

**LCG Sub-group on Disaster and Emergency Response (DER)
Minutes of the Meeting held on May 29, 2007**

Mr. John McHarris, Adviser, DPR section, WFP chaired the meeting. The list of participants as introduced by them is attached as Annex A.

MAIN POINTS COVERED AT THE MEETING

1. Adoption of the minutes of the last meeting held on 7 February 2007:

A small typo was noticed by USAID. In the second page instead of 'WATSON' it should be read as 'WATSAN'.

The minutes were adopted without any further modification.

2. Situation Monitoring and Response Update by agencies, if any:

USAID: USAID reported about a tornado that hit Bhola district in March 2007. SCF-US responded with survival kits to the needs of about 500 households through USAID supported project.

WHO: It reported on the latest bird flu situation in the country. Since 24 February, 38 poultry farms have been affected in 11 districts. A total number of 145,000 poultry have been culled. No human cases have been reported. As a precautionary measure, a good number of doctors from national to upazilla level will be trained to take care of the clinical cases. The Chair informed the members about the LCG sub group on agriculture and rural development, which is closely working on the bird flu issue. He also invited Mr. Rune Brandup, focal point of Avian Influenza in the UNRC's office to share any additional information that he may have. He informed that LCG DER website has a link to the Agriculture and Rural Development website, where the bird flu related information can be found.

ActionAid, Bangladesh: AAB reported that in Koira Upazila under Khulna district due to the breach of the embankment, seawater entered into the ponds preventing the inhabitants from pure drinking water facilities. AAB responded to this situation by installing pure drinking water facilities for the locality in April 2007.

UNDP: UNDP showed their concern regarding the tilting of some of the buildings in Dhaka City. The reason for this is poor quality construction and not following the building codes. All the members were concerned regarding the impact on these poorly constructed buildings in case of a sudden earthquake.

ECHO: They inquired about the DER sources of information in case of any disaster situation. The Chair replied that typically and firstly it is from the DER members, secondly from the media and thirdly from the DIFPs. But he also believes that this should be the reverse like firstly from the DIFPs, secondly from the DER members and thirdly from the media. ECHO also appreciated the work done by the DER Secretariat and insisted that they do more as the monsoon is approaching.

UNICEF: It emphasized that we should take advantage of the DIFPs more for data collection and reporting on any initial emergency situation and their skills should be further enhanced. He also informed that the DIFPs contact list is available at the DER website. The members agreed to make greater use of the DFIPs.

DER Secretariat: The Chair informed about the Early Warning and Hazard Bulletin produced and circulated by WFP twice a week. He also said that the DER mailing list could be used for circulating the sitreps or any assessment reports done by the DER members.

Action:

- a. The members agreed to remain vigilant and report any changing situation.

3. Future/Nomination for DER Chair:

The Chair informed that this issue is not a new one and have been discussed in some earlier meetings. The Chair reminded the members that the issues of DER Chair, ToR and the secretariat are usually discussed annually in line with LCG guidelines. In an earlier meeting held between DER Secretariat and MoFDM, the Secretary MoFDM expressed willingness and readiness to take the role of the Chair with the Secretariat support by WFP. Both WFP and GoB share a common view that the GoB should play a central role with regards to DER activities. The Chair identified several reasons for the GoB to take on the role of the Chair. It would i) help strengthen integration of the efforts of the group and the GoB towards risk reduction, ii) facilitate the decision making process and implement actions in case of any emergency, iii) facilitate data and wider information sharing and dissemination, iv) ease the process of resource mobilization, v) help facilitate the capacity building initiatives for the GoB and other partners, vi) add formal approach to the meetings, and vii) any emergency response would be cost effective. In this regard, Concern Universal added that having GoB as the chair it would be easier for the GoB to formally declare any emergency, if they think it is necessary and also getting consensus on any issue can happen quickly and easily. USAID questioned who from the government would be nominated as the Chair. The Chair responded that the Secretary, MoFDM is expected to be the Chair, in his absence his designated authority either the DG, DMB, DG, DRR or the Joint Secretary could chair the meeting. DFID remarked that it should not be less than the level of the Joint Secretary.

Dr. Aslam Alam of CDMP said that he was present in the meeting DER Secretariat had with MoFDM regarding the issue of the Chair. It was verbally agreed in the meeting that the GoB would take the role of the Chair but this needs to be formalized now. He also informed that before coming in to this meeting, he was requested by the Joint Secretary, MoFDM to request the Chair of the meeting to postpone decision on this issue until the next meeting. He suggested discussing this issue with the new Secretary again. The agreed to this but suggested that the DER members can discuss this issue in the meeting and transition modalities.

ECHO said that all agencies efforts should be complementary to the government. He in principle agrees that GoB should take the role of the Chair but pointed out some of his reservations as well.

- a. Endorsement will take some time and likely to delay actions.
- b. In some cases when the Secretary, MoFDM will not be able to Chair and if that person to represent in his absence is not appropriately designated the decisions could be delayed.
- c. UN Cluster approach is also an issue. Strategically there is difference between the GoB and non-governmental organizations. The GoB responds to relatively big disaster only but NGOs respond both to small and big. His concern is that whether or not the shift in DER Chair to the GoB will create any difficulty with the implementation of the cluster approach.

USAID thinks that GoB should set up some procedures in terms of managing big disasters. And having GoB as the Chair would ease the process and will enhance effective response in a timely manner. They also think that if the GoB is in the Chair, it will be easier for them to share any

disaster related information with their high officials. They also suggested that as different agencies are doing different things in terms of disaster mitigation/preparedness, they could present their activities in the DER meetings. Having the GoB as the Chair, this will enable us to know what government actions are being taken at the field level.

UNICEF suggested that the purpose of DER need to be focused once again. The main objective is better coordination and effective response. It will be more realistic to nominate the Chair focusing this objective.

CDMP stressed that the GoB is very active in terms of managing any disaster. As they lack in information sharing and coordination mechanism, it often becomes difficult for others to know clearly what they are doing when any big disaster occurs. They believe that if the GoB takes on the Chair, it will also facilitate the process of information sharing and coordination in a more effective manner.

DFID: They emphasized that the role of the Chair as well as the DER Secretariat should be clearly defined once again and should be shared with the members towards finalization. They strongly feel that ideally the Chair should be the Secretary, MoFDM but in case of his absence, the Joint Secretary could chair it but under no circumstances it should be less than the Joint Secretary. The DG, DMB, or the DG, DRR could also be the Chair.

UNDP: They said that DER is the coordination platform that can complement with the government structure. During emergency the Ministry can have their own meeting. This type of issues needs to be addressed and analyzed. Actions taken in the DER meetings could serve as an input for the inter-ministerial meetings.

The Chair appreciated all the comments made by the members. He also clarified the role of Clusters.

- The UN Clusters are activated during disaster periods and respond where humanitarian assistance is needed.
- The Clusters concentrate on the preparedness and capacity building aspects as well.
- The GoB will not be responsible to lead the Clusters. There are nominated cluster leads for each cluster. These nominated clusters are to be finalized by 6 June 2007 at the UN Country Team meeting.

The Chair also agreed to the point raised by DFID of the need for distinct roles of the Chair and the DER Secretariat.

Discussions were also held on the issue of the 'venue' for the meetings. The members have agreed that the meetings should preferably take place at the GoB venue either at MoFDM or at DRR or at DMB. When these are not available the present IDB Bhaban venue will apply. The members also feel that advance notification by the DER Secretariat should be given before the meetings take place.

Action:

- a. DER Group in principle agreed that the GoB is to take the role of the next DER Chair. WFP will continue as the DER secretariat to support the new Chair during the transition period.
- b. DER Secretariat will draft and share the roles of the Chair as well as the DER Secretariat with the DER members towards finalization.

- c. A formal letter to be sent to the Secretary, MoFDM for his formal acceptance of the function of chairing DER.
- d. DER Secretariat, if required, will request the Secretary, MoFDM for a meeting to further discuss the issue of the Chair.

5. Any Other Business:

Islamic Relief, Action Aid Bangladesh and OXFAM: All of these three agencies separately organized DIPECHO funded lessons learnt workshops in May focusing on disaster preparedness against the risk of flood and earthquake. They can send their information related to these workshops to DER Secretariat for wider circulation as well as to demonstrate good practice.

SDC: They showed their interest for regular updates on Avian Influenza. DER Secretariat as well as Mr. Rune Brandup of UNRC office advised him to contact FAO directly for related information. DER Secretariat also suggested him to send his contact details to the Secretariat to forward to FAO office.

DER Chair asked if USAID knows of any flood forecasting information from CFAB, funded by USAID. It was learnt that CFAB model is still in the testing phase and could only start forecasting from 2008.

Action:

- a. DER members are encouraged to present any of their disaster related topics in the DER meetings. They have also been requested to send their copies of presentations or any documents related to disasters to DER Secretariat for wider circulation, if they wish to.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair and to all participants.

ANNEX A: ATTENDANCE LIST of DER Meeting held on 29 May 2007

| Organisations | Sl | Name | Organization |
|---------------|----|------------------------|--------------|
| GoB | 1 | Mr. G M Mansur Rahman | DRR |
| | 2 | Dr. Aslam Alam | CDMP |
| Donors | 3 | Mr. Johny Sarker | DFID |
| | 4 | Mr. Abdul Awal | ECHO |
| | 5 | Mr. Walter Shepherd | USAID |
| | 6 | Ms. Shahnaz Zakaria | USAID |
| | 7 | Mr Ashek Ahmed | SDC |
| UN | 8 | Mr. Rune Brandrup | UNRC |
| | 9 | Mr. Md. Tarik-ul-Islam | UNDP |
| | 10 | Mr. B M M Mozharul Huq | UNDP |

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|-------------|----|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| | 11 | Mr. Syed Sadrul Ameen | UNDP |
| | 12 | Mr. Zulfikur Ali Khan | UNICEF |
| | 13 | Dr. Rafiqus Sultan | UNFPA |
| | 14 | Dr. Zahidur Rahim | WHO |
| | 15 | Mr. John McHarris | WFP |
| | 16 | Ms. Rehana Banoo | WFP, DRR |
| | 17 | Mr. Monzu Morshed | WFP, DRR |
| NGOs | 18 | Ms. Farhana Ferdous | Action Aid Bangladesh |
| | 19 | Mr. Stephane Bonduelle | Concern Universal |
| | 20 | Mr. Ashutosh Dey | Concern Worldwide Bangladesh |
| | 21 | Mr. Nurul Amin Bagmer | Islamic Relief |
| | 22 | Mr. Naser S. Haider | Oxfam GB |
| | 23 | Mr. Md. Tariqul Alam | Proshika |
| | 24 | Mr. Anthony D'Cruze | RDRS |
| DER | 25 | Mr. Malik Kabir | DER Secretariat (WFP) |
| Secretariat | 26 | Ms. Meher Nigar Bhuiyan | DER Secretariat (WFP) |

Minutes recorded and circulated by: DER Secretariat