

Meeting of the DER Group

03 August July 2004

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Douglas Casson Coutts, WFP Representative and UN Resident Coordinator *ad interim*.

Main points covered at the meeting:

- The Chair referred members to the Action Points to the previous meeting of the DER Sub-Group on 28 Jul 04. No changes to the points were requested.
- The first part of the meeting consisted of a series of presentations from the DER Secretariat and Sectoral Working Groups.

Situation Overview

[Charlie Higgins, DER Secretariat]

- Development of the situation over the previous three weeks, using the inundation maps from the FFWC to show the changing depth and pattern of flooding;
- The flood situation today;
- The weather forecast for Bangladesh, and the longer range picture for Northern India/Nepal and Tibet, the potential for further flooding in Aug or Sep, given that it is still early on in the monsoon season;
- The possible worst case scenario – a flood in the Jamuna, Padma, and Meghna River Basins all at the same time;
- Use of Vulnerability Analysis Mapping to identify the most severely impacted *upazilas*.
- The latest Government loss and damage figures (as at 1 Aug 04).

The first stage of the Vulnerability Analysis Mapping has been completed and all affected upazilas have been ranked based on a composite index of the percentage of their total land area flooded > 0.5 metre on three successive dates, and their pre-flood poverty incidence. This has generated three categories of upazila: high, moderate, and lower need. The list is available on the DER web-page at www.lcgbangladesh.org

Health and Nutrition Sectors

[Dr. Kazi Akram, WHO]

- Review of current health situation and the distribution of diarrhoea cases and deaths by date, and by district.
- Objectives and strategies for health and nutrition interventions.
- Discussion centred on the rising incidence of diarrhoea, the possibility of dengue fever as the waters recede, and the need for medical assistance to be given equal priority with the distribution of food relief. Other concerns include the spread of chicken pox and malaria, and the shortage of water purification tablets (WPTs), water-soluble chlorine for bulk purification and oral rehydration salts. As a preparedness measure WHO has already brought in 15,000 bags of cholera saline solution, and has a budget of US\$ 330,000 for immediate medical support.

Food and Agriculture Sectors [Ms. Rehana Banoo, WFP, & Mr. Mahmudul Islam, FAO]

- Review of food needs given the extent of the flooding, the US\$ 500 million losses to agriculture, the loss of day-labouring opportunities, and the need for 3-6 months relief as poor families will take at least this long to recover partial domestic food production.
- Strategies for food relief include a standardized food relief package to ensure consistency across DER member interventions, and supplements targeted at infants and pregnant/nursing women, in order to ensure food security for the most vulnerable in the short and longer term.
- Critical issues, needs and priorities in agriculture include generating an immediate supply of seeds, fertilizers, and inputs to support livestock and fish-pond farming.
- Strategies for agriculture include a 6 month rehabilitation programme for up to 20% of affected families, to supply seeds for aman, vegetables, and various winter crops.
- Questions were asked about the calorific value of the relief package (1800-2100 Kcal per person for a 5 person family) and the percentage of hardcore poor in need of the food package. FAO clarified that the rehabilitation programme would be designed to prevent the failure of the next aman crop, not recover the one lost in the floods. Early and adequate seed availability as the floods recede is a serious concern.
- DER Member Agencies were invited to join the Sectoral Working Group in order to participate in more detailed discussion of these issues.

Shelter and Non-food Relief Sectors [Ms. Dilruba Haider, UNDP]

- Review of current shelter situation, with 19 million people now effectively homeless, increasing the problems of migration, family separation and disintegration.
- The Government response to date was outlined, and critical areas to be addressed in terms of house repair and rebuilding.
- The scale of the problem and the potential cost of recovery in this sector were also highlighted, and linked to economic recovery through reconstruction of local infrastructure, creation of employment opportunities, and small interest-free loans.
- Discussion centred on the permanence of any houses rebuilt, the time and cost of implementing this initiative, the use/dimensions of CI sheets and locally-produced alternatives, and the need to address the rehabilitation of non-agricultural livelihoods.

Education and Protection Sectors [Mr. Paul Edwards, UNICEF]

- Review of the present situation, with 23,000 educational institutions directly affected by the floods or through being used as evacuation centres. Protection was also a concern, since the current situation makes children and women more vulnerable to abuse than normal.
- The overall protection and education response to date was limited and assessment of the flood's impact on the education sector was still ongoing. Given the range of critical issues in both areas, the required responses were outlined.
- Although response in these sectors to date had been very limited, it was suggested that at least in terms of protection, much could be achieved without large interventions, and

that what could be done should be done, including responses such as police protection, separate shelters for pregnant women, and provision of trained birth attendants.

Water and Sanitation Sectors

[Mr. Gabriel Rozario, UNICEF]

- The presentation reviewed the current situation, with up to 2 million tube-wells and 3 million latrines rendered inoperable. The bulk of the response to date had been made by the Department of Public Health and Engineering and the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority.
- Critical issues include the shortage of WPTs, and the difficulty of accessing the remotest flooded areas. The required responses include the importation of large quantities of WPTs and their swift distribution where they are most needed. Sanitation facilities also need rapid improvement and expansion.
- There was discussion on the possible alternatives to WPTs available within Bangladesh.

Copies of the sectoral presentations made at the DER Sub-Group Meeting and the Donor Briefing the following day, are available on the web-page at www.lcgbangladesh.org

- The meeting suggested that now the five sectoral working groups had been formed, they should address the following issues for their sector:
 - Achieve consensus within the working group on the scope and scale of the problems;
 - Share information and summarize what has already been done about these problems;
 - Agree what more has to be done to define needs within the sector;
 - Jointly plan action that addresses the critical problems;
 - Estimate the cost of the envisaged interventions, based on agreed unit cost figures (e.g. how much it will cost to provide 1,000 typical affected families with the necessary medical supplies, food, and non-food relief they will need for the same period of time);
 - Consider how much stock of the most essential items, already exists in-country.
- The DER Secretariat explained that the sectoral working groups are not exclusive. Any DER Sub-Group Member working in any of the sectors is invited to participate – just contact the person who gave the relevant presentation at the meeting.
- The Chair outlined the overall UN strategy of utilising their readily available resources first, at the same time as preparing an inter-agency Flash Appeal to cover response across all sectors, and address both ongoing relief and initial recovery needs for the next 6 months.
- Initial response had relied both on resources in the UN Agencies' existing country programmes, and emergency grants such as the £10 million from UK (DFID). This grant was enabling UN Agencies to support capable NGOs which submit appropriate and effective project proposals to a review committee consisting of DFID, UNDP, and WFP. Currently half the funds have been allocated, and more projects await review. The DER Secretariat will try to report back on the status of all proposals received so far, so that DER Member Agencies and donors alike know which have already been accepted.
- The DER Secretariat introduced a fresh initiative to get on top of the enormous flow of information from members, the Government and others, about response efforts and

outstanding needs. A standard format for collecting data about response (initially) had been designed, and all members were asked to complete the form that was distributed in hard-copy at the meeting, and would also be disseminated electronically by e-mail. The first response using this new form should be completed no later than the next DER Sub-Group meeting. Thereafter it would be uploaded on the web-page and regularly updated.

So far only a few responses have been received. All DER Member's cooperation is needed if this effort is to reveal overlaps and gaps in the response to date, and thus be a useful tool for the whole emergency aid community in Bangladesh.

- The meeting considered that coordination at national level was quite effective, but there was some discussion as to whether it was so effectively supported at district, upazila, and union level. Could the DER Sub-Group really influence this beyond urging all members and their implementing partners in the field to share information and work cooperatively with each other through such fora as the District Disaster Management Committees and the Upazila District Disaster Management Committees ?
- The Chair introduced the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team which was helping to produce the Flash Appeal. He thanked all DER Members and especially those contributing to the sectoral working groups. He also emphasized that donors are grateful for the existence of the group and promise to continue their support.
- The next meeting of the DER Sub-Group will be on Wednesday, 11 August 2004, at 1400 hrs. The location and agenda will be disseminated shortly, but suggestions from DER Sub-Group Members are very welcome.

***DER Sub-Group Secretariat
7 August 2004***