

Donor roundtable meeting

Date: 22 July 2020, 14:00 – 16:00 Bangkok Time

Venue: Virtual ('MS Teams')

Participants: About 93 participants from UN agencies, RC RC Movement, I/NGOs, and donors including ECHO, DFID, MFAT, USAID BHA, MOFA Japan, and MOFA ROK

Co-chairs: OCHA ROAP, DCO

1. Welcome and introduction

- OCHA ROAP Head of Office a.i. welcomed all participants and opened the meeting.
- UNDCO Regional Director highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic is a multifaceted crisis that requires a holistic approach considering the impacts on health, but also the severe humanitarian and socio-economic consequences. This approach is reflected in how different partners have come together and cooperated since the onset of the pandemic.

2. Update on Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP)

OCHA ROAP

- OCHA provided an update on the recent update of the GHRP, an overview of the humanitarian response plans in the Asia-Pacific (AP) region, and the risk profile in the AP region for the remainder of the year.
- The Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) is the first instance of a response plan with global reach. It is a strategic plan and resource mobilization vehicle to respond to immediate health and multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in especially vulnerable countries. It targets the most vulnerable people (250 million) in 63 countries.
- What has changed: No new countries have been added, but new intersectoral plans have been included for countries that previously only had refugee or migrant plans incorporated in the GHRP –this included the addition of a 200 million USD appeal for Bangladesh in AP (in addition to the existing Rohingya Refugee Response Plan). This reflects the reality that an effective response to a refugee crisis requires to also address the wider systemic and humanitarian issues, including those caused by COVID-19.
- The GHRP appeals for US\$10.3 billion to address immediate humanitarian needs caused or exacerbated by COVID-19. This is part of the wider global humanitarian requirements of \$40.2 billion. As of the release of the GHRP, \$1.64 billion in donor funding has been received. In its newest iteration, the GHRP includes a new supplementary envelope of \$300 million to bolster NGO rapid response actions, and a \$500 million envelope for famine prevention. In addition, there is a sharper focus on priorities in areas that are underfunded or underserved, including food security, health, sanitation and protection.
- Global support services are up and running. Globally, eight humanitarian hubs have been established. In the AP region, a hub has been established in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and a 'cargo-only' hub in China. Negotiations with the government of Singapore are ongoing on establishing a COVID-19 medevac destination.
- For the AP region, total financial requirements in the GHRP amount to \$1.27 billion. Beyond the GHRP, there are five additional multi-sectoral plans in the AP region (Nepal, PNG, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Pacific Multi-Country Plan),, which appeal to a total of \$436.4 million to address additional, country-specific humanitarian needs. Additional details on these plans, including a sectoral breakdown of the requirements, are provided on an online dashboard (accessible under: <https://interactive.unocha.org/data/ap-covid19-portal/planning.html>).
- In addition to COVID-19, the AP region is facing a number of other risks. Monsoon season has started and already had devastating effects in Bangladesh. The second cyclone season of 2020 will soon begin in many countries, adding additional risks to countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and others. Food insecurity is looming in the region, and Iran, India, and Pakistan are currently facing locusts' outbreaks. There are also several ongoing pre-existing conflicts. On top of this, we are seeing the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic unfolding in many

countries in the region. While the AP region accounts for around 10 per cent of the total GHRP requirements, the risks for increased crisis in several countries in the AP region are potentially still underestimated.

RCO Nepal

- Over 17,000 positive cases have been confirmed among young migrant workers returning from India. Initially, 170,000 people were put in quarantine sites, with the number now being down to around 21,700 people.
- The Nepal COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) appeals for around \$110 million for preparedness and response measures, of which currently about 23 per cent are covered.
- Monsoon season has caused 129 deaths and 53 people missing. Most of these fatalities are caused by landslides not floods, which is unusual. An Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for the monsoon season has been prepared, which outlines a worst-case scenario of 1.26 million affected people and funding requirements of nearly \$US37 million.
- OCHA added that some countries, such as Bangladesh, have included financial requirements based on risk forecasts for natural disasters into their GHRP response plans for maximum flexibility.

Q&A

- *From the chat box:* CARE: 'It'd be great to have clarity on the \$US300million for NGOs - how will donors be invited to provide funding under this envelope? What will be the allocation mechanism? Lastly, most of the funding for the GHRP has come with the first iteration, when NGOs were not included. Isn't it too late to request this funding for NGOs?'
 - *From the chat box:* 'The 300mil is not a 'fund' as such and there is not a pot of money to access at this stage; it is a request for donors to fund NGOs and suggests 4 mechanisms to prioritize: (i) augmenting the resources under CERF (specifically for the NGO Rapid Response Window); (ii) making use of NGO-managed pooled funds, such as the Start Fund; (iii) increasing the amount of funding channelled through Country-Based Pooled Funds and (iv) by giving directly to NGOs.'
 - OCHA noted that there are also ongoing concerted efforts to ensure that country plans include envelopes allocated towards NGO projects (international and national organizations).
- *From the chat box:* DFID: 'Could you say a few words on access issues and if there are any challenges with implementation capacity?'
 - WFP informed that key access concerns exist regarding Myanmar and Afghanistan due to pre-existing conflict-related concerns, which are managed carefully with the support of diplomatic missions to ensure that most of the vulnerable groups can be reached.
 - Passenger services for the humanitarian and diplomatic community are provided out of the hub in Kuala Lumpur for Laos, Timor Leste, Myanmar, and Nepal, in addition to cargo services for Bangladesh.
 - There are concerns regarding the funding situation in Afghanistan, where requirements fall short of \$150 million for the remainder of the year.
- *From the chat box:* CARE: 'Can you provide clarity on the \$US500 million funding requirement for famine prevention? Why a separate envelope? Will it cover some country in Asia?'
 - OCHA informed that discussion is ongoing on how to set up the envelope. There are still some question marks on how those funds will be run. OCHA will share more information once available.
- *From the chat box:* ECHO: 'Could you also elaborate in more concrete terms on the human-development nexus under the GHRP?'
 - UNDCO elaborated different ways how humanitarian and development actors are working together. One way is information sharing between the DCO and OCHA in different country contexts. In Pakistan, area-based plans have been developed, which complement development plans by meeting immediate humanitarian needs. Some countries, such as

Pakistan and Indonesia to a certain extent, have also managed to put plans together under an overall umbrella to ensure that no gaps are unmet.

- *From the chat box:* ECHO: 'How do the different plans come together and operationalize at the regional level?'
 - UNDCO: In Afghanistan and Bangladesh, efforts are being made to expand social protection programs with mixed results. There are opportunities on the humanitarian as well as the development side to scale up programmes and extend reach beyond their 'traditional' caseloads.
 - OCHA: The Cash Working Group is actively working on linkages with social protection nets and cash in humanitarian programming in countries such as Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia. In Indonesia big efforts are being made to integrate cash work directly through government programmes. One challenge in these efforts is the general expansion of these schemes to fight the detrimental effects of COVID-19: While governments are trying to expand social protection schemes, humanitarians are trying to include vulnerable groups that are currently left out.
- USAID BHA: Is the UN or other organizations planning to conduct assessments on the effectiveness of social safety net programmes implemented by different host nations in the region for the COVID-19 response? If these programmes are assessed as successful, they should be institutionalized as part of national disaster response mechanisms in the region.
 - OCHA informed that such assessments are planned or ongoing. But we are currently still in the middle of the crisis and thus the scale up of knowledge management and data collection processes remain a work in progress.
 - UNDCO added that within the UN systems, ILO provides technical expertise to other UN agencies, such as UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP.
 - In Pakistan, UNHCR is cooperating with the government on aligning cash-based assistance with national social protection programming. In Iran, organizations were successful in working with the government to enrol refugees in the national health system for basic healthcare.

After the meeting, WFP sent a brief summary explaining its work with government social protection systems in response to COVID-19 and an analysis on food security in the region.

3. Key issues of concern: integration in response plans, needs, response and gaps

UN Women / Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group

- It is encouraging to see the increased emphasis on gender responsiveness and criticality of women and girl's participation in the revised GHRP.
- The GiHA Working Group convened a 'listening session' with eight diverse grassroots women-focused organizations on 20 July. The organizations are working on diverse issues and present refugee women, home-based workers, LGBTI+, women with disabilities, rural women, and adolescent girls. The session focused on how these organizations are responding to COVID-19 and their key advocacy messages. The groups are working on diverse issues, such as providing critical and life-saving gender-based violence (GBV) and gender services, GBV awareness raising, seed banking to farmers to preserve food culture and increase food security, financial assistance to women with disabilities, one-stop education solutions and e-commerce platforms for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs.
- In order to support the critical work of these groups, donors, UN agencies, and INGOs are asked to enable positive localisation practices. Funding schemes and modalities by the Government of Canada and IFRC/ICRC's National Society Investment Alliance can serve as good practices.
- However, funds that are directly serving women are critically underfinanced. There is great need for dedicated funds that prioritize national, women-focused organizations. In addition, improved access for women-led and women-focused organizations to access existing funds is needed.

IOM / Migrants and Refugees

- Migrants and refugees are facing multiple problems in the context of COVID-19:

- Health crisis: Migrant and refugees are vulnerable to transmission due to different factors such as crowded living and working conditions and comprised access to health services.
 - Protection crisis: Asylum seekers are facing curtailed access. There are also increased cases of detention, deportations, and enhanced rounding up of undocumented migrants, as well as situations of stranded migrants and family separations.
 - Socio-economic crisis: The socio-economic impacts are becoming more severe as time goes on.
- COVID-19 has multiple links with mobility. The pandemic and its secondary effects cause migration; response measures to the pandemic are prompting movement or stopping migration; and is impacting ongoing movements such as migrants facing difficulties when trying to return to their homes. Because of this, there have been strong efforts to include migrants and refugees in humanitarian response plans and socio-economic plans. Migrants and refugees are often left out of national plans, putting these people at elevated risks. Inclusion of these vulnerable groups in an active manner requires engagement with NGO, migrants' groups, and CSOs. If these groups are not included, we could see cases expand rapidly.
 - Some countries are also working to reduce their reliance on migrant workers, which will have negative impacts on these groups that need to be addressed through facilitating repatriation, reintegration in their communities and work, and facilitating the return process to their home countries.

OCHA / Risk Communication and Community Engagement

- OCHA introduced the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group dashboard, which tracks community voices and perception of COVID-19 in a real-time manner. The information on this dashboard can inform response activities and actions by humanitarian actors and donors.
- So far, preliminary findings from four countries (Pakistan, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia) and responses from over 5,000 participants are included.
- Key results show that beneficiaries' greatest fear is the 'loss of loved ones' and 'getting sick'. Respondents also often believe that specific groups are responsible for spreading COVID-19 in their communities, which highlights the need to work on reducing stigma. Respondents mainly access information through their respective Ministry of Health and social media. Among all sources, social media is the least trusted source, while television is the most trusted.
- The dashboard can be accessed under <https://sites.google.com/view/rcce-community-insights/>

IFRC / Localization and nexus

- IFRC's response to COVID-19 is focusing on three main priorities: 1. Working through national societies and local responders to COVID-19; 2. Addressing the primary and secondary impacts of the pandemic; 3. Strengthening and sustaining the capacities of national societies.
- There are 39 national societies in the AP region working on addressing COVID-19. COVID-19 has stretched the capacity of local responders and communities in unprecedented ways. Localization has been fast-tracked because of access and mobility constraints for international actors.
- However, this comes at a time where local actors are facing additional challenges and greater risks. The pandemic is often affecting first responders themselves. In addition, they are facing challenges related to movement restrictions, digital divide and increased conflict and instability. In many countries, the operating environment will likely deteriorate even more. The pandemic has also disrupted business continuity and caused a declining revenue base.
- Against this background, IFRC's strategy is to actively work on COVID-safe programming. Legal frameworks are important to ensure that humanitarian assistance is designated as essential services and that humanitarian personnel and goods have freedom of movement. To overcome practical challenges, local actors need digital technology, pre-positioned goods, human resources, and cash capabilities.
- Local actors are the key to future responses, and they need to be supported on an institutional level. They need to be equal partners in response.

4. Donor presentations

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

- Mr. Masahiro Tada, Director of the Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Relief Division (International Cooperation Bureau, MOFA), outlined the principal pillars of Japan's humanitarian aid policy: 1. A common approach taken by the entire international community is urgently needed because economic activity is supported by the global flow of people; 2. Human security approach that ensure that no one is left behind: An approach focusing on the most vulnerable people is crucial.
- The government of Japan decided to support the UN appeals for humanitarian assistance. This includes emergency assistance to five UN agencies and IFRC, and technical assistance to medical personnel and support to medical facilities. The assistance provided focuses on countries in the AP region.
- Additional assistance will be provided to countries with vulnerable health systems in Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. This assistance includes mid-term and long-term capacity--building, expert training and human resource development, and in-kind assistance to the health and medical sector. Support will be provided through bilateral grant assistance and through UN agencies.
- In addition to emergency assistance, the government of Japan will provide emergency loans for two years in order to maintain and contribute to revitalizing economic activity in developing countries, particularly in the AP region.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea

- Ms. Song Hye Ryoung, Director of Multilateral Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance Division (MOFA), highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, including the AP region, which have aggravated humanitarian crises to a critical level. Considering this, the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) has mobilized additional financial resources for further humanitarian assistance and support to almost 110 countries, including 23 countries in the AP region.
- The government of ROK has drawn attention to the humanitarian needs in the AP region stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and protracted crises. Demonstrated by joining the Grand Bargain this year, ROK has been making efforts to provide principled humanitarian assistance.
- At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic limits operational space and resources. Against this background and the high demand for medical supplies, ROK has provided assistance to countries in need through bilateral or multilateral channels. Particular attention has been given to countries with large populations in the region, such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines.
- ROK has long engaged with partners in providing socio-economic assistance to Afghanistan. This year, ROK also provides humanitarian assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, ROK is contributing to existing operations in Rakhine State, Myanmar and surrounding areas. Countries in need are supported in improving their health systems and Pacific Island nations are supported through bilateral and multilateral channels.
- ROK provides financial support to CERF, CBPF and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, which have effectively contributed to the COVID-19 response in the AP region. The government of ROK will continue its efforts to narrow the gap between the increasing humanitarian needs and resources available.

Department for International Development (DFID)

- Mr. Alastair Burnett informed that DFID has provided about \$850 million dollars globally towards the response to COVID-19, which includes contributions to implementing organizations as well as contributions to vaccine research.
- DFID's approach will remain to provide contributions to the global appeal and maintain a level of flexibility in the funding for partners and country offices to adapt programmes and responses to short term and medium-term needs.
- Additional contributions are currently under review to be made to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the strengthening of health systems in the AP region.
- Mr. Burnett notes that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerates localization efforts and that DFID will investigate this thematic area.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand

- Mr. Richard Hannah gave an overview of MFAT's re-prioritization of humanitarian and development support considering the new risks and impact associated with the pandemic. At a global level this includes a NZ\$7 million contribution to the GHRP through CERF and a NZ\$7 million contribution to the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), in addition to standing contributions to different actors including WHO.
- The Pacific region remains the priority for New Zealand. A number of contributions have been made in the AP region, including to the Pacific humanitarian response plan via New Zealand's new UN Pacific Partnership, contributions through the WHO Pacific office, direct bilateral country-to-country support for preparedness efforts and financial assistance to Pacific countries (recognizing the fiscal challenges associated with the steep drop in economic activity).
- In addition, New Zealand has contributed NZ\$500,000 to IFRC to support national Red Cross societies in the Pacific and set up a NZ\$2 million COVID-19 preparedness and response fund for New Zealand NGOs and their local partners in the Pacific.
- Despite the low number of cases in the Pacific region, New Zealand remains concerned about the second order impacts of the pandemic, including on food security, livelihoods and protection.
- The recent response to Tropical Cyclone Harold provided interesting lessons learnt. The overarching priority of affected countries was to prevent transmission of COVID-19 to local populations, which accelerated New Zealand's thinking on support to local actors and localization.

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)

- Mr. Jonathan Baker informed on the merger between the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Office of Food for Peace (FFP) into the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) consolidating expertise and resources from both agencies.
- The US government through USAID and the Department of State has mobilized \$1.5 billion for assistance and equipment such as ventilators, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), infection prevention and control (IPC), laboratory systems, rapid response teams, in more than 120 countries.
- Additional assistance of around \$1 billion has been provided through other modalities such as the Department of Defense in the form of PPE and handwashing stations; activity modifications to existing programs for strengthened WASH, Health and Protection; and deployment of technical advisors from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- In the AP region, around \$200 million has been committed, including \$60 million for international development assistance administered through BHA. BHA COVID-19 response funding has two criteria attached to it: Either 1. Countries must be in an ongoing emergency state or 2. Countries must have a strong potential to collapse into a complex emergency state in the absence of COVID-19 emergency response funding. Therefore, for the AP region, BHA funding has targeted Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Mindanao in the Philippines, and around ten Pacific Island nations. Sectoral focus is on WASH, emergency health, logistics and protection. USAID BHA has supported targeted humanitarian assistance activities such as hygiene and sanitation kits, risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), IPC, protection, rehabilitation of water systems, community-based surveillance and rapid health response teams to save lives
- BHA programmes will continue to support COVID-19 mitigation, preparedness and response activities through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021.
- Mr. Baker showcased the new USAID BHA thematic video which provided more comprehensive details on USAID BHA.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

- Ms. Taheeni Thammannagoda provided a brief overview of ECHO's 'Team Europe' approach, bringing in resources from different EU services. ECHO contributed to WHO strategic preparedness and response plan, and supported WFP's set up of the humanitarian air bridge. At the same time, adaptations to country plans have been made within ECHO, and jointly with other EU services.

Q&A

- USAID BHA: With a reduced footprint in the AP region, how is OCHA planning to ensure sufficient coverage for sudden-onset and continuing complex emergencies?

- OCHA has been reflecting on how to support the AP region since the start of the COVID-19 crisis considering the restrictions in mobility. Tropical Cyclone Harold provided first lessons learnt on how to adapt to the 'new normal', be more flexible and agile in response, and working with and through local partners. During a two-day meeting, OCHA ROAP developed scenarios on how to respond in case of a major disaster, including remote support and in-country/'on the ground' deployment. Discussions on new response modalities in the context of COVID-19 are ongoing within OCHA.
- USAID BHA: In terms of localization and building capacity, does OCHA have formalized operational plans/strategies to support the AHA centre to autonomously coordinate disaster response in the years ahead?
 - Such plans exist and are constantly reviewed, together with adapted work plans for the current and upcoming planning cycle. Coordination between OCHA and the AHA centre has increased during the COVID-19 crisis and information on readiness and deployment are shared on a regular basis.
 - OCHA is also partnering with UNEP through a Joint Environment Unit, which is a roster with specialists for crises with an environmental dimension. Deployment of roster members is difficult at the moment and upon request the unit is mostly operating through a rapid analysis unit. For example, last months the government of Colombia requested the unit to assess air pollution hotspots around displacement areas. The unit also provides capacity-building and skills updating for UN agencies through webinars. A series on waste management in the current pandemic will start next week.

5. Round table discussion

- Mr. Azmat Khan, CEO of FRD-Pakistan, informed donors on the perceptions, concerns, needs and questions of local NGOs in the context of COVID-19.
- Donors have provided flexible funding to UN agencies and INGOs, but that flexibility often does not trickle down to local NGOs.
- In many countries, early recovery programmes have been started, but the stop in remittances has led to food insecurity and increased humanitarian needs. This change in context needs to be addressed through adapted programming and funding.
- Safety and duty of care is of an area of concern for local NGOs as workers and volunteers are facing increased risks of COVID-19 infection. This necessitates investments in equipment and capacity building.
- While \$300 million in the updated GHRP have been dedicated to NGOs, it is not clear how much of this funding will be allocated to local organizations. Local organizations often receive funding by UN agencies and INGOs through sub-contracting. However, local organizations are wishing for the relationship between them and UN agencies to be one of partnership, rather than of 'sub-contractorship'. Local NGOs are often just seen in their implementing role for specific projects or programmes without investments being made in their institutional capacities.
- Local NGOs would like to know how donors are planning to respond to the increasing humanitarian needs beyond 2020 while facing economic burdens inside their own countries.
 - DFID responded that the current situation has had a global impact on economies and budgets, which has a knock-on effect on the budget that DFID has available. How budgets for humanitarian assistance will evolve beyond 2020 is an ongoing question within DFID. On flexible funding and duty of care: It is recognized that local actors are doing the hard work on the ground and DFID is thinking about if this is given enough consideration and reflected enough in current investments.
 - WFP added that the annual partnership consultation will be virtual, which will make it easier for local NGOs to raise these issues. The issues raised are acknowledged and will be taken forward to be discussed at the partnership consultation.
 - USAID BHA prioritizes the Grand Bargain, journey to self-reliance and localization. In collaboration with IFRC, the Red Ready program has been established to graduate nine national societies in the AP region in order to potentially receive direct funding from the US

government. Today, USAID BHA is providing more direct funding for CSOs and NGOs than ever before.

- ECHO: This current context provides an opportunity to think about new ways of working. ECHO's and other EU services' stance is to work together with national response mechanisms, including national NGOs that operate at the front line. Duty of care is an important issue and should be taken on board and addressed by donors.
- UNICEF thanked the government of Japan for their valuable contributions to allow support to all countries under the Regional Office. Considering the challenges brought by COVID-19, the flexibility of the funding and the cross-border component was critical in ramping up operations.

6. **Wrap up**

- UNDCO: The humanitarian needs in the AP region differ across countries, including countries with humanitarian response plans. There is a need to look at health response plans, humanitarian response plans, and socio-economic frameworks which are currently under development to see how they can integrate and merge. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically increased the urgency and the scale of the humanitarian needs and issues. The rationale to help the most vulnerable groups and those in need is stronger now than it was before the pandemic. The same is true for supporting the SDGs: Many people who were benefiting from development efforts are now falling back into poverty and are more vulnerable due to the secondary effects of COVID-19.
- OCHA thanked all participants for attending the meeting. The humanitarian-development nexus and localization are two important issues to take forward. UN agencies and INGOs have been working with local actors for a long time and the COVID-19 pandemic now provides the opportunity and chance to strengthen relationships, invest in capacities and establish partnerships with local organizations.
- OCHA welcomes suggestions and recommendations on the format of future donor meetings. The draft of the minutes together with the presentations will be disseminated for further comments and suggestions.