

Meeting of the DER Sub-Group

14 December 2005

Ms. Rehana Banoo, Manager, DPR section, WFP chaired the meeting. Mr. John McHarris, Adviser, DPR section was also present. The participants introduced themselves and the list is attached as Annex A.

MAIN POINTS COVERED AT THE MEETING

1. Adoption of the minutes of previous meeting:

The minutes of the last DER meeting held on 16 November 2005 were adopted. Further comments, if any are welcome.

2. Review current emergency situation and response by agencies:

The representative from WHO, Dr. Zahidur Rahim informed that the diarrhoea situation in the country is normal. The winter impact in the northern belt is reported under control. According to the Met Office bulletin of 13 December 2005, night temperature may fall, light to moderate fog may occur over the river basin.

3. Discussion on the revised RENA report:

The first draft of the RENA report on floods in October 2005 was circulated to all DER members by the Secretariat on 2 November 2005. The draft report was discussed extensively in the meeting of 16 November. One of the main concern raised by DFID is that the draft report barely meets the donors information needs on issues of damages, needs and responses; the gaps in terms of need and responses etc. These are to be clearly addressed and more specific and strong recommendations should be made for informing potential intervention. In case of genuine need, it would assist likely donors' consideration to respond.

A small technical working group was formed which included UNICEF, CEGIS, IFRC, CARE-Bangladesh, and DFID to work on the draft towards finalization. WFP volunteered to address the issue of food needs/gaps but as they do not have the mandate for non-food issues like health, education etc, they could not address those issues. The small technical group met and concrete revisions were made to the draft report that was circulated. The first two sections were not changed much. Major changes were made in the areas of gender and diversity, damage and losses, food needs and gaps, response, conclusion and recommendation parts. The gender and diversity section was revised and reflected that in future the assessment team should use the gender and diversity checklist and should include one gender & diversity specialist in the team to address these issues analytically. The disability issue has been briefly mentioned in the report. It was acknowledged that more improvements could be made with regards to gender and diversity issues. Overall four recommendations have been made in the revised report with regard to the improvement of DER technical capacity for emergency needs assessment. Some of the issues could not be clarified clearly in the absence of historical data in a comprehensive manner. In 2006 DER will try to address these issues so that more improvement could be made in terms of assessment towards informed response.

On behalf of the Secretariat, Rehana clarified that RENA exercise include different groups. The forms used include questions relevant to gender and diversity issues –an area which needs more attention and improvement. The challenge is how the assessment team can collect the information. The assessment teams may include individuals to look into the diversity or other issues by sector. But when there is a smaller assessment team and if an individual with diversity related expertise cannot be included, in that case the alliance could be requested to do this exercise. It was suggested that the person who will be assigned to look at the Gender perspective while doing the assessment could also cover the diversity perspective as well.

The representative of UNICEF, Mr Awal inquired about the next steps regarding this report. The main concern was to know if rehabilitation programme is done by any agencies after the flood that hit some of the districts in northern region. It was noted that different organizations have already completed their response actions. WFP has provided 37 MT of high energy biscuits through OXFAM in Naogaon district. The revised report in final form has been circulated to all DER members including the donors.

Mr. Awal suggested having more discussion on capacity building of the assessment teams before, during and also after the assessment. It was noted that in early October capacity building of the assessment team organisations have been completed on the new RENA and RIR formats. Further training of specific team members have been planned for 2006. Mr Awal emphasized on how to build the capacity of the GoB in terms of emergency needs assessment. Due to frequent transfer of the government people who are trained in assessment procedures, skills are not being properly utilized.

Actions:

- a. To circulate the revised RENA report to all including the donors and ask for their feedback/comments.
- b. More discussions to be made on capacity building of the assessment teams, both during and after the assessment.
- c. WFP would also continue to monitor the food security situation during the coming months.
- d. The consultant engaged in doing the gender and diversity capacity assessment study could examine these issues and recommend ways on how best the gender and diversity issues are addressed during assessment for improvement.

4. Presentation on Disaster Database:

Mr John McHarris of WFP gave a brief presentation on ‘Disaster Database’. The main objective of the presentation was to share ideas regarding how a more systematic use of historical disaster data would support better preparedness, responses as well as mitigation and prevention. The database fields identified are disaster type, geographic location, time fields, damage fields, humanitarian response fields etc. The benefit of having a historical database is that it can compare the present event with the past, rapid response planning could be done; target could be better prepared and prevented etc. The areas prone to floods or other disasters could be identified from historical records of past occurrences. He also shared the sources of data base which includes MoFDM DMB Disaster Database, Dartmouth Flood Observatory Database, WHO (CRED) EM-Dat Emergency Events Database, MoH-DGHS/WHO-IEDCR Diarrhoea Database,

USAID (OFDA) Database, and other UN Agencies/NGOs. He also presented on the geographical locations of the flood prone maps and the areas where disaster has happened. The presentation concluded with some steps to be taken in the future like forming a working group on information management/database development, other sources of disaster events data-NGOs/GoB/other Ministries/Humanitarian Agencies, mechanism for sharing the data and combining tabular data with GIS/Remote Sensing data.

Mr Faizul Kabir of Handicap International suggested that there should be continuous and proper updating of the database. As DER we need to consider if we are taking on more responsibilities and if so how we are going to accomplish that. He also informed that CDMP has a component of disaster management information system center based on the information system technology. He suggested that we should learn from them their functions related to disaster information system but while developing the DER historical database we need to consider whether these will supplement, compliment or duplicate their initiative or not.

Mr Awal of UNICEF commented that this database would definitely help all to compare the present events with the past. There is very much a need for developing this as when disaster occurs people depend mostly on the media, newspapers etc which are not always reliable. But he was curious to know if this would be DER's mandate or some other agency's.

Mr McHarris replied to his concerns that it is not WFP or any other organizations' mandate, it is the responsibility of all. He also said that each and every organization have their own mandate towards achieving their organizational goals with regard to disaster but if these could be coordinated together then the greater cause can only be achieved. He also opined that coordination with CDMP and others is to be done with regards to disaster database.

The Chair and some members said that one of the key mandate of DER is information sharing and historical database is one way to contribute to this for improvement. The DER has already developed a database about relief distribution during flood 2004. The database gives a clear indication of which organization provided relief during the 2004 floods. It can be used as a historical reference. DMB has also developed a database. Unfortunately this could not be used in 2004 flood. WFP emphasized on the point that DER activities are supplementary, complementary to the government with regard to disaster management and response in Bangladesh.

Mr Monzu Morshed asserted that the DER's role is not to duplicate the database rather strengthen the government functions. Government need time to implement these initiatives. Keeping this in mind DER could develop something in the interim to bridge the gap, which would eventually support and strengthen the GoB in terms of disaster database.

Action:

- a. Review the ToR of DER and prioritization of issues or themes for the DER to focus in 2006.
- b. Coordinate with CDMP with regard to disaster database to see how DER and CDMP for MoFDM can complement each other.

5. Any Other Business

i) Gender & Diversity WG Progress: Rehana invited Dr. Rakib, G&D Consultant to introduce himself and to share his ToR with the DER members. Dr. Rakib has been assigned by DER Working Group on Gender and Diversity to fine tune the checklist and prepare the user's guideline and also to assess the assessment reports of six organizations to see how the gender and diversity perspectives are addressed.

Dr. Rakib said that he would start working from last week of December for a period of 60 days completing in March 2006. He informed that the main objective of his ToR is a) pre-testing of the Checklist, identify the areas of improvement if any, develop the indicators for practical use, and apply and test them as required; b) Identify and present best practices and advise how these models can be promoted among other agencies; c) Collect and review the tools DER member organizations are currently using to analyze and address gender and diversity, and recommend any area of improvement as to its coverage, appropriateness, and practicality.

Ms. Kabita of Oxfam mentioned that a maximum of five organizations could be assessed. Those who have shown their interests to be assessed are: Oxfam, Action Aid, CARE, and Concern. Handicap International expressed their interest to be assessed from the diversity perspective. After a discussion it was agreed that the recently developed DER RENA assessment report would be assessed. It was also agreed that the focus should not limit only to International NGOs, the local NGOs could also be assessed. Finally it was decided that Action Aid and Oxfam would send their names of the partner organizations for assessment.

ii) Training of DIFPs: Mr Awal of UNICEF suggested for active functioning of the DIFPs and for this discussion is needed with respective organizations. He further suggested having more than one focal point for each district. It was remarked that the DIFPs are not expected to be active only during emergencies rather throughout the year, even in normal times. This would help to see how situation changes when a disaster occurs and also analyze the situation better. The training of the DIFPs might not be the solution; different sources have to be consulted for collecting information. In this case, question may arise that if one organization collects information from a particular district, it might be biased towards that particular organization. The DER should be neutral in terms of any information provided.

iii) Local Level Plans: Mr Bazlur Rahman of IIRD asked if there is any local level plans of the government to respond to emergencies. The meeting was informed that at the union level government has disaster management committees supported by UNDP, UNICEF, CARE, Oxfam, WVB and several other NGOs provide training to the disaster management committees. So far 2000+ unions have local level plans. But the question is whether these plans are updated, accessible, user friendly, or being implemented as effectively as needed.

iv) Agency Launching Booklet: Handicap International informed the meeting of its launching of a booklet on 'how to include disability issues in disaster management' which was attended by many DER members. Such an innovative idea is very much appreciated.

To end with, the Chair summarized the key issues discussed in the meeting:

- a. Review of the composition of the sector working groups.
- b. Emphasis on DER technical capacity for improved emergency needs assessment with appropriate attention to donor's information needs for potential intervention.
- c. Standby roster to be reviewed. Training to be given to the members of the standby roster and to the DIFPs so that more focal points could be deployed in the districts for information collection.
- d. Strengthening of DER's information sharing process like websites, database etc.
- e. Importance of historical (time-series) database.
- f. High risk area mapping

6. Date/time of next meeting

Wednesday, 4 January 2006, 14:00 hrs at IDB Bhaban 17th floor.

ANNEX A:

ATTENDANCE LIST

DER Meeting held on 14 December 2005

Organisations	Sl	Name	Organization
UN	1	Mr. Abdul Awal	UNICEF
	2	Dr. Muhammad Zahidur Rahim	WHO
	3	Mr. John McHarris	WFP
	4	Ms. Rehana Banoo	WFP
	5	Mr. Monzu Morshed	WFP
	6	Ms. Farhana Pinky	WFP, FC section
NGOs	7	Mr. M A Wahed	Concern
	8	Mr. Faizul Kabir	Handicap International
	9	Dr. M Bazlur Rahman	IIRD
	10	Mr. Md. Zamir Hossain	Islamic Relief
	11	Mr. Palash Mondol	Nirapad
	12	Ms. Kabita Bose	Oxfam
	13	Mr. Suman SMA Islam	SC-UK
	14	Mr. Saikat Saha	SC-USA
DER Secretariat	15	Mr. Malik Kabir	DER Secretariat (WFP)
	16	Ms. Raushan Ara Begum	DER Secretariat (WFP)
	17	Ms. Meher Nigar Bhuiyan	DER Secretariat (WFP)

Minutes recorded and circulated by: DER Secretariat