

**LCG Sub-group on Disaster and Emergency Response (DER)
Minutes of the Special Meeting held on August 23, 2006**

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

This special DER meeting was particularly focused on two main agenda:

1. Current situation of Southwest region (Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira)
2. Unusually dry monsoon 2006

1. Current situation of South-west region

DER Secretariat: The Secretariat distributed a one-page outline to guide the discussion on potential issues relating to the first agenda item. The discussion mainly focused on i) consensus on DER members understanding of the situation itself, local coping capacity, recent relief to date, assessed needs, longer term solutions and gaps between relief and needs; and ii) what DER as a group can do with regards to the current situation. It also informed on the assessment reports done by Oxfam, Concern, Action Aid Bangladesh (AAB), Islamic Relief (IR) and WFP and UNICEF situation reports. The Secretariat suggested producing a synthesis report as the consolidated ‘DER Assessment Report’ on the basis of all these available reports.

UNICEF: It was suggested to form a smaller group to work on producing this synthesis report.

Oxfam: It volunteered to take the lead role in producing the synthesized report in consultation with AAB, IR, and Concern. It informed that during a meeting the Minister for Food and Disaster Management suggested them to produce a consolidated picture of the current situation. Next week Oxfam will meet again the Minister and at this time the relevant DRROs will be present.

Oxfam identified 30% of the total water logged population as severely affected requiring immediate assistance. It has initially budgeted for 2 million taka to provide immediate assistance to cover 6000 families. Through its local implementing partners it has also provided some emergency shelters as well as health and hygiene kits.

Action Aid Bangladesh (AAB): It appreciated Oxfam for taking the lead role in synthesizing all the reports together. However it raised the concern whether or not this report would add any value in terms of advocacy with the government regarding the current threatening situation. With its right based approach AAB considered advocacy not only with MoFDM, but with other relevant ministries and the media as well. It had stressed on the fact that the situation warrants immediate assistance and the agencies can go for immediate responses on the basis of these already produced assessment reports.

It was informed that AAB will cover 20,000 families and will provide sanitation, medical support, safe drinking water, and create employment opportunities. AAB emphasized that immediate drainage of water should be the first and foremost responsibility of all agencies and they should work closely with the government to recede the water.

Revised on 7 September 2006

Islamic Relief: It was informed that IR has conducted RIR in the affected unions and is planning to undertake RENA jointly with AAB, Oxfam and Concern. IR will cover 25,000 families and will provide hygiene kits and food items.

Concern: It has planned to cover 10,000 families and will provide food relief.

IFRC/BDRCS: It has provided 300 Family Kits (consists of 18 different items) and 300 pcs of blankets to 300 families who have moved from their inundated houses to dry, higher places, i.e, on road sides. It is still assessing the situation and will provide more relief, if need be. It can provide shelters to the affected families as per their mandate. It has limited WATSON capacities and the ability to distribute food. Apart from reporting on their relief status, they have suggested that interested agencies can jointly take a small plane and get an aerial picture of this situation.

DRR: It was informed that the government has taken the issue of water logging into serious consideration. It was informed about the visit of the Joint Secretary, MoFDM and the DG, DRR to some of the severely affected upazillas of Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira. It also informed about a meeting tentatively scheduled for 7 September at the Prime Minister's office. The meeting aims to discuss comprehensive plans to solve the water-logging issue permanently.

The GoB in an initial assessment has identified 86,840 affected families in 46 severely affected unions out of the 73 Unions in six upazillas (Keshobpur, Monirampur and Abhaynagar, Tala, Kolaroa and Dumuria) in Jessore, Satkhira, and Khulna districts. It was also informed that the government has distributed 1,24,000 VGF cards covering all the fully and partially affected families. So far, they have also distributed 407 MT of GR and another 4 lacs as GR Cash. Under the National Risk Reduction Programme, the government has allocated 3.5 million taka for each of the affected upazillas.

UNDP: It was said that the synthesized assessment report could not be termed as advocacy report. Apart from MoFDM other relevant Ministries need to be involved as well to make a permanent solution to this long standing water logging problems in the Southwest regions. The fact is to see if this report would attract the attention of the government in terms of long-term solution.

DER Secretariat: It fully agreed with AAB on the fact that the government is the key stakeholder in terms of advocacy. But it should not limit to the government only, this synthesized report could also be used for internal advocacy within the senior managers and other related stakeholders. It also agreed with the concern raised by Action Aid and anticipates that the government will step up significantly in terms of relief response.

The secretariat recommended that the agencies should go forward with immediate assistance at this time and the medium and long-term solutions could be looked into separately. It offered producing a summary table compiling all the relief response to date.

The secretariat proposed that all DER agencies that have conducted an assessment along with the GoB could form a small working group. The small group will task to discuss the extent of damage and responses to date for effective coordination and to avoid duplication of relief efforts. The GoB representative in the meeting has willingly accepted the proposal and agreed to work together with other agencies on this.

ECHO: It emphasized that actions needs to be chalked out to enable the donors to critically analyze the situation and to act immediately on short, mid and longer-term relief and rehabilitation.

DFID: It appreciated the idea of forming a small working group including the government. But wanted to get some picture regarding the relief operations to date assuming the GoB need to coordinate the relief responses. While appreciated the GoB's efforts of distributing 124, 000 VGF cards, asked what mechanisms are there to ensure that the most vulnerable groups would receive them.

DRR: The representative from the DRR informed that since 2003 the Government has deployed army personnel in times of the distribution VGF cards to prevent any unfair means to be reported. In addition to this, the government in their transition period would not want to face any problems. All these point to less possibility of adopting unfair means.

The following issues were raised in the subsequent discussion:

- CDMP requested all to look into the DER mandate. It raised the question and appropriateness of the DER sub-group making an appeal to the government with regard to the water logging issue if the GoB is a member of the sub-group.
- DFID, ECHO, IFRC/BDRCS, UNDP, UNICEF, Oxfam, AAB, Concern they all articulately clarified that the current threatening situation warrants immediate assistance and 'DER as one voice' can appeal to the government for taking immediate measures to draw a permanent solution to this problem. The consolidated DER report can work as a tool to take this forward.
- DMB echoed the concern earlier raised by CDMP about the appropriateness of DER making an appeal to the GoB considering that the GoB itself is part of the DER.
- The DRR positively noted that the consolidated DER report/recommendations can be taken to the decision makers within the government. Another importance of having this report is that the report can be used as a reference to advocate with other key Ministries (not just the MoFDM), within the government.

Recommendations and actions:

1. The DER Secretariat will produce a table format to put all the related information together. It will circulate the table to all the DER members by cob 23 August.
2. The DER members will complete the table and send this back to DER Secretariat by midday 24 August.
3. DER Secretariat will then circulate the consolidated summary table of relief responses to the DER members by cob 24 August.
4. Oxfam, AAB, IR, IFRC/BDRCS and Concern will sit together to share their individual response plan. They will share their consolidated response plan with all the DER members.
5. Oxfam to take the lead role in producing the DER assessment report through the consolidation of all the available reports done by different agencies (AAB, IR, IFRC/BDRCS and Concern).
6. DER Secretariat will provide technical support in terms of structuring the report. It will liaise with Oxfam bilaterally on this issue.
7. IFRC/BDRCS recommended having monitoring reports from the fields after the responses by different agencies have taken place.
8. The RIR reports produced by the DIFPs of the respective districts (Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira) will be circulated among the DER members.
9. DER Secretariat will continue to circulate situation information as and when they receive from DER members.

2. Unusually dry monsoon-2006:

Mr. John McHarris made a presentation on 'Monsoon 2006; unusual light rainfall' in Bangladesh. The main objective of the presentation was to share information and raise the awareness among the DER members on this burning issue. The presentation included information on current rainfall situation in the country as issued by Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), rainfall situation in the selected 7 northwest stations by Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), monitoring and assessment issues etc.

Main discussion points are summarized below:

- The situation could be described as 'hydrological and meteorological drought'.
- Also less rainfall in other neighboring countries like India and Nepal.
- Aman plantation is between 15 July and 15 August of each year. But in Bangladesh the actual picture is that the plantation goes up to 30 September.
- The flowering period of Aman is October.
- GoB plan is to cover 5.25 million hectares of land and to produce 12.22 MT of rice.
- A total of 2.45 million hectares (35%) of Aman seeds have already been planted till 10 August 2006 despite less rainfall and the drought like situation. This amount is more or less similar to last year.
- So far, there is no problem in plantation of Aman rice.
- If drought occurs in September/October, it will have serious implication on Aman cultivation.
- The seasonal monga will hit harder, if drought takes a serious turn in September/October.
- According to IRI forecast, normal rainfall situation will prevail in August, September and October this year. But the concern is if this normal situation is sufficient for Aman cultivation or do we need above normal to avoid this drought like situation.
- FAO and WFP can jointly conduct a crop assessment study.
- FAO produces a pre-harvest forecast. Suggestion came that if FAO can circulate this information (drought like situation) to all the DER members.
- FAO can share current crop monitoring and future monitoring reports with DER Secretariat and then DER Secretariat can circulate this to all DER members.

NEXT DER MEETING:

The next regular DER meeting is proposed as usual for the first Wednesday of the month on 6 September 1400 hrs at the same venue at IDB Bhaban 17th floor.

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

ANNEX A: ATTENDANCE LIST of DER Special Meeting held on 23 August 2006

Organisations	Sl	Name	Organization
GoB	1	Mr. Md. Abdur Rahman	MoFDM
	2	Mr. Md. Jahangir Hossain	DRR
	3	Dr. M.S.H. Mahmud	DRR
	4	Mr. Md. Abu Sadeque	DMB
	5	Mr. Abdul Latif Khan	CDMP/UNDP
Donor	6	Mr. Johnny Sarker	DFID
	7	Mr. Abdul Awal	ECHO
	8	Mr. Alan Biggs	IFRC
	9	Mr. William Halder	IFRC
	10	Engr. Ranadhir K. Das	IFRC
UN	11	Dr. Subash Dasgupta	FAO
	12	Md. Tarik-ul-Islam	UNDP
	13	Mr. Md. Zulfikur Ali Khan	UNICEF
	14	Dr. Muhammad Zahidur Rahim	WHO
	15	Mr. John McHarris	WFP
NGOs	16	Wahida Bashar Ahmed	ActionAid Bangladesh
	17	Tauhid Ibne Ahmed	ActionAid Bangladesh
	18	Mr. Mostafa Kamal	BDRCS
	19	Mr. Oliver Wakelin	Concern
	20	Mr. Pankaj Kumar	Concern
	21	Mr. Charles S. Sarkar	Christian Aid
	22	Mr. Reshad Md. Ekram Ali	Geological Survey of Bangladesh
	23	Ms. Armana Ahmed	ICDDRDB
	24	Mr. Nurul Amin Bagmer	Islamic Relief
	25	Mr. Anil Tambay	Oxfam
	26	Ms. Kabita Bose	Oxfam
	27	Mr. Anthony D'Cruze	RDRS
	28	Mr. Md. Atiquzzaman	SC-SD
DER Secretariat	29	Ms. Mariko Hattori	DER Secretariat (WFP)
	30	Mr. Malik Kabir	DER Secretariat (WFP)
	31	Ms. Meher Nigar Bhuiyan	DER Secretariat (WFP)

Minutes recorded and circulated by: DER Secretariat