

Government and Humanitarian Partners Agreed to Implement Cluster Approach to Respond to Emergencies

High-level Government officials and Humanitarian Partners met and agreed today to implement the cluster approach in order to support the Government of Ethiopia's led coordination and response structures to respond to floods, droughts and other humanitarian emergencies.

The cluster approach is a new method of organizing international and national humanitarian actors to ensure better preparedness, greater accountability, stronger partnership, predictable leadership and greater capacity during an emergency.

"The Cluster Approach not only increases accountability but also transparency and efficiency among the humanitarian community and the government," said Ato Simon, Director General of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Agency (DPPA) in his closing statement to dignitaries at the workshop.

"Clear terms of reference for Cluster Leads, Taskforces and Working Groups will facilitate the efficient discharge of roles and responsibilities in this regard," Simon added.

The approach is due to be implemented in Ethiopia this year and will compliment existing government coordination structures and sectoral

taskforces. It aims to further support DPPA-led planning and response to humanitarian emergencies.

Workshop participants which included heads of UN agencies, key humanitarian NGOs and government officials held several discussions and broke into seven sectoral groups-Early recovery, Water and Sanitation, Health, Nutrition, Shelter, Logistics and Protection to explore how best to apply the sectoral approach to Ethiopia. The groups were then given a simulated emergency and instructed to find better ways to support the government's response.

"We quickly realized the need to further strengthen the overall coordination framework and response capacity," said Paul Hebert Head of Office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "We have a responsibility to the people of Ethiopia to support the government in having the best possible emergency response."

While the participants took critical first steps in establishing cluster approach in Ethiopia, they realized that much hard work is yet to come. "Since the cluster approach is part of ongoing UN reform, this process will need further discussion and refinement in due time," said Ato Simon.

(Joint DPPA and OCHA Press, 9 March 2006)