Strengthening Area-Based Disaster Management Committee (DMC) Coordination Model in Bangladesh

Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT)
A forum for effective coordination with the international community by the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator jointly with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR)

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Introduction

Disaster Management in Bangladesh is guided by number of national drivers including plans, policies, and orders. The National DM plans (NPDMs) look at the risks and consequences of disasters and community involvement and integration of structural and non-structural measures. The Disaster Management (DM) Policy (2015) places importance on financial resources for DM activities at all levels. The DM Act 2012 endorses the Standing Orders on Disaster (SoD) which was updated in 2019 and provides a legal basis. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) has the responsibility for coordinating national disaster management efforts and the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) is the supreme body for providing overall direction, which is translated in the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM 2021-2025). To fulfill the legal basis, National and Local Level Disaster Management Committees (DMC) have been formed at all administrative levels.

The explicit priority for the humanitarian sector since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the establishment of the Grand Bargain to increase support to local actors and communities, including a specific commitment to strengthen leadership and decision-making by local actors. The local actors must support and complement national coordination mechanisms where they exist and in keeping with humanitarian principles. In 2019, the Government of Bangladesh, through the approved revised SOD, recognized the present national cluster coordination mechanism in line with the global Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster system. The Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) is a forum for effective coordination with the international community by the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator jointly with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) as the national disaster management focal organization. The HCTT also acts as the coordination platform for the sectoral cluster co-leads with GoB and the humanitarian community. The HCTT coordinates disaster preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction interventions based on the SPEED approach.

The area-based DMC coordination model identifies practical steps to enhance the participation, representation, and leadership role of L/NA within disaster management coordination structures. It is envisaged that relevant local coordination forums should use the model to spur discussion, identify priority actions and agree on indicators for monitoring progress.

Objectives

The purpose of the strengthening area-based DMC is below-

1. **Common Collaboration Model**: To promote effective participation of relevant GoB and civil society in the inter-agency coordination as per SOD for improving institutional capacity at the local level.

2. **Multi-Sectoral Program Operations**: To make disaster risk reduction, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery explicitly people-centered and comprehensive based on program delivery priorities and competencies.
Local Level DM Coordination in Bangladesh

According to the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD), the Government of Bangladesh undertakes disaster management (DM) work which covers responding to disasters, preparing for disasters, and working for sustainable post-disaster activities. As disaster management is a multi-sectoral and multi-functional discipline, functional and hazard-specific planning and execution of responsibilities are vested in agencies with primary technical/management focus on specific sectors. The SOD is an important part of the Disaster Regulatory framework in Bangladesh. The SOD was first introduced in 1997, revised in 1999, 2010, and, again, in 2019. The SOD clarifies the duties and responsibilities of disaster management actors at all levels, it outlines the roles and responsibilities of the ministries, divisions, agencies, organizations, committees, public representatives, and citizens to cope with any natural disaster. Three (3) fora coordinate natural disaster response in Bangladesh at the national level: The National Disaster Management Council (NDMC), headed by the Prime Minister, is the supreme body for providing overall direction for disaster management (DM) which includes disaster risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery; the Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Committee (IMDMC), responsible for coordination across ministries; and the National Disaster Management Advisory Committee, responsible for policy development and advice. At the local level: Area-based Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) at division, city corporation, district, upazila, union, pourashava and ward levels. These committees perform coordination and implementation roles of disaster risk reduction, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery. The below diagram shows the coordination structure for disaster management in Bangladesh (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Disaster Management Coordination Structure in Bangladesh](image-url)
Institutional strengthening and coordinated efforts of all concerned agencies/organizations play an important role in establishing a disaster management system. Local level coordination is a prime indicator for effective disaster management. The SOD has recognized that the success of disaster risk management at the local level largely depends on the proper initiative and coordination of local agencies/organizations. Also, recognized coordination of disaster preparedness, response, humanitarian assistance, and recovery activities by governmental and non-governmental organizations especially L/NAs. The L/NAs constitute a vibrant sector in Bangladesh and have been acclaimed worldwide. L/NAs are actively involved, among others, in disaster management, micro-credits, family planning, and human rights protection. Currently, a large amount of foreign assistance to Bangladesh is channeled through NGOs. Therefore, their contributions, particularly to the social service sector and the mobilization of the poor, are quite prominent. L/NAs pre-disaster activities include advocacy, public education campaigns, and training programs for personnel involved in disaster management from the national down to the union or local community level. L/NAs are also active in emergency evacuation and in taking people to shelters. The L/NAs are playing a strong technical role to support area-based DMC’s functionality with the support of international stakeholders.
Area-Based Coordination Model

Area-based approaches treat people in need holistically within a defined community or geography; provide aid that is explicitly multisector and multidisciplinary, and design and implement assistance through participatory engagement with affected communities and leaders. By better aligning how diverse interventions interact within a defined context, and by deepening the involvement, the affected population, area-based approaches enable a more demand-driven program logic than the supply-driven logic enshrined in the cluster approach. While area-based approaches take different forms in different contexts, identifies three defining principles i.e. inclusive, localized, and multi-sectoral (Inclusive Coordination: Building an Area-Based Humanitarian Coordination Model):

- **Inclusive**: Engage the affected population through participatory design. Area-based programs tend to be more accessible to local actors (both recipients and local responders) and center more explicitly on how affected people define their priorities.

- **Localized**: The programs are organized and targeted geographically. They recognize differentiation of contexts even within individual crises and thus start by identifying defined geographic units as the foundation of disaster management.

- **Multi-sectoral**: They are explicitly multisectoral and multidisciplinary. Given that different sectoral needs do not exist in isolation from each other, area-based approaches address how diverse needs interact to shape acute vulnerability among crisis-affected populations, and area-based approaches align program delivery priorities and competencies accordingly.

An area-based coordination model can enhance coordination through an inclusive, localized, and multi-sectoral approach. It can bring local leaders in a decision making role and align international responses with local organizations to the better need of aspirations of the aid recipients. Experience from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic all over the world demonstrates the importance of devolving and integrating coordination at area-based. The approaches have proved useful in making disaster management delivery more explicitly people-centered and comprehensive. National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19, Bangladesh is developed based on the Infectious Disease (Prevention, Control and Elimination) Act, 20 focuses on area-based coordination model principles as below figure 2.

![Figure 2: Area-Based Coordination Model for COVID-19 in Bangladesh](image-url)
Outlining Area-Based DMC Coordination Model

In Bangladesh based on the lessons from climate-related disasters within the COVID-19 pandemic context in 2020, the centralization of most HCTT cluster activity at the capital level puts their decision-making processes out of reach for many local government actors and civil society leaders which hinder the complementarity between different sectors. Area-based DMC coordination approaches in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery can provide a systematic shift in the cluster coordination in Bangladesh to improve complementarity between sectoral interventions, engaging L/NAs in a collaborative technical support role to DMCs. Based on the area-based principles it will enshrine local context rather than the sector as the essential organizing principle for coordination and planning; reorient the humanitarian program cycle around explicitly multisectoral interventions rather than boundaries of the individual clusters. It will create open coordination and planning systems to much greater participation and leadership by local actors and aid recipients. The HCTT clusters would revert to a role analogous to the technical support division of L/NAs—as centers of technical excellence and operational quality assurance, but not platforms for operational planning and execution.

An area-based model can enhance coordination through an inclusive, localized, and multi-sectoral approach in disaster management in Bangladesh. It can support the leadership of local DMC and align cluster preparedness and responses efforts with L/NAs to improve speed, quality, and volume of response that complements Government disaster management efforts. Further, it will promote Anticipatory Action (or Forecast Based Action) coordination at local level.

The purpose of the area-based collaboration model is to maintain close cooperation with L/NAs involved in disaster management activities with the cluster efforts to support and complement the Government of Bangladesh efforts. The clusters and L/NAs will provide technical support to the
DMCs coordination efforts through support to the member secretary’s operational focal role to better perform his/her job in disaster preparedness, response, and disaster risk reduction according to the SOD.

For example, at the district level overall disaster management decision-making authority rested with the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) as per SOD (Figure 4). The Deputy Commissioner (DC) acts as chairperson and leads the DMC with a good intention. The DMC becomes active when there is a disaster, is under-resourced, and operates on an ad hoc basis. The District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) at the district level acts as member secretary (operational focal) of the committee and is responsible for secretariat functions of DMC. The DRRO is the main interface with upazila and union parishad representatives as well as Disaster Management Committee (DMC) resource allocations to the vulnerable and marginalized community. Local Member of Parliament acts as an Advisor of the District Committee. Based on the context DC can co-opt other Advisors as necessary. The DDMC is linked with the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) and ultimately National Disaster Management Coordination Centre (NDRCC) under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). The L/NAs presently work with DRRO and DMC at the district level with its project and program funded by the international community to improve the functionality of the committee with the range of technical supports including information management, early warning system, risk and needs assessment, logistics management, and operational planning.

Figure 4: Area-Based DDMC Coordination Approach According to SoD
Promote Area-Based DMC Coordination Model

The Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), and major donors need to collaborate to promote the area-based approach in line with Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD). The following figure 5 shows how area-based DMC coordination link L/NAs hub, clusters, and inter-cluster working groups for efficient disaster management actions.

Figure 5: Clusters Technical Support to L/NAs Hub to Promote Area-Based DMC Coordination Model
Several steps need to follow by the humanitarian community especially clusters, inter-cluster working groups, and L/NAs to provide technical support to the area-based DMC coordination approach at the local level in collaborative ways:

### a. Capacity Building of L/NAs Hub to Support DMC

Develop the capacity of L/NAs is critical to the success of disaster management in Bangladesh. L/NAs are often the first responders and are at the heart of disaster management. They provide an invaluable understanding of local challenges and potential solutions, can mobilize local networks, and offer greater access to affected populations, hence contributing to a more effective, efficient, and sustainable disaster preparedness and response with enhanced accountability to affected populations. They are also often adept at working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to support affected communities in preparedness, response, and recovery. L/NAs commitment and coordinated technical engagement in area-based DMC coordination could improve the effectiveness of existing national clusters and inter-cluster working groups.

Cluster and inter-cluster working groups will provide technical support to L/NAs for establishing local coordination hubs to support DMC leadership around the five key functions based on the SOD. The hubs would convene all operationally relevant humanitarian players active within the hub’s area of responsibility, whether local, INGO, or multilateral; would also interface with DMC.

### b. Common Areas of Technical Support to DMC

The clusters and inter-cluster working group presently is supporting the technical capacity of the L/NAs for coordinated preparedness and response that complements DMC efforts at the local level. The L/NAs will support DMC disaster management functions within their areas of responsibility as per SOD: Information management, early warning system, needs assessment, logistics management, and operational planning. The technical national clusters would retain important roles in this process, advising on program technical design, monitoring program quality, and assessing impact within their sectoral lanes.

The clusters, inter-cluster working groups, and L/NAs with the supports from HCTT will further develop guidance, tools, and process for operationalizing the area-based DMC coordination model in Bangladesh. Further, HCTT will promote this area-based DMC coordination model for the identification of practical steps to enhance the participation, representation, and leadership role of L/NAs in DMCs functions.

### c. Strengthen the Role of L/NAs in the H-D Collaboration

There are numerous terms that describe interventions that manage or reduce climate-related disaster risks; these approaches can be categorised according to: the time at which they are used before, during or after a hazard; the types of risks they are dealing with; which part of a ‘risk equation’ (Risk = Hazard x Exposure x Vulnerability) they are attempting to tackle; or invariably the terms are conflated or used synonymously. Develop strategies to strengthen the role of L/NAs in the collaboration between humanitarian, development actors, using the area-based approaches. Support L/NAs in contributing to the development of humanitarian-development (H-D) strategies, including the development of collective outcomes, in coordination with other forums.

The collective outcome focus on reducing the impact of climate-related disaster requires both, meeting immediate needs and investing in the medium to long-term to reduce vulnerabilities and risks affecting communities and wider economic and governance systems and contribute to sustainable development. H-D collaboration particularly need for improving relationships between civil-society and national authorities, and contribute to the strengthening of good governance practices and promoting civil society space.
For additional information, please contact:

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