EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HUMANITARIAN AID OFFICE (ECHO)

MISSION REPORT

Subject: Monitoring mission – BANGLADESH

Author: Luc Soenen - TA WASH - Shelter

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Participants:

- ECHO: the ECHO Bangladesh team, René, Michelle, Awal & Mokit, nutrition Roselyn, food security & livelihood Devrig, & Luc
- Partners: Action contre la faim - ACF, Solidarités International – SI & IOM

Places visited & Interlocutors:

- Cox's Bazar district – Kutupalong makeshift site with ACF, Leda with IOM & Forum, Teknaf upazilla with SI

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / HIGHLIGHTS

ACF are doing pretty well!

SI are doing ok with a bit modest objectives but with good local impact.

IOM showed very disappointing with a poor performance we asked to improve, correct and that needs follow up and continued monitoring that was agreed to be scheduled second week of March; communication is recommended at headquarters levels asking all questions to be answered and a time plan with corrective actions.

2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

First mission of current WASH TA in Bangladesh, quite a long time after the previous WASH mission in Bangladesh.

You cannot miss it, Bangladesh has a very high population density, well above 1000 people per km2, and then pressure; every square meter is used, it seems like space is not available anymore.

Cox's Bazar region has – always – suffered of dire poverty.

Rohingyas fled out of Myanmar massively since more than 20 years back. The older ones are registered in camps, the more recent ones, so called UMN, undocumented Myanmar

nationals, are settled in makeshift settlements and, as they are called, they have no document; they are then particularly vulnerable.

In makeshift settlements, permanent structures were not allowed by authorities that have softened their position lately.

IOM is seen and seems to be very close to the official authorities – but, then, they are allowed much more easily than the other NGOs that are very prudent at all times, knowing they can be kicked out if they do not please the authorities.

3. ISSUES DISCUSSED, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACF

ACF are doing a good job, with an adapted approach, in difficult conditions they address rightly, permanent structures not well authorized, the population having hardly no access to livelihood opportunities. They are going to work on reinforcing the community to decrease their dependency, multiplying, for example, biogas plants for sanitation, enabling to decrease by 2 the need to desludge the latrine pits, from 2 times per month to one time a month, providing at the same time free energy used for cooking, decreasing the need of firewood. **It was agreed ACF would look into how septic tank and biogas plant compare and share their findings**.
Some houses and latrines under construction were destructed some 2 weeks before our visit on 9 February 2016, to show the place was not accepted by some powers. One pit is covered with squatting plates without any infrastructure to be used, and actually used, by children; a second pit, lined with sand bags, is kept for the time being until a decision is taken about what is possible / agreeable to be done of it.
They have a good technical level proficient team, experienced, committed, involved, available, both expatriate and national staff, with a good spirit.
They developed a comprehensive database, linked with GIS – Google Earth -, enabling them a good targeted follow up.

SI

We saw 2 of what they call spring catchments, wrongly: they are actually surface water catchments, and then, the water quality is naturally poor, turbid at least.
Their works are simple and not optimized, with possible margin of improvement – the current technical – hydraulics - competency is basic. Instead of proper topographic surveys, they used GPS, which is not an altimeter and not accurate for elevations.
Still, the situation compared to before the intervention shows significant progress.
PVC pipe was seen unprotected: **it is to be protected, from UV (ultraviolet) ray sunlight, at least somehow**.

Ceramic filters were provided to the same – most vulnerable – households who received support to construct latrines in communities where water systems – surface water catchments equipped with filtration and some distribution – were put in place: it can be argued why those filters were not provided to communities that do not have any kind of water system at all.

Seemingly good proximity with communities who are well listened to.

IOM at Leda makeshift settlement (LMS)

IOM are not doing enough nor well enough. They discovered everything at the same time as us! No monitoring, no follow up, no knowledge; their partner, Forum, is lost the same, they just do things mechanically without questioning, with no ambition, without any memory although they have been working in the settlement for a number of years. The technical knowledge and competency is not sufficient. Poor organization and management. Many human resources were hired recently and do not seem to do much, left on their own and little committed. **What is the budget impact of the late hiring?**

Sanitation

There are a number of septic tanks, 59, and biogas plants, to treat latrine sludge. Desludging was said to be carried out once a month, for both systems.

The biogas plants produce methane gas that feeds 41 kitchens, hence reducing the firewood consumption, hence participating in fighting against deforestation, that benefit some households – 16 for the plant we saw. Questions are raised on how the benefiting households, seemingly always the same ones, are selected – **IOM is expected to explain how the households were selected, why, for example, there is no rotation**.

How do the 2 systems, septic tank and biogas, compare? Currently, there is no answer, no idea: **IOM is kindly requested to conduct the study and come with an answer which is better; then, take the adequate measures**.

Currently, the coverage is 37 cap / latrine cubicle: beside the lack of space, **why, is that adequate, sufficient?**

IOM, and Forum, have no plan for the future, beside what they call maintenance that consists mainly in desludging.

Hygiene

The settlement is not clean and, worse, it is less clean than it used to be.

IOM promised to provide the morbidity data, and especially those WASH related – why has IOM not followed up those that are the final indicator?

To conduct hygiene promotion, Forum has no female staff; then, they cannot reach the female population for many issues.

Water supply

The settlement population was said to be 15 000. The water production was said to be 225 000 l daily, then providing a convenient average of 15 l/cap/d. The current production was said to be a maximum for some reasons. IOM said they will not be able to provide with that quantity in a few months' time and will do water trucking – **from where, for what cost?** We did not get any answer; they need to be provided. Knowing they will run out of water, why do they not manage it? It does not seem smart to provide more little water when the need, the demand is more during the hottest last months of the dry season.

The water was said to be availed from 8 to 10:30 and from 14:00 to 16:30: **why, and why only 5 h/d?** There, again, we got no answer: everything seems to be done by chance, without reason, without questioning, without justification.

Raw water is pumped from so called a canal into 3 reservoirs where sedimentation is supposed to take place for a given number of hours. In practice, the pumping duration is not known, then, arguably, the quantity of water pumped. The water is then pumped from the sedimentation reservoir, 110 m3 for the main station, into a filtration tank, 25 m3, and then into the chlorination tank: it is not known how that is done. A same pump

does the 2 operations and pipes get connected and disconnected. A lot of the pipe visible is plastic spiraled emergency type, not adapted for a setup for years. A valve of a reservoir is shut with a piece of banana tree. The reservoirs, said to have been rehabilitated recently, show many leaks and there is mud and stagnant water all over around. The roofing of the reservoir is made of makeshift mats with plastic sheeting, weathered, torn and worn out, with big holes open to dust and contamination. The pump is not fixed, just laid on the ground – it is actually brought every evening to the IOM office; the pumping house is a poor shelter offering little protection against rain and none against being stolen, reason why it is carried to the office for the night, although the the station is in the middle of a living area with many shops. No information could be provided on the pumps, their yields and heads.
The same emergency type pipe was seen, non-protected, in a number of places along the pipeline.
The intake pumping station is in a same poor situation, equipped with non-covered, non-protected PVC pipe with makeshift connections. A second pump lies with the intake pipe disconnected and water pumped leaks through it because of a valve that cannot shut anymore.
A logbook is kept at the office with little information recorded, still showing differences of fuel consumption without any explanation.
IOM is to correct all those numerous deficiencies, installing adapted permanent structures, protection, including right pipe – replace all emergency type spiraled pipe, have all PVC pipe covered somehow, protected from UV (ultraviolet ray sunlight) -, valves, pumps anchored protected in proper pumping houses, the reservoirs covered with proper roofing, the main leaks eliminated; a few meters at right spots are expected. A proper management is expected with recorded pumping hours in a proper logbook and followed up and analyzed in time with spreadsheets, indicating water production and fuel consumption. A layout of the whole system is to be produced with all the technical data, pipe diameter and material, length, elevations, showing the locations of all the infrastructures from the raw water intake to the treatment facilities to all the 18 distribution points.
There are said to be 3 upstream dams to retain water; **study, look into possibilities to increase the retained capacity to increase the production, especially for the dry hot months to come**.

IOM sent us a few days after the mission a document supposed to describe the LMS water system. Unfortunately, the document shows other weaknesses of IOM & raises more questions:

Alum add (Coagulation) is mentioned whereas we were never talked about it on site nor saw any reagent: then, **is the water coagulated?**

The chart does not show a third sedimentation tank: **does it exist?**

2 pumps are cited from sedimentation tank to chlorination tank whereas there was only one the day of our visit.

The flow chart does not mention nor show filtration whereas we were showed a tank as filtration tank; then, **is the water filtrated?**

Most of all these comments / remarks were already made by previous WASH TA & Bangladesh ECHO team but were not considered much.

Doubts were expressed by previous WASH Elio about Forum back in Feb. 2014, proposing to have them replaced.

The project was initially for 12 months until 31 March 2016. IOM just submitted a no cost extension request with some reduction on staff costs and some increase on the activities.

Eventually, recommendation to communicate officially to IOM at headquarters levels asking them to answer thoroughly all the questions and to provide with a time plan showing when the corrective measures will be put in place.

Such communication was already passed to IOM Cox's Bazar Head of sub office, who acknowledged all the points raised and promised a quick reaction; we also could gather that Cox's Bazar office was pretty much left on its own by Dhaka office, with not much support, whereas competency is supposed to exist sitting in Dhaka office and quite some resources are charged on the budget. IOM Cox's Bazar expressed this monitoring came late. Given all of the above + this mission could not cover all the planned sites mainly because of time, a next WASH mission was decided and agreed, between ECHO Dhaka & IOM Cox's Bazar, to be scheduled in March from 5 to 10 with nights to be spent in Teknaf rather than Cox's Bazar.