

## **Bangladesh Emergency Response to Cyclone SIDR**

### **Draft** Minutes of DER WASH Cluster Meeting

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Venue UNICEF office Dhaka

The WASH cluster meeting was held on 28 November 2007 from 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm. Mr. Richard Luff, DER WASH Cluster Coordinator chaired the meeting, with DPHE as co-chair.

### **WASH meeting agenda**

1. Introductions
2. Review of last meeting actions,
3. Managing water borne disease outbreaks, led by WHO
4. WASH overview (see sitrep report)
5. Use of WPTs and their effectiveness
6. Pond cleaning and hygiene promotion. The issue of technical working groups
7. Sub national coordination
8. AOB

### **1.0 Introduction:**

While not yet formally announced, we are expecting that DPHE will be the co-chair of this meeting. This is an important initiative and it is intended that all clusters will follow this co-chair initiative. For non government WASH actors, we will specifically work with DPHE to be better coordinated and complement our efforts with theirs. Attendees from DPHE were Superintendent engineer Ihistihumul Huq and Superintendent engineer Dewan Naquib Ahsan.

Participants from the following agencies introduced themselves; Action Contre La Faim, BRAC, Care Bangladesh, Concern, Dhaka Community Hospital, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, NGO Forum, Oxfam, Save the Children, WHO, DFID, USAID, UNICEF, UNDP, Proshika, HAPI, FHI, Action aid, Wateraid, IRD.

### **2.0 Review of last meeting actions**

- The 3 Ws form, (who is doing what where) needs continuous updating. Since the last meeting, the following organizations have provided detailed information about their activities; DPHE, WHO, UNICEF, NGO Forum. Other organizations that have provided an overview of their presence but little information in detail are; Solidarites, Oxfam, Muslim Aid, Islamic Relief, Christian Aid/ Norwegian Church Aid, ACTION CONTRE LA FAIM, Islamic Relief. Others are urgently requested to provide information to Mr. Lalit Patra as requested previously.
- UNICEF provided an update of the funding mechanism for those agencies who wished to apply for funding through funds UNICEF has access to from the CERF. The issue of prequalification was explained to participants. UNICEF also explained that they will welcome funding applications for sanitation and hygiene promotion. Please contact Mr. Birendra Shrestha in UNICEF for more information.

### **3.0 Managing water borne disease outbreaks, led by WHO**

WHO and one of their national collaborating partners gave an overview of the disease monitoring system, which is led by MoH. To date (27/11/07) we understand that there have

been 1,100 cases of diarrhea **reported** in the affected area with 1 associated death. It was noted that pneumonia was likely to be as big an issue in this season and therefore the shelter cluster should be kept informed. In the event of widespread water borne outbreaks DPHE will assist control efforts led by MoH, with DPHE providing WPTs and bleach focusing on affected areas.

Action; WHO/MoH health cluster to make sure that WASH and shelter clusters are kept informed of disease surveillance information at national and sub national levels.

#### 4.0 Issues from paper

A paper prepared by Richard Luff was circulated. This was intended to serve both as a discussion piece for urgent issues at today's meeting and as a basis of the WASH contribution to the UN sitrep. The following key points were discussed

- 5 areas that have suffered significant damage and these are the areas where we expect to find the most severe water shortages on a widespread scale. These 5 areas lie within the districts of Borguna, Bagherat, Pirojpur and Patuakhali.
- The extent of damage to crucial supplementary private sources is not known. Mapping. How do we get a better picture?
- Coordination efforts need to be strengthened with the national WASH cluster - A sub national mechanism?
- Some ponds are "damaged" by saline inundation and these will remain so until rains start in May 2008 and wash out and replenish these. Critical water supply issues exist here but how to address these and how widespread is this?
- WPTs unless distributed effectively, in sufficient quantities, with water containers and hygiene promotion/ information about their use occurs, their potential beneficial impact will be limited. How can we maximize effectiveness?
- The ability of the supply pipeline of water containers to fulfill needs, how many are on the way?
- We have not heard of anecdotal reports of widespread open defecation, is this an issue?
- There are reports of limited water borne disease outbreaks. How much should we be worried?

Discussion;

- There was NOT a collective concern of the WASH cluster that there were **widespread** acute shortages of water across **large** areas. Instead we believe we are facing pockets where the situation is acute (UNICEF, and no doubt others, is surveying these at this moment) and for most areas where water is collected from ponds the issue will be improving water quality through pond clearing. Widespread and heavy salinisation is not as severe as initially assumed. Several organizations present are already clearing ponds and some have large scale plans to undertake more work. This will complement DPHE work on public sources which at current rate of progress will mean repairs on private sources will be complete in 2-3 weeks. Non the less pond cleaning remains the biggest issue to tackle.
- The WASH cluster as a whole felt that the extent of open defecation is limited and thus does not constitute a major risk at this moment. While sanitation and accompanying hygiene promotion programming is required, investment should be made in solutions that are suitable for the coming months and beyond, rather than temporary solutions suitable for a few weeks only.
- Water borne disease outbreaks still appear limited judging by official reports. However WASH cluster needs to follow Health cluster monitoring of this.

- Greater clarity about the number of water containers was gained. It is thought that up to 500,000 are or soon will be available in country. Distribution mechanisms are the key concern here. However more detailed information needed urgently on this.
- Getting good mapping to start to quantify overall water supply (and sanitation/hygiene promotion) needs is still proving difficult. While DPHE has now started to provide information disaggregated down to Upazila level to the national level (available in coming days), getting a complete picture of the private sources is very difficult and will not easily be resolved. Non the less a much clearer picture must be made available by Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

#### **5. Use of WPTs and their effectiveness**

Not specifically discussed, but this does need attention focused on this. A sub group should be set up.

#### **6. The issue of technical working groups**

There was not any direct response to this as yet so Richard Luff will contact agencies that involved in certain types of work to talk bi laterally to set up working groups on key issues and it is hoped that agencies will be willing to contribute to working with other key partners on these issues.

Action Richard Luff to contact agencies bilaterally

#### **7. Sub national coordination**

The importance of having WASH sub national coordination was discussed. DPHE and some others felt that getting this down to the district level was most important, with a focus on the 4 most affected districts of Bagerhat, Barguna, Potuakhali, Phirobjur. While there was a suggestion that this needed to operate at an Upazilia level it may be hard to achieve a dedicated WASH coordination. Richard Luff will travel to Borisal on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov to investigate how DPHE can be supported to co-lead this with UNICEF assistance. It was discussed and agreed by the cluster that national level WASH coordination should occur once per week.

Action: Richard Luff to disuses with DPHE and other actors in affected area what a sub national coordination mechanism for WASH will look like.

Action: national level WASH coordination to occur once per week in Dhaka, possibly on Wednesdays and possibly moved to UNDP offices to co locate with other clusters. Both to be confirmed.

#### **AOB:**

None

Next national level WASH cluster meeting Possibly Wed 5<sup>th</sup> Dec, possibly in UNDP offices, if not UNICEF. Date, time, location to be confirmed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.