR

**Minutes of WASH Cluster Coordination Meeting, held at UNICEF Office,
Wednesday 21st November 2007 at**

Participating Agencies:

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE)
Action Contre La Faim, BRAC, Care Bangladesh, Concern, Dhaka Community Hospital,
Environment & Population Research Centre, ICDDR,B, IFRC, Islamic Relief, Muslim
Aid, NGO Forum, Oxfam, Plan Bangladesh, Save the Children-USA, UNICEF, USAID,
WHO

The meeting was chaired by the acting Cluster Coordinator, Paul Edwards, Chief WES
UNICEF Bangladesh

The agenda was as follows:-

1. Introductions
2. Information sharing from agencies situation and response to-date
3. Information from DPHE on situation and response to-date
4. Discussion on gaps and constraints experienced so far, and ways to overcome
5. Discussion on coordination and information management
6. Summary of action points
7. A.O.B.

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed the participants and participating agencies. Participating agencies were requested to introduce themselves.

In his introduction, the Chair reminded participants of the purpose of the cluster system and how UNICEF has been designated the lead agency for water sanitation hygiene (WASH) cluster. The cluster coordination would primarily help: (a) improving coordination and sharing information among relevant agencies; (b) making decisions ensuring best use of strengths of agencies towards overall achievement of WASH interventions; and (c) coordinate funding potential interventions. The key role of the cluster is to help ensure the international response supports that of the Government of Bangladesh. In the case of WASH, this largely means coordination with DPHE at all levels.

It was announced that an experienced cluster coordinator will be brought in by UNICEF, in the meantime the coordinator will be Paul Edwards. It was also mentioned that UNICEF is planning to use its field base at Barisal for local coordination.

2. Information sharing from agencies situation and response to-date

Each agency round the table gave a summary of their response to date.

UNICEF

WES Programme Manager Birendra Shrestha explained UNICEF's initial response to this cyclone emergency; as it works closely with DPHE. Initially USD 50,000 has been mobilized to provide basic supplies and logistic assistance to DPHE and partners in the affected areas. Local procurement of 10,000 jerry cans is being processed along with 100,000 jerry cans is being procured from India. The process seems to have been relatively slow due to inadequate availability of materials in the country.

In the meanwhile, we are making distribution plan in advance so that supplies could reach to the affected communities at the earliest. UNICEF is also in the process of exploring partnership with selected NGOs; who have the interest to work for affected areas in coordination with DPHE. Major assistance to affected communities may include: supplying safe water, assistance of water purification, improvement of latrines, construction of new latrines, supplying soap and sanitary napkins.

In response to the interest of NGOs for partnership, UNICEF has agreed to consider proposals with a small write up and budget as soon as possible. Although preferences would be given to the 39 pre-qualified agencies, efforts would be made to consider proposals from others.

IFRC:

IFRC has initiated assessment of the situation for all the affected districts. It is expected to have the result of the assessment by 22 November. Based on the result of assessment, decisions would be taken to decide on continuation of nature of support.

While the assessment is on-going, distribution of water purifying tablets and food/non-food items has been initiated.

ICDDR,B:

Head Programme on Infectious Diseases, Steve Luby explained regarding supply of couple of thousands of water purifying tablets (WPTs). He also informed that there has been marked increase of patients coming to hospitals. Possibility of cholera outbreak is very much foreseen.

CARE Bangladesh:

Care Bangladesh is carrying out an assessment of situation through its partners in several locations in all affected districts. CARE's immediate response includes the supply of safe water by installing 4 water treatment plants. One of the 4 water purifier has been installed in Morul Ganj that would supply 10-20,000 liter water a day. Other 3 on the way is planned to be installed in Sarankhola, Pirojpur and Barguna.

Dhaka Community Hospital is engaged to provide necessary health and sanitation assistance. Five teams moved to 5 upa-zillas (sub-districts) to assist affected communities with basic medical treatments. It has been reported by the partners that pneumonia and diarrhea incidences are increasing.

Care has contacted US Navy team and they have agreed to assist distribution of basic supplies to the affected people.

Plan Bangladesh:

Plan Bangladesh is also carrying out initial assessment in the affected area. Partner agencies are working closely to assist efforts of Plan to this cyclone. Essentials such as clothing and shelter are part of their support to the affected communities. USD 1.5 Million is earmarked to initiate such a support and additional USD 3-4 Million is being mobilized towards rehabilitation of affected people.

Concern Worldwide:

Concern Worldwide (CWW) is processing its 1st phase response operation for the affected areas. This time CWW is providing food and non-food items to 26,000 families in 7 upazillas of two districts (Borguna and Potuakhali). We are expecting to initiate the distribution from next Friday or Saturday.

The second phase operation has been under planning process which would cover interim shelter, health-hygiene supplies and other critical needs. Hopefully, 3rd phase would follow back to back.

NGO Forum:

NGO Forum is carrying out damage assessment in both Borisal and Khulna areas through its partners. Water and sanitation is clearly coming out as an emergency need for the affected people.

Some 10,000 jerry cans of 5 to 10 liter capacities are being mobilized for distribution to the affected families. Mineral water bottles are also being supplied to meet to the immediate need of affected people. In addition some 500,000 WPTs are also in the process of distribution in these locations.

About 500,000 ORS packs are in the process of distribution. NGO Forum expressed their interest to develop partnership with UNICEF as well.

Save the Children:

Save the Children is planning to concentrate its focus in Patuakali and Barguna. The work would include both immediate responses for couple of weeks and also for the rehabilitation period.

Water and sanitation interventions would be one of their priority interventions that include: distribution of purifying tablets, educating people how to use purifying tablets and on critical hygiene/sanitation behavioural aspects. WES intervention would also include improve/install pond sand filters for sustainable clean water for communities.

Environment & Population Research Centre:

EPRC is carrying out assessment of situation in Patherghata and Saronkhola sub-districts of Bagerhat and Barguna districts respectively through 45 local partners.

Activities on-going includes distribution of bleaching power packs to disinfect water sources and distribution/use of ORS.

EPRC has shown interest to work with UNICEF, Oxfam and DPHE in the sub-districts of their interest.

BRAC:

BRAC has initiated support to the affected people that includes water and food. Special medical teams have also initiated their assistance to the affected communities.

Following the cyclone, BRAC met top district/ sub-district officials to be briefed on the current situation and to share their initial findings to the district administrations. Apart from emergency supply of water, BRAC is considering working on cleaning ponds, treatment of water by lime/alum, etc.

BRAC's central office in Dhaka is planning to come up with a detailed plan of action for coming months within couple of day from now.

Islamic Relief:

Islamic Relief is active in several affected locations such as Patuakhali, Muraliganj, etc. As a part of immediate relief assistance, 3,000 farmers are supported with basic household goods that include candles, match boxes, polyethylene shelters, etc. Two medical teams are already in field and have provided some basic treatments to about 6,000 patients.

WES support of Islamic Relief is under procurement. The materials to be procured include jerry cans and sanitary napkins. Family kits planned to be supplied by Islamic Relief would also include sanitary items. Water assistance for future would include developing 150 deep tube wells.

Islamic Relief is work out the possibilities of mobilizing fund for its interventions.

Action Contre La Faim (Action for Hunger):

ACF is working in Shariatpur district. ACF understands that there exist a lot need in water and sanitation in the affected locations. ACF would explore the possibility of assisting communities to rehabilitate their latrines. ACF is working on rehabilitating 100 latrines and constructing 700 new latrines. ACF is also in the process of distributing hygiene kits to 1,000 household.

The support would include livelihood assistance such as supply of seeds for plantation as crop failed.

An emergency team is going to be formed near future to work for the south part of the country. Assessment would be conducted if needed or else ACF would work on the result of assessment conducted by other agencies.

Oxfam:

Oxfam is responding to most affected locations in Barguna/ Bagerhat districts such as Sadar Pathargada, Pathargada upa-zilla and Kapchira. Cleaning of dead bodies is still a problem in the affected areas.

Oxfam's partners are playing a major role in supporting Oxfam's interventions.

Major water and sanitation interventions planned/ on-going incorporate: cleaning ponds, managing garbage/ solid-wastes, supplying cooking pans to boil water, promoting household water treatment using alum/PUR sachets, assisting to build women's enclosures for private defecation/ bath, etc.

Moreover, to deal with salinity issues, deployment of reverse osmosis technique or solar disinfections will be planned.

Some of the interventions would be undertaken in coordination with the Save the Children UK. Oxfam would also like to explore possible partnership with UNICEF.

USAID:

USAID has now a team of 5 professionals in Dhaka to assess the existing situation. The mission includes identifying potential partners for WES interventions in the ground. USAID has initiated dialogue with some of agencies including IFRC and Save the Children.

WHO:

WHO is working out its support to affected areas through its 'Emergency Humanitarian Action Unit' to support surveillance and to supply essential drugs. In the area of water and sanitation, WHO is standing ready to assist DPHE.

Water Aid Bangladesh:

Water Aid Bangladesh is carrying out situation assessment through 27 partner agencies. Four partners have submitted proposals for funding and some more are in the pipeline.

Water Aid would prepare its comprehensive response plan within couple of days from now.

3. Information from DPHE on situation and response to-date

Superintending Engineer DPHE Groundwater Circle, Mr. Ihtishamul Huq, gave a brief summary of the situation and DPHEs response to-date. Government has prioritized water and sanitation as a major response area. The works would include restoring existing water systems, repairing hand pumps, repairing PSFs, transportation of drinking water, installing SS Wells, etc.

Some of the initiatives already taken include: continued transportation of water to affected areas, distribution of 6,500 jerry cans, installation of 9 HDPE tanks of 500 liter capacity each, installation 1 water treatment plant and installation of 100 SS wells. Three more treatment plants are on the way and would be installed in the affected areas.

The main problems to be faced are related to the surface water sources, since the ponds will not be replenished with fresh water until after the rains in about 6 months time. Since the very shallow aquifer has not been contaminated, very shallow shrouded tubewells are possible. However in some places even these are not feasible and continued water transport will be necessary. . Pond cleaning also has to be done

He urged all agencies to coordinate closely with DPHE especially at the local levels.

4. Discussion on gaps and constraints experienced so far, and ways to overcome

A short discussion followed on some of the key issues facing the emergency response. The damage to surface water sources, either by the storm surge and/or debris, including dead bodies, seems to be a critical issue and there is a need to quickly develop some guidelines on how these ponds can best be brought back in to operation. There is also a need to map the area and the communities which are without water. A guideline is needed on the maximum levels of salinity which can be tolerated in water before condemning the source.

NGO Forum mentioned that capacity for manufacturing WPT in the country was small and that NGF could do it if supported in the future. Also ORS was limited.

5. Discussion on coordination and information management

The discussion on coordination and information management dovetailed the previous discussion. Two key issues were raised. One was the gathering of information on what the various agencies are doing. UNICEF distributed a format and asked agencies to send in their information. The format will also be distributed by e-mail. Agencies were asked to fill in the format twice – once for work already in progress and one for work which was planned. The other was that several agencies stated they had done assessments. There was a need to gather all this information, so that a picture of the overall situation could be built up.

A sheet was also circulated, for participants to add their names and contact details.

Lalit Patra (UNICEF) was identified as the focal point for sending information to (lpatra@unicef.org)

6. Summary of action points

The main action points highlighted were on the need for gathering information and sending it to UNICEF for consolidation, and the need to produce guidelines on options for rehabilitating surface water sources. Also, the need for agencies to coordinate at the local level with the DPHE offices.

7. A.O.B.

There was no AOB.

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 28th November at 2pm in UNICEF office.

