

Disaster and Emergency Response Sub -Group

Terms of Reference

Revised as per the DER meeting on 13 February 2006

Introduction

The Sub-Group on Disaster & Emergency Response (DER) of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) comprises representatives from the Government, UN, donors, NGOs and others in the humanitarian community. The DER Group promotes active participation of the Government in the DER main and thematic/sector working group meetings/coordination.

Background

Bangladesh is frequently faced with sudden natural disasters. NGOs, bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as the civil society play an important role before, during and after such disasters by providing resources and technical assistance for disaster risk management in particular for relief and rehabilitation. These activities complement the GOB's efforts, considering the primary and central role accorded by the United Nations General Assembly to national governments in the response to natural disasters. In September 2000, in response to the flood situation in the South-West of Bangladesh, the UN Resident Coordinator, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Disaster Management Team, formed an emergency working group, which was chaired by WFP on his behalf. In addition to UN agencies, several bilateral donors and NGOs formed part of the group, with the aim to better coordination of the various relief efforts. Based on this and previous experiences with disaster situations, it was widely felt within the community of humanitarian organisations that a permanent structure was needed to facilitate an institutionalisation of coordinated response planning and information sharing. It was proposed to establish a Sub-Group of the LCG mechanism, to deal with disaster and emergency response, but with the clear understanding that the Sub-Group will not deal with structural natural threats such as for instance river erosion and the arsenic problem, which needs long-term development efforts and fall within the mandate of other LCG Sub-Groups. Similarly, the sub-group will not deal with other chronic problems such as long-term food security and poverty.

Vision:

The Vision of the DER Sub-Group is "Reduced suffering and losses of the affected population from disasters in Bangladesh".

Mission:

The Mission of the DER Sub-Group is to "Increase the effectiveness of its members' disaster preparedness and response efforts to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest and most affected members of society".

Objectives:

The overarching objective of the Sub-Group is

'to put in place and to contribute towards better operational systems to ensure an effective preparedness and a more coordinated response from the GOB, donors, UN agencies, NGOs and others in the humanitarian community to future disasters.'

The specific objectives are:

Objective 1: Rapid, coordinated, and timely response to disasters.

Objective 2: Establish an improved information system* with continuous access for main stakeholders.

Objective 3: Enhance disaster preparedness and response capacity of the GoB and partners.

Objective 4: Advocate for the preparedness** and response needs of those vulnerable to or those affected by disasters.

Scope

The DER Sub-Group will work for disaster response (immediate as well as recovery) and preparedness for an efficient and effective response. The sub-group will address disaster preparedness activities contributing to disaster risk management. In principle, the sub-group will not i) address disaster risk management other than preparedness for response, and ii) extend its activities in areas where other LCG Sub-Groups are working for long-term mitigation.

Membership

The Government, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, research institutions and others in the humanitarian community may be members. The members that are not able to attend any or all of the meetings of the Sub-Group will be kept informed of the proceedings of meetings; and their inputs and suggestions will be solicited as feasible. In addition to these regular members, resource persons will be invited from relevant organization/agencies involved with disaster preparedness, response and early warning activities as appropriate.

Organisational set-up

The attached LCG Sub-group Guidelines (updated on 25 September 2000***) will guide the overall functioning of the Sub-Group in the context of the LCG mechanism. The Chair and the Secretariat will be assumed by an agency or agencies to be appointed by general consensus of the members of the Sub-Group. The sub-group's Terms of Reference will be reviewed and revised as appropriate at least every two years.

Functioning of the Sub-Group

The Sub-Group will meet on a monthly basis, and more frequently, if required, in times of known potential threats, and during emergency situations. The Sub-Group will have an action-oriented character, and will utilize small thematic and/or sector working groups to help achieve its objectives. The working groups may adopt member(s) from outside the full member agencies where expertise and technical input is needed.

* A system for generating and disseminating information on early warning, preparedness, disaster situation, response and recovery.

** Preparedness refers to actions taken in anticipation of an emergency to facilitate rapid, effective and appropriate response to the situation.

*** A recently conducted LCG on-line opinion poll may contribute to a future revision and or update of the existing LCG sub-group guidelines.