



FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER

Strengthening Humanitarian Response

Lessons Learned & Good Practices in the Bangladesh Food Security Cluster

Exercise Conducted by WFP/FAO co-led Global Food Security Cluster

10/10/2013

Synthesis Report

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1. Executive Summary

The Lessons Learned and Good Practices Project was designed to officially document key coordination accomplishments of the Bangladesh Food Security Cluster (FSC) and to identify those particular areas where the Lead Agencies' experiences might be useful for other clusters and coordination structures. Three of the most successful areas include the following:

- i. Preparedness
- ii. Assessments
- iii. Government Collaboration

2. Methodology

The findings in this report are the result of consultations with the WFP/FAO Lead Agencies, and NGO partners. Literature reviews and semi-structured teleconferences with team secretariat also took place. Preliminary findings and good practices were reviewed by the Bangladesh FSC, and feedback incorporated into this report.

3. Coordination Context

In Bangladesh, the aim of the coordination approach is to support the existing Government structure to ensure a more coherent and effective response by mobilizing groups of agencies, organizations and NGOs to respond in a strategic manner across all key sectors and areas of activity, with each sector having a clearly designated lead.

The FSC supports the Government-led, **Local Consultative Working Group on Disaster and Emergency Response (LCG-DER)** through the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) both lead by the Ministry of Disaster Management (MoDM) and the Resident Coordinator's (RC) office, in responding to the evolving humanitarian context in Bangladesh, keeping in mind the needs of the people at risk. The FSC coordinates humanitarian responses ensuring that adequate preparedness mechanisms are in place before a disaster strikes, as well as in the early recovery phases.

Disaster Coordination Bangladesh

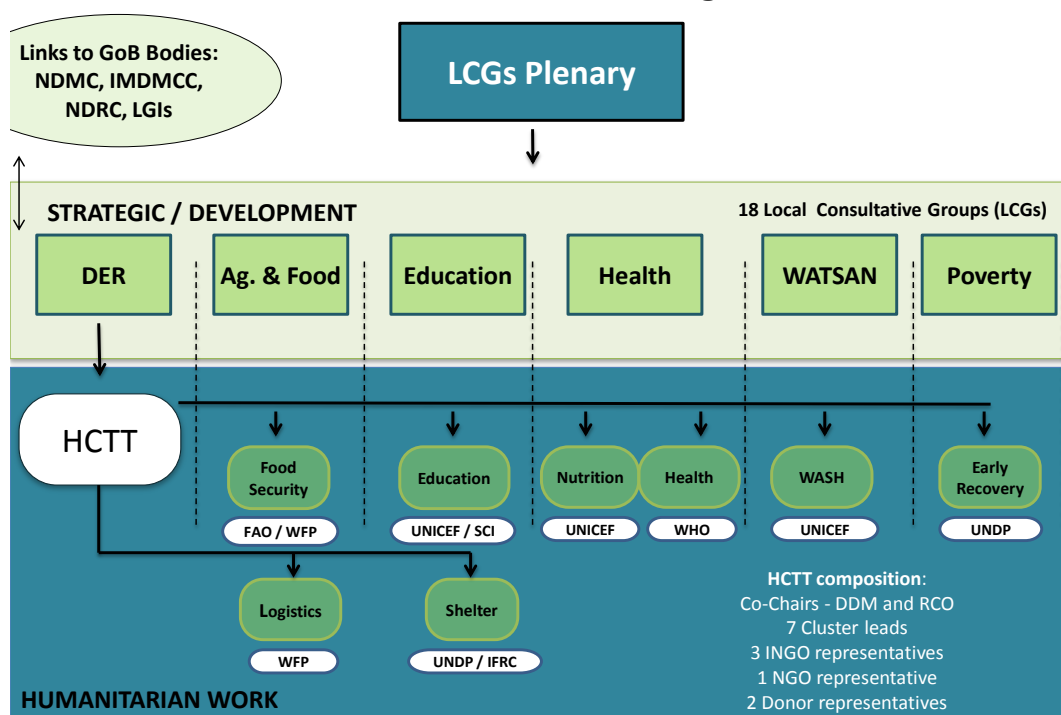


Figure 1: The diagram highlights the disaster coordination structure in the event of a cyclone or other emergency.

The FSC strengthens the collective capacity of humanitarian actors working in the area of food security in Bangladesh. It focuses in particular on preparedness, whilst providing support to the Government and LCG DER on response efforts during times of both slow and sudden onset emergencies. In this endeavor, the FSC works closely with the HCTT on all emergency coordination related activities and communicates (information exchange) with the Local Consultative Group on Agriculture and Food Security and Rural Development, (LCG-AFSRD), chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and co-chaired by FAO.

The lessons learned in this report relate particularly to preparedness activities – including contingency planning, needs assessments and integrated food security phase classification (IPC) activities – undertaken during 2013 leading up to the coordination solutions, including the FSC joint response planning approach, undertaken before and after the advent of the Tropical Storm Mahasen, on 16 May, 2013.

Following an initial rapid joint needs assessment (JNA Phase I), the FSC along with the Nutrition Cluster (NC) undertook a detailed assessment in the three worst affected districts (Barguna, Bhola and Patuakhali). The assessment measured the extent of damages to food security and strengthened coordination and response efforts at government, inter-agency and inter-cluster level. Furthermore, the emergency alert phase of the humanitarian clusters, during the days prior to the Mahasen Tropical storm, provided a wealth of lessons learned that have been incorporated into the preparedness procedures of the FSC, which have been incorporated into the FSC Contingency Plan (July 2013 version).

4. Preparedness

The Emergency Preparedness Plan for Cyclone, Bangladesh (April 2013) was developed by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) to strengthen overall capacity and capability of communities to efficiently manage seasonal national hazards and to ensure an orderly transition from relief through recovery, and back to sustained development. The FSC's Contingency Plan for Cyclones in the South (May 2013, revised in July and October 2013) complements the Government Document, focusing specifically on Food Security actions specific to UN agencies, civil society and development partners, that support the initial response of the Government.

The FSC, together with government line ministries, UN agencies, civil society and development partners are engaged in training appropriate personnel in food security analysis, needs assessments, mitigation measures to protect and rebuild (BBB) livelihoods of crisis affected-communities.

Lessons Learned:

3.1 The Standing Orders on Disasters (SODs) of the Emergency Preparedness Plan for Cyclone, Bangladesh (April 2013) outline the way the government will respond to disasters, which the humanitarian clusters should complement. Furthermore, DER, through the HCTT, ensure that the efforts of humanitarian clusters are coordinated. The triggering of the FSC emergency alert phase in the hours/days immediately before or following a disaster is prompted through the HCTT by Government, in line with the SODs.

3.2 Initial cluster alert and preparedness actions, guided by the draft FSC Contingency plan (May 2013), further complemented the Government interventions. This was done in close collaboration and engagement of the Government of Bangladesh, UN organizations, civil society (I/NGO) and development partners including prepositioning (food and cash), deployment of cluster members to further assess the situation and complement the Government response, avoiding overlaps and gaps, specific to the food security sector.

3.3 Based on the work of its Technical Working Group (TWG) with participation of key Government stakeholders on the cluster contingency plan on cyclones in the south, the FSC provides normative guidance on operations to ensure they are well coordinated. The TWG has also developed Standard Operating Procedures for the cluster.

3.4 Effective partnerships exist with local consultative groups (especially those that are Government-led) and other clusters, specifically with the Nutrition Cluster but also WASH, Shelter and Early Recovery. Indeed, as part of the cluster's preparedness measures, the FSC has worked closely with the Nutrition Cluster on food package standardization to ensure a coordinated cluster response.

3.5 The IPC, housed within the Ministry of Food, has contributed significantly to the coordination of clusters, agencies, I/NGO's and especially the Government. The IPC acute phase analysis developed during the preparedness phase was used for the Mahasen JNA I and Phase III FSC and Nutrition Cluster Assessment, to help determine the best approach to response, in terms of access, availability and utilization, which cuts across many of the humanitarian cluster mandates.

5. Assessments

The FSC effectively coordinates Joint Needs Assessments (JNA) to ensure that synergies are developed with other relevant stakeholders and to avoid overlap, whilst benefiting from mutual support. The networks developed during Assessment phases also help build national capacity and ensure a degree of continuity in the response. In parallel, FSC ensures specific assessment capacity building of cluster members and enumerators for better assessments. Cluster specific assessments are in coordination with inter-cluster, multi sector initial assessments, which are called JNA Phase I and JNA Phase II. In recent times, FSC assessment reports were commonly used for response programmes.

NGOs are strong partners and contribute to assessments by volunteering, cost sharing whilst some such as Oxfam have provided funds for training. A roster of over 100 trained assessment experts has been developed to be used during future assessments.

Lessons Learned:

4.1 Joint Needs Assessments (JNAs) and Common Analyses are the result of strong inter-cluster coordination and collaboration across different agencies and the NGO community.

4.2 The benefits of the JNA (*i.e.* a single report rather than several rapid sectoral assessments) have been recognized by both Government and donors.

4.3 The JNA took into account the different needs of population groups, particularly basic requirements related to food security, shelter, nutrition, water and sanitation.

4.4 Trainings have increased national capacity on the ground, so that Assessments can be undertaken in a thorough and timely manner. The ECHO-funded Assessment Officer has also contributed to enhancing the technical quality of Assessments through better data collection and analysis.

4.6 The FSC coordinates food security assessments including sampling, production of assessment tools, market survey, data management and analysis to acquire a deeper understanding of people in need of external assistance for food security, agriculture and nutrition.

6. Government Collaboration

Government collaboration is especially important within the Bangladesh context, which relies on national information structures and systems, coupled with local capacities to undertake a harmonized response. The FSC is therefore keen to encourage partnership and promote a high degree of ownership in the coordination process by multiple national stakeholders, so as to ensure response continuity in the event of natural disasters.

Lessons Learned:

5.1 It is important that the humanitarian clusters, including the FSC, leverage and build on the full potential of GoB, through the existing relevant thematic working groups. These thematic groups provide a platform for the government's development planning and strengthens the coordination framework (refer to figure 1) to enhance cooperation between, UN agencies, civil society (I/NGO), development partners and the GoB. This link increases focus, efficiency and reduces the possibility of duplication of efforts in different fora.

5.2 Coordination with the Government is linked directly to preparedness and response; consequently, meetings are designed with clear agendas, timely minutes and with clear target outputs. Meetings include respective focal points for follow up action and dissemination of information. Government capacity in turn, supports food security assessments and responses through existing networks at the national, district, upazila (sub-district) and union levels.

5.3 The Government provides consistent and thorough support by addressing both disaster relief and recovery activities. The Government is the first to collect primary data on any event (D-form) and respond to an emergency. This is in line with the 2012 Disaster Management Act. The GoB has a National Disaster Management Fund and a District Disaster Management Fund to ensure a more complete and targeted response. The FSC will then use both primary and secondary data for follow up assessments and address any gaps in response from the Government.

5.4 Effective communication exchanges and information sharing take place between the FSC and government authorities, either directly during cluster meetings or through the HCTT. The National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) was instituted by the Secretariat of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief in order to fully manage information, resources and activities on a 24X7 basis.

5.5 Different line ministries also collaborate amongst themselves, in conjunction with the FSC to develop appropriate community based approaches and inform locals ahead of time of cyclone shelters available and possible evacuation routes. This facilitates a more harmonized response in which the affected populations have access to different kinds of services related to food, health or shelter.

5.6 The Working Group on Disaster Emergency Response was effectively co-chaired by both the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister for Disaster Management and Relief, who coordinated the relief activities of both national and international stakeholders, ensuring work complementarity.

6. Way Forward

There are numerous lessons that can be learned from the Bangladesh model in terms of cluster preparedness, inter-cluster coordination and government planning to develop more harmonized preparedness and response plans. The nutrition cluster has been involved in food security assessment phases and has enhanced the quality of planned interventions by taking into account the needs of different population groups.

Lessons learned from the recent Mahasen Tropical Storm have been reflected in the normative guidelines in the revised FSC contingency plan, with a view for them to become standard operating procedures, in the event of future hazards.

Lastly, the coordination mechanisms instituted are fully integrated within the established Government emergency response mechanisms, which promote national capacity development and a sustainable structure to tackle repeated shocks.

ANNEX 1 – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| CLA | Cluster Lead Agency | IPC | International Phase Classification |
| DDM | Department of Disaster Management | JNA | Joint Needs Assessment |
| DP | Development Partner | KII | Key Informant Interview |
| EFSA | Emergency Food Security Assessment | LCG | Local Consultative Group |
| FSC | Food Security Cluster | LCG-AFSRD | Local Consultative Group on Agriculture and Food Security and Rural Development |
| gFSC | Global Food Security Cluster | | |
| GoB | Government of Bangladesh | | |
| HCTT | Humanitarian Coordination Task Team | LCG-DER | Local Consultative Working Group on Disaster and Emergency Response |
| HDD | Household Dietary Diversity Approach | MoDM | Ministry of Disaster Management |
| HDDS | Household Dietary Diversity Score | MoDMR | Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief |
| HEA | Household Economy Approach | | |
| HPC | Humanitarian Program Cycle | NEOC | National Emergency Operation Centre |
| IPC | Integrated Phase Classification | OPS | Online Project System |
| ICWG | Inter-Cluster Working Group | PCM | Program Cycle Management |
| IM | Information Management | RC | Resident Coordinator |
| IP | Implementing Partner | SAG | Strategic Advisory Group |

ANNEX 2

Contingency Plan on Cyclones in the South, July 2013

<http://foodsecuritycluster.net/document/fsc-bangladeshcontingency-plan-cyclones-southrevision10072013>

ANNEX 3

gFSC Inter-Agency Assessment Presentation on the Tropical Storm Mahasen in Bangladesh

<http://foodsecuritycluster.net/document/fscpower-point-presentation-mohasen-phase-iii-report-findings-1-july-2013>

ANNEX 4

IPC Acute Analysis Report for Phase 2, July 2013

<http://foodsecuritycluster.net/document/bangladesh-ipc-acute-analysis-report-phase-2-july-2013>

ANNEX 5

Bangladesh Government Emergency Preparedness Plan for the Cyclone, April 2013

<http://foodsecuritycluster.net/document/government-emergency-preparedness-plan-cyclone-april-2013>