INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

PRINCIPALS MEETING

Cluster Working Group on Water and Sanitation Executive Summary

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I   Executive Summary

The outcomes of the Water & Sanitation Cluster Working Group (WASH CWG), particularly the Implementation Plan for 2006 presents a minimum package of core activities and budget to create a catalytic competency with operational mechanisms for wider capacity development, preparedness, predictability and response capability with accountability and an effective working framework for future humanitarian crises.

For the WASH CWG to be successful in ensuring the above, it needs to fully assess all current and potential capacity in the sector at all levels, identify critical gaps and build sufficient catalytic capacity at critical levels to equip and enable others to address future challenges. It must also provide support and leadership, including for coordination in the interim years until such sufficient catalytic capacity and capability is developed.

In the context of the above challenge and in follow-up to its appointment as lead agency for Water and Sanitation, UNICEF called a meeting of all key stakeholders in the sector with a vested interest and proven capacity in dealing with or supporting humanitarian response programmes. The meeting took place on 15th August 2005 in Oxford, UK (hosted by OXFAM) and was attended by nine organizations representing INGOs and the UN. At that meeting, participants further endorsed the importance and urgency of creating an effective cluster approach to demonstrate positive results in terms of improving humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene response in emergency situations and beyond. The meeting also stressed the importance of hygiene in all emergency response programmes and thus recommended that the cluster's title be expanded to include hygiene i.e. "Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Cluster Working Group" (WASH CWG).

1.1 How to Improve Humanitarian Response - summary of proposed strategy

Strategy Concept

➢ Create a minimum critical core capacity within the CWG to initiate support and leadership for a wider capacity development role both internally and externally. This strategy should be time bound to around two- to three- years, and have a clearly defined phased exit strategy, as appropriate core-capacity is developed at pertinent levels (country, regional and global).

➢ Develop an innovative approach to leadership through strategic partnerships and use of specialized institutions (at global, regional and country levels) to build critical mass of **catalytic** core capacity for further development of capacity at critical levels on its/their own (e.g. through training of trainers), including stand-by surge capacity arrangements at all levels; tools; technologies; etc.

➢ Create synergy through strategic planned intra- and inter-sectoral linkages and convergence of key sector activities and the efficient use of existing capacities of partner organizations, specialized institutions and the public and private sectors.

➢ Develop a clear exit phased-strategy as appropriate catalytic capacity is developed at pertinent levels.

➢ Plan for, and link emergency response activities to longer-term development initiatives to ensure greater potential for local sustainability and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.

1.2 Implementation Plan

Developed at Oxford meeting, the key elements includes:

1) **Assessing Sector Capacities:**

➢ Aim: To identify available and deployable resources across the whole of the IASC WASH Cluster membership, including a mapping process to identify where critical gaps and weaknesses exist.

2) **Strengthening Surge Capacity:**

➢ Aim: To ensure greater preparedness for rapid deployment of technical expertise is in place, including the establishment of emergency personnel rosters and developing inter-agency stand-by arrangements.

3) **Training and Orientation:**

➢ Aim: To identify where greatest needs and skills upgrading is needed at international, regional and national levels. And by enhancing support for relevant training options to build sector preparedness and response capacity.

4) **Strengthening Coordination:**

➢ Aim: To ensure that agreements on the coordination function and requirements are in place during humanitarian crises and matched with core competencies for an effective coordinated response.

5) **Development of Supply Assistance:**

➢ Aim: To research and share information on emergency supply specifications and performance, including standard items and equipment kits for compatibility and product development. And review emerging technologies with potential for application in emergencies.

6) **Standard Setting and Performance Indicators:**

   ➢ Aim: To improve services delivery performance and suitability through a greater understanding of technical performance standards and ensuring their consistent application.

7) **Monitoring and Advocacy:**

   ➢ Aim: To ensure that appropriate monitoring mechanisms are in place to measure / review impact and progress against implementation plans, and commission sector lessons learned exercises for informing future preparedness planning.

8) **Resource Mobilization**

   ➢ Aim: To ensure that resource needs are properly identified and that funding strategies are in place to meet needs in a timely manner.

1.3   Capacity and Gaps

Although there are numerous government, non-government, international, UN and private sector stakeholders who are either actively involved in, or have a vested interest in humanitarian response issues - their individual or combined capacities have never been systematically assessed nor mapped. To address this, the WASH CWG is currently finalizing the design of a capacity mapping questionnaire (including for personnel, training, supplies, technologies, etc.) for initial use at the global level and scheduled to commence analysis in mid-January. Moreover, this mapping exercise is scheduled to be extended to priority countries and geographic regions in the first quarter of 2006. Once completed, a capacity matrix will be made available to all pertinent stakeholders, at all levels, for decision making in planning, deployment, training, etc. This matrix will be used by the WASH CWG to determine specific capacity development needs and specific training requirements.

1.4   Response in Selected Existing Emergencies

The newly formed WASH CWG draws from over thirty years of experience and lessons learned in emergencies and are continuing to draw on the recent lessons from the tsunami and the current South Asia earthquake humanitarian response and ongoing emergencies in Sudan (Darfur), Uganda, Liberia, the DRC and elsewhere.

Although the South Asia humanitarian response has been, by default, a piloting ground for the cluster approach it has, nonetheless provided a valuable testing ground for learning on what works and what does not work and why. Although the WASH CWG at the global level is closely monitoring operations on the ground and is involved in providing support regarding standards, methodology, systems development for surge capacity, etc. - it nonetheless fully recognizes and accepted that the cluster approach needs to be country-led.

In Pakistan, UNICEF has taken up the challenge of leadership and has formed an effective local cluster working group. Although the sector experienced initial shortfalls in capacity (among all partners) and difficulties in getting in urgently needed supplies, the response capacity and leadership is now functioning relatively smoothly, whereby:

   ➢ **Coordination has improves overall effectiveness, making best use of scarce resources and helping to reach agreement on where the gaps are, what needs to be done, by whom and with what resources.**
   ➢ **Information is being shared among all partners through the senior coordinator (UNICEF).**

> ➢ **Participating agencies are beginning to pool supplies (water purification, sanitation).**
> ➢ **Where capacity is scarce and the problems enormous, in case of Pakistan, priorities have been set within the existing resources.**
> ➢ **Government is now actively participating in cluster meetings and sector coordination.**
> ➢ **The enhanced coordinated response in water supply and sanitation has improved Government's relationship with international response agencies and makes cluster management easier.**

Likewise, UNICEF is taking on leadership roles in Uganda, the DRC and Liberia even though it has limited resources.

1.5   Non-UN Actors Involvement

The WASH CWG is made up largely of international NGOs and of the ICRC and IFRC, and it is hoped that this membership will be extended to include bilaterals, key learning- and specialized- institutions, representatives from high-risk countries and the private sector.

Currently, the IASC Cluster Working Group on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene includes representatives from Action Contre la Faim, IASC Secretariat, Inter Action, ICRC, IFRC, IRC, MSF, MSF Belgium, OXFAM and RedR, as well as UNHCR, WFP, WHO and UNICEF. Invitations were extended to a wide range of sector related organizations and agencies with a vested interest in emergencies informing them that membership of the cluster working group is voluntary and that all IASC member agencies were eligible.

1.6   Cross-Cutting Issues

Maximum health and social benefits are realized when convergence of water supply, sanitation and hygiene programmes are coordinated and integrated with other key sectoral programmes. Diarrhoeal disease is best tackled, for example, through a combination of preventive and curative interventions involving inputs from the health, education and nutrition sectors and that of water, sanitation and hygiene. Work on cross-cutting issues is planned for early 2006 and will include, in addition to the above linkages, an examination of ways to address:

> ➢ Rights-based programming.
> ➢ Working with governments & affected populations.
> ➢ Gender.
> ➢ Ensuring linkages to longer-term development.
> ➢ Evidence-based advocacy and programme design.
> ➢ Learning-based approaches guided by effective knowledge management.

1.7   Response Planning and Preparedness

As mentioned earlier, a lot of effort has gone into the preparation of the draft **Implementation Plan** and matrix of responsibility. However, more consultation is needed among the cluster partners regarding responsibilities, resource needs, implications for each of the organizations and other matters before a final consensus is reached. This, and several other related issues will be addressed in a joint workshop tentatively planned for late January 2006.

1.8 Plan for Phased Introduction and Recommendations for 2006 Implementation

As mentioned earlier, significant work against the Implementation Plan has already begun. However, priorities and phasing have now been identified and agreed upon by the CWG, these include priorities for the December 2005 through end March 2006:

➢ Capacity mapping of all cluster member organizations (and other institutions) at global level to determine their capacities, critical gaps and specific training needs, including how, where and by whom it may be done.

➢ Capacity mapping of four high risk countries (D.R. Congo, Uganda and Liberia) and two geographic regions to determine existing capacity, critical gaps and what training and other support are needed.

➢ Review current protocols for sector coordination at global, national and sub-national levels and develop/update for improved coordination.

➢ Review current standards, technologies, kits and logistical arrangements for supplies and equipment and take necessary corrective action.

➢ Review present capacity of supplies and equipment of all key partners to meet major emergency needs.

➢ Review performance indicators an update as needed and based on SPHERE standards.

1.9 Recommendations on Outstanding Cluster-Specific Issues

We now need to further examine some key challenges, including:

➢ How to achieve universal buy-in when moving so fast? Ensuring tangible, useful outputs – members need to see value and have time to analyze the implications.

➢ How to enhance coordination for predictability without creating additional bureaucracy? It is therefore important to keep the CWG work-plan focused on critical/priority activities - shift actions to country / regional level.

➢ How to strengthen the role of the CWG in enhancing rapid deployment of sector professionals? Further discussion on feasibility of global rosters, standby agreements and recruitment service provision, which will be a major issue at the upcoming Surge Capacity Meeting planned for January 2006 (with key NGO partners).

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