

**Special Meeting of NGO Members of the DER Sub-Group to
Brief the UN Flash Appeal Review Team**

01 November 2004

The meeting was chaired by Ms. Rehana Banoo, WFP Disaster Preparedness Section Manager.

The attendance list is at Annex A.

MAIN POINTS COVERED AT THE MEETING

The purpose of the Review:

The aim of the review was to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the July/Aug 2004 Bangladesh Flood Flash Appeal process, and to draw lessons so that subsequent humanitarian responses to natural disasters in Bangladesh and elsewhere could be improved. This should contribute towards improving the Flash Appeal process and therefore lead to reduced hardship and loss of life and to a speedier recovery. As it was too early to address the impact of the response (which is likely to be the subject of a post-Appeal review in early 2005), the review was to consider the Flash Appeal process from the following perspectives:

- a) Time taken to offer immediate help to flood victims.
- b) Time taken to put together and launch the Flash Appeal.
- c) Process followed for putting the appeal together including roles and responsibilities of the key personnel involved.
- d) Scope of the Flash Appeal in terms of its appropriateness relative to humanitarian needs.
- e) Part played by Government Departments.
- f) Response of the donor community.
- g) Disbursement of the funds raised through the Flash Appeal.

The recommendations will be addressed to the main stakeholders in country as well as at headquarter level including donors, OCHA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

The purpose of the Special Meeting:

The Flash Appeal Review Mission team members were two consultants engaged by DFID; Ms. Jane Barham and Mr. Harold Lockwood. The meeting was held at the request of the team, to exchange information with a selection of NGO representatives from the DER Sub-Group in order to gather their views on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the UN Flash Appeal process, its scope and approach, and particularly the adequacy of the consultation with NGOs.

What are your views in terms of time taken to offer immediate help ?

- Mr. Monzu Morshed (CARE): “How quick was DFID’s response is a big question. At the initial stage the emergency, relief mechanisms started late but after that everything took place on time in terms of data collection, information sharing and consultation with NGOs etc. But, even so, the DFID triangular funding arrangement with UNDP providing only non-food relief and WFP providing only food relief was not made clear to the implementing NGOs in the beginning, which created confusion.”
- Ms. Columba O’Dowd (Concern): “We have 50 local partners with pre-positioned stocks ready for immediate response. We could have done more relief work if more funding was

available but we spent a lot of our own money. \$40,000 was received from UNDP raised through the Flash Appeal, otherwise Concern's own funds were used. For rehabilitation work ECHO and UNDP funds were available. We submitted a project proposal for non-food relief and 'shelter' work but since UNDP only agreed to the 'Cash For Work' (CFW) component, we withdrew our application as it was slowing our operations. I have to say as well that the triangular arrangement of DFID, UNDP and WFP was confusing for us too."

- Mr. Apurba Sarker (Koinonia): "DER's role in the response was not so clear. Our relief operation cost approximately \$500,000, raised through our traditional funding source."
- Mr. Farhad A. Majumder (Handicap International): "We started with our own resources but later on applied to UNDP and WFP for assistance. We have received funds from UNDP and food items from WFP but we are still waiting for the rest of the amount as per the Letter of Agreement. Our priority lies with helping the disabled people."
- Mr. Abdul Shahid Mahmood (SCF USA): "We worked under the banner of SCF (Alliance). We have received non-food items from UNDP and food items from WFP but we also have the same complaint that we have not as yet received all of the food items, hence distribution is delayed. It would have been helpful for the poor people if distribution took place in the month of Ramadan in the rural areas. We applied to UNDP for 'CFW' but they had certain terms and conditions which were unacceptable to our management. We hope that before 15 November our distribution work will be complete."
- Dr. Ahmed Nasr Toson (Islamic Relief): "In the middle of May our emergency operations started in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari in coordination with the DER Group. Initially we utilised IR's own funds of \$45,000 and later were able to secure £100,000 from headquarters to support this operation. We also received DFID funds through UNDP for non-food items worth \$857,000, to support 20,000 families in 17 districts. We provided seeds to 9,000 families, hygiene kits to 20,000 families, money for reconstruction of houses to 6,000 families, and funds to clean 100 fishponds. We have received 1,237 MT in bulk food items and 60 MT of High-Energy Biscuits (HEB) from WFP and distribution of the second and third phases of food relief from WFP is in the pipeline. Although we have experienced some delays which we cannot explain, we feel that the overall response by DFID, UNDP and WFP to this emergency was quick."
- Mr. Alauddin Khan (NDP): "We started operations with our own resources early August and then received funds through our partners; we supported 3,000 families with CARE's funds and 2,500 families with IR's funds. WFP and UNDP provided assistance to support 14,000 families. We hope to complete our distribution by 4 November."

Did the DER Sub-Group work ?

- Mr. Morshed (CARE): "The DER Sub-Group was successful in bringing agencies together during peak periods and the turnout was good for information sharing. There are agencies which usually do not have access to a lot of information and DER's capability to coordinate all of us so that there were no overlaps of information gathering was commendable. It is understandable if some improvement is needed as 'DER' is still evolving."
- Mr. Nurul Amin Bagmer (Islamic Relief): "We agree that DER's efforts to coordinate all the agencies which have participated in information exchange was very helpful indeed."

Any comments on the assessment process ?

- Dr. Toson/Mr. Bagmer (Islamic Relief): "DER facilitated the assessment process, which again helped to coordinate work in a systematic manner so that there were no overlaps in

information gathering. DER assembled the assessment teams and briefed them on how to collect the relevant information.”

- Mr. Morshed (CARE): “Government figures can be relied upon as the basic source of information and DER’s consolidated information should complement it. Different NGOs have differing opinions about the number of people affected, so a baseline is necessary. Also, for information collection, there was interaction with people at the union level, and it has been observed that at this level, manipulation of figures is much harder.”
- Everyone agreed that the difference of opinion might be caused by inaccuracies in certain information which cannot be avoided whilst consolidating all the information. Complexity arises when we see that day-to-day variations in information exist and yesterday’s information becomes out-of-date. So, consolidating of information is a huge and complex task and tremendous support was received from local level NGOs and government offices.

Did the presence of UN-OCHA and UNDAC teams improve the process ?

- Mr. Bagmer (*Islamic Relief*): “There was an increase in the capacity to make everything work at a faster pace. However, WFP’s support to the process during this emergency period was commendable and it should not be compared to the set-up in normal times. From both a domestic and an international perspective the approach was appropriate and orderly.”
- Ms. O’Dowd (Concern): “I would like to make a general comment that the person in the director’s chair in many agencies changes often, so there is always a problem of information gaps due to lack of continuity and experience in these positions.”
- Ms. Rehana Banoo (DER Secretariat): “The UNDAC team facilitated the work of the newly formed DER Sectoral Groups, and in this respect their guidance was very helpful.”

Were you equally happy to be a part of the sectoral working groups as of ‘DER’ ?

- Mr. Morshed (CARE): “There is room for improvement in this particular aspect. DER has to clarify to all participating NGOs that it will work only as a coordination platform rather than actual directing activities and disbursing resources. And to make the sectoral working group function effectively, regular and proper participation in meetings is needed.”

Summary of Key Points:

1. That consultation of key NGOs in the process of formulating the UN Flash Appeal was adequate and timely.
2. That the overall response was significant but not comprehensive and timely in every respect, since there were problems with procurement and supply. As a result, the DFID assistance did not always reach the affected families as quickly as it should have done.
3. That the core role of the DER Sub-Group, that is to facilitate information sharing, is understood by members of the group, but still needs to be more widely promoted.

DER Sub-Group Secretariat

22 November 2004

ANNEXES

A Attendance List

Annex A**ATTENDANCE LIST**

Serial	Name	Organisation
1	Ms. Jane Barham	DFID [consultant on the Review Team]
2	Mr. Harold Lockwood	DFID [consultant on the Review Team]
3	Mr. Monzu Morshed	CARE
4	Mr. Ashutosh Dey	Concern
5	Ms. Columba O' Dowd	Concern
6	Mr. A. S. Mahmood	SCF (USA)
7	Mr. Farhad A. Majumder	Handicap International
8	Mr. Nurul Amin Bagmer	Islamic Relief
9	Dr. Ahmed Nasr Toson	Islamic Relief
10	Mr. Apurba Sarker	Koinonia
11	Mr. Md. Alauddin Khan	NDP
12	Ms. Nazria Islam	WFP [DER Secretariat]
13	Ms. Rehana Banoo	WFP [DER Secretariat]