

# Mainstreaming the Environment into Humanitarian Response

An Exploration of Opportunities and Issues

November 2007

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## ANNEXES

- Annex A: Master Contact List;
- Annex B: Compilation Interviews; and
- Annex C: Key Tools used by Humanitarian Agencies.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### RESEARCH AIM:

*To explore the opportunities and issues associated with mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian response activities.*

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

*Nineteen NGOs, three Donors, five United Nations Agencies, the IFRC and two experts were interviewed as part of the research to collect feedback and good practice examples on environmental policies, tools, standards, guidelines and procedures used by humanitarian agencies. In addition, a Steering Group, comprising eleven experts was convened to discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian response.*

### MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS:

#### *What are the Linkages?*

- *Environmental issues have implications for the nature and frequency of disasters and the subsequent humanitarian aid (notably availability of natural resources to support the response).*
- *Both the disaster itself and the subsequent humanitarian response can have primary impacts on the quality and availability of environmental resources and receptors (e.g. water, land, soil, air) with subsequent secondary impacts on human health and livelihoods.*

#### *What are the Benefits?*

- *Delivering sustainable solutions – environmental resources (e.g. wood for construction, water for drinking) are essential inputs for response activities, however careful identification, assessment and management is essential to deliver sustainable solutions.*
- *Mitigation of negative impacts – negative environmental impacts (e.g. localized resource depletion) can undermine the effectiveness of the response. Early assessment of these risks/ impacts can ensure that appropriate mitigation measures and opportunities are identified and implemented.*
- *Reduced costs in the long-term – a longer-term approach can reduce the likelihood of protracted negative effects and hence the overall costs of disasters, as humanitarian assistance starts to link more effectively into the development process.*

## What are the Challenges?

- **The need to strengthen partnerships and ensure that cross-cutting themes like the environment are effectively addressed and prioritised.**
- **Field personnel and other humanitarian practitioners often have low environmental awareness.**
- **Lack of environmental policy statements and therefore a lack of prioritisation/commitment.**
- **Absence of environmental performance indicators and appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework impedes ability to analyse the benefits of considering the environment impacts of a humanitarian response.**
- **Increased accountability at an agency level to ensure that humanitarian agencies fulfil their environmental responsibilities and mandate.**
- **Lack of awareness, understanding, standardisation and use of existing tools for environmental assessments and insufficient evidence of their successful application.**

## What are the Opportunities?

| Challenges  | Opportunities   | Key Recommendations   |
|---|---|---|
| Inter-agency coordination central to delivering benefits of integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure buy-in for driving forward initiative</li> <li>• Strengthen partnerships</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a task force</li> <li>• Provide cluster system support</li> </ul>  |
| Increase prioritisation and awareness amongst practitioners             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate good practice and benefits of integration</li> <li>• Consideration of environment in longer-term responses for cost savings and benefits</li> <li>• Growing momentum and attention on climate change</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare information sheets with case studies</li> <li>• Evaluation of environmental assessments</li> <li>• Establish information hub</li> </ul>  |
| Effective policy frameworks and monitoring & evaluation                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure outcomes, compare effectiveness of alternative solutions, draw lessons, inform decisions and justify costs</li> <li>• Focus monitoring programmes to ensure they work towards objectives of sustainable development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage agencies to incorporate environment into organization policies, performance indicators and response protocols</li> <li>• Technical assistance and funding conditions</li> <li>• Agencies to be accountable for fulfilling environmental commitments</li> </ul> |
| Effective tools, guidelines and standards                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate environmental assessments within other non-environmental assessments</li> <li>• Improve understanding of environmental issues</li> <li>• Improve understanding of existing tools</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support tool refinement, promotion and training</li> <li>• Identify training needs assessment and develop environmental training</li> </ul>  |

## CONCLUSION

*Humanitarian response primarily focuses on people; reducing suffering and saving lives. Response times are usually short and finance limited. However, it is argued that failure to consider the environment in the short-term, even when faced with such pressures, can result in a number of significant negative outcomes, with consequences for the very people the intervention is designed to help.*

*There is increasing evidence to show that consideration of the environment early on can greatly improve a humanitarian response; by reducing negative outcomes and identifying sustainable solutions. However, few agencies are either aware of the benefits of integrating the environment into policy or practice, nor sufficiently equipped to deal with the challenges posed by this integration. There is nevertheless a growing body of tools, guidelines and standards to support integration of the environment into response actions, although the research suggests that these are not always well understood or effectively used.*

*Therefore this report provides recommendations for overcoming these challenges, for building momentum and for realising opportunities founded on the existing body of knowledge and work. Recommendations fall into the following four categories: 1) promoting partnerships and coordinated action; 2) collating information and sharing good practice to increase awareness; 3) developing the enabling policy and monitoring & evaluation framework; and 4) refining, awareness raising and training in existing tools.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

### 1.1.1 Preamble

This paper has been commissioned by DFID to explore the opportunities and issues associated with mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian response activities <sup>(1)</sup>.

Humanitarian response primarily focuses on the victims of disaster, helping to save and preserve life, reduce suffering and protect the integrity and dignity of those affected <sup>(2)</sup>. By its nature, humanitarian assistance often involves a rapid response and the midst of a crisis may not appear to be the most appropriate time to consider the environment. However, it is also argued that failing to consider the links between the crisis and the environment means that humanitarian aid will be based on an incomplete and incorrect understanding of the situation <sup>(3)</sup>.

### 1.1.2 Context

There is growing awareness of the importance of considering the environment during a humanitarian crisis. Principle 8 of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*, currently endorsed by 413 agencies worldwide, states:

*“We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes.”*

There is increasing evidence to show that environmental considerations can greatly improve a humanitarian response, whilst their exclusion can result in a number of significant negative outcomes. These are discussed further in *Chapter 2*.

### 1.1.3 Scope of the Report

This report seeks to explore how environmental considerations can affect a humanitarian response, whilst also examining the key challenges to their integration. Information for this research has been drawn from a desk-based review as well as information provided by key donor and implementing agencies during interviews (see *Annexes A and B*). Case study examples are also provided to illustrate key messages. This report presents an objective summary of key findings as well as recommendations and suggested next steps.

(1) Actions in the face of an adverse event aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering and reducing economic losses.

(2) ECHO, Humanitarian Aid department, European Commission.

(3) Kelly, Charles. Including the environment in humanitarian assistance.  
[www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster\\_studies/rea/project\\_summary.pdf](http://www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster_studies/rea/project_summary.pdf)

### 1.1.4 *Research Approach*

Nineteen NGOs, three Donors, five United Nations Agencies, the IFRC and two experts were interviewed as part of this research to collect feedback on environmental policies, tools, standards, guidelines and procedures that are used by humanitarian agencies. Good practice examples of environmental integration were also explored, along with agency coordination.

A Steering Group was also set up, drawing together eleven experts from amongst donor agencies, implementing agencies and consultants to discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian response <sup>(1)</sup>. This group showed considerable interest in the topic, were convinced about the benefits of integrating environmental considerations into their work and were committed to explore this issue further.

## 1.2 *STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT*

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- *Chapter 2* establishes the links and benefits between the environment and humanitarian response activities;
- *Chapter 3* discusses the key challenges and opportunities for integrating environment into humanitarian response activities; and
- *Chapter 4* provides recommendations and next steps to address constraints and replicate best practice.

The report is supported by the following *Annexes*:

- *Annex A*: Master Contact List;
- *Annex B* : Compilation Interviews; and
- *Annex C*: Key Tools used by Humanitarian Agencies.

(1) The Steering Group was made up of representatives from UNEP, UNEP/OCHA, TearFund, CARE, Disaster Waste, WWF International and consultants to DFID and CARE.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the link between the environment and humanitarian interventions and the drivers/ benefits of considering the environment in humanitarian response activities.

## 2.2 EXISTING EFFORTS

There is growing awareness amongst lead agencies on the benefits of integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian activities, with the UN (e.g. UNHCR and FAO), donor institutions (e.g. ADB, Sida and USAID), INGOs (e.g. CARE and WWF), the IFRC and academic research institutes (e.g. Benfield Hazard Research Centre <sup>(1)</sup>) all having considered the environment in their work.

The degree/consistency with which the environment is integrated in daily activities is variable and the efforts have often been limited in scope, but during this research there was no disagreement amongst those interviewed that identifying, evaluating and responding to critical environmental issues during a disaster improves the disaster relief and recovery operations. The Pakistan earthquake response, Tearfund's environmental study in Darfur and the cluster system (all of which are discussed subsequently) were amongst examples cited by respondents of activities that had raised awareness about the linkages between environment and a humanitarian response.

As the UNHRC quote on their website:

*"Although environmental concerns have taken a back seat to humanitarian needs at such times of crises, the close links between the well-being of human populations and a healthy environment are being increasingly recognised"* <sup>(2)</sup>

The UNHCR is a leader in this field having established an Environment Unit back in 1995 to monitor environmental activities and produced a number of handbooks in 2002 and guidelines in 2005 <sup>(3)</sup> that are intended to serve as sources of information and reference on environmental practices and approaches in refugee operations <sup>(4)</sup>.

*"Environmental considerations need to be taken into account in almost all aspects of UNHCR's work with refugees and returnees... The state of the*

(1) University College London.

(2) <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/3b94c47b4.html>

(3) UNHCR Environmental Guidelines, UNHCR, August 2005, p5.  
[www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b03b2a04.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b03b2a04.pdf)

(4) <http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/protect/406c11134.html>

*environment, in turn, will have a direct bearing on the welfare and well-being of people living in that vicinity, whether refugees, returnees or local communities”.*

## 2.3 EXAMINING THE LINKAGES

There are four key ways of looking at the linkages between the environment and a humanitarian crisis (see *Figure 2.1*):

1. **Implications of environmental issues** (e.g. climate change) on the nature and frequency of **natural disasters** (see *Box 2.1*);

### *Box 2.1 Climate Change and Natural Disasters*

The general features of climate change – higher temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and changes in the frequency and intensity of some extreme climatic phenomena – act on both human and natural systems.

Research indicates that African countries could be among the most susceptible to changes in temperature and rainfall associated with changing climate. Changes are expected to include: increases in damaging floods, dust storms, and droughts; sea-level rises and flooding from storm surges; and more violent windstorms <sup>(1)</sup>. Climate change is a global challenge currently facing the humanitarian sector.

“Climate change is a multi-faceted...hazard that has short, medium and long-term aspects and unknown outcomes. What we know is that climate change is intensifying the hazards that affect human livelihoods, settlements and infrastructure. Climate change is also weakening the resilience of livelihood systems in the face of increasing uncertainty and frequent disasters <sup>(2)</sup>”.

Climate change is receiving increasing attention from donors and humanitarian agencies. Testimony to this is the new initiative ‘*Stop Climate Chaos*’ a coalition of key UK NGOs <sup>(3)</sup>. The implications for humanitarian aid are twofold: an increase in the frequency and intensity of disasters; and the humanitarian consequences of climate change <sup>(4)</sup>.

2. **Implications of environmental issues** on subsequent **humanitarian aid** (e.g. availability of natural resources such as firewood, water);
3. **Impacts of the disaster** on the environment (e.g. loss of productive land, drought and depletion of groundwater resources); and the
4. **Impacts of subsequent humanitarian response** on the environment (e.g. deforestation for construction timber).

(1) EGSSAA (August 2006). Part II. Chapter 10. Humanitarian Response/Natural Disasters.

<http://www.encapafrika.org/EGSSAA/humanitarianresponse.pdf>

(2) O'Brien, O'Keefe, Rose and Wisner (2006) 'Climate change and disaster management', *Disasters*, Vol. 30 (1), pp. 64-80, London: Blackwell Publishing/ODI

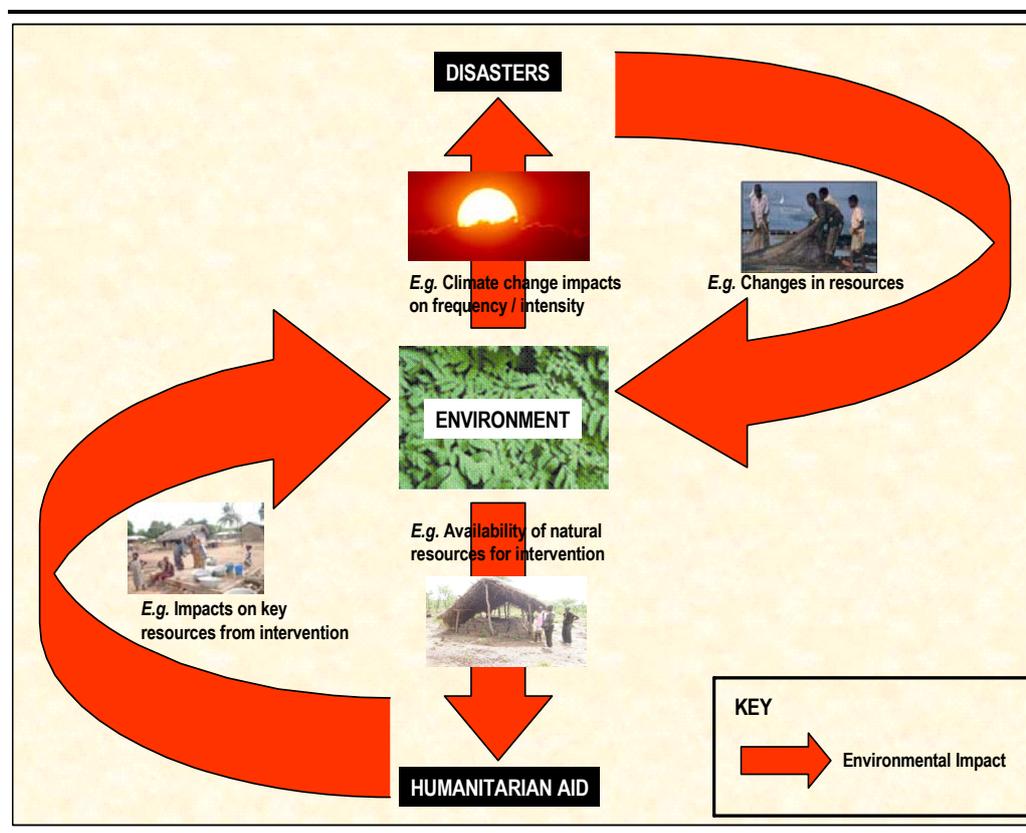
(3) Source: [www.stopclimatechaos.org](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org)

(4) The subject of a forthcoming (November 2007) International IFRC conference.

All are key considerations in maximizing the effectiveness of a humanitarian response. As Charles Kelly <sup>(1)</sup> stated in his 2001 paper <sup>(2)</sup>:

“relief assistance cannot be effective if managers and decision makers exclude, or are unaware of critical factors such as the environmental impacts of the disaster and relief actions” <sup>(3)</sup>

**Figure 2.1** *Inter-linkages between the Environment and Humanitarian Assistance*



Interviewees had some awareness of the linkages between humanitarian activities and the environment; for example the impacts of fuel-wood collection on deforestation and the personal safety of collectors. However, their awareness tended to be more focussed on the large humanitarian disasters that had benefited from the integration of environmental considerations. Key examples included:

- GTZ and Benfield Institute’s REA activities in Indonesia following the Indian Ocean Tsunami (see *Box 2.2*).
- UNEP’s Tsunami waste management project in Indonesia;
- Environmental Assessments undertaken by UNEP/OCHA as part of the humanitarian response to the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan;

(1) Benfield Hazard Research Centre, University College London.

(2) The most recent Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters developed by Charles Kelly (Version 4.4) are dated April 2005.

(3) Kelly, C. 2001. *Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment: A Framework for Best Practice in Emergency Response*. Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, University College London.

- IFRC's use of sustainable timber as part of their Transitional Shelter Programme in Indonesia after the Tsunami;
- UNHCR's environmental assessments in the Great Lakes region; and
- Tearfund's environmental study in Darfur (see *Box 2.3*).

## Box 2.2

### *Indian Ocean Tsunami: Rapid Environmental Assessment*

#### **Background:**

- The northern tip of Sumatra, Indonesia, and the provincial capital of Banda Aceh bore the brunt of a tsunami which hit Indonesia and 11 other countries early in the morning of 26 December 2004.
- Satellite images showed that 49km<sup>2</sup> or 80 per cent of the built up area of Banda Aceh city was either totally destroyed or extremely damaged.

**Environment and the Humanitarian Response:** As the massive relief operation moved out of the initial emergency phase into rehabilitation and reconstruction the Ministry of Environment, with assistance from GTZ/ProLH undertook a rapid environmental assessment as a first step towards assessing the impacts of this disaster on the environment. This assessment was carried out by one international expert and a team of three people from the Ministry of Environment over a seven day period.

**Outcomes/recommendations:** This REA process was judged to have gone very smoothly, despite the short lead-in time and inexperience of the nature and/or use of this tool by the majority of users. It allowed some of the first concerted observations to be made of the situation on the ground whilst also identifying a number of potential future impacts.

**Source:** Benfield Hazard Research Centre

## 2.4

### *THE BENEFITS*

There are a number of benefits of considering the environment as an integral component of a humanitarian response:

- **Sustainable solutions.** Environmental resources are a key component of humanitarian interventions (*e.g.* water, wood for fuel and construction). Early assessment of these assets and their most appropriate use ensures the most effective sustainable solutions in the short and longer-term. For example, appropriate siting of refugee camps and the introduction of appropriate technologies (*e.g.* fuel efficient stoves) can help reduce over-exploitation and conflict over scarce resources; and the reduction of packaging material relieves the need for safe (often costly) disposal.
- **Mitigation of negative impacts.** A disaster and the subsequent humanitarian response can have significant negative impacts upon natural resources (*e.g.* water, land, air) and environmental quality (*e.g.* air quality, water quality). If not adequately managed, secondary impacts on community health and livelihoods can also result (*e.g.* water contamination, loss of land, conflict etc. See *Table 2.1*). Early assessment of these risks/ impacts can ensure that appropriate mitigation measures and opportunities are identified and implemented.

- **Reduce costs in the long-term.** The short-term view often taken of humanitarian response activities, which fails to consider the broader aspects of a disaster, is usually justified by demands on time and money <sup>(1)</sup>. However, a longer-term approach (starting to be taken by some organisations, such as CAFOD) can reduce the likelihood of protracted negative effects and hence the overall costs of disasters, as humanitarian assistance starts to link more effectively into the development process (see *Box 3.3: Vietnam case study*). As stated in the paper by Concern Universal <sup>(2)</sup>:

*“The key issue is that all humanitarian assistance should address the immediate, medium-term and long-term needs of a community, in order to reduce the likelihood of negative effects. There needs to be a continuum, whereby relief projects feed into long-term development programmes; they are not separate entities (Cohen & Deng, 1998:16)..... Good relief should have a basis in future development work, with foundations laid for future recovery”.*

The Case Study presented in *Box 2.3* highlights the potential benefits of considering the environment in a humanitarian response.

### **Box 2.3**

#### ***Darfur: The Benefits of Considering the Environment***

##### ***Darfur: Relief in a Vulnerable Environment***

###### **Background:**

- More than two million people, nearly one in three of Darfur’s population have been forced to flee for their lives into camps. Approximately 107,000 civilians were newly displaced by insecurity and fighting between 1 January and 1 April 2007.
- Four million people in Darfur, two-thirds of the population, are dependent on humanitarian aid for their survival.

**Environment and the Humanitarian Response:** Darfur’s environment is particularly resource poor and suffers from very high natural variability and unpredictability. The environment is a crucial part of the current conflict between pastoralists and farmers with environmental resources being fought over and being destroyed as part of the violence.

Environmental resources are under considerable stress in Darfur as a result of the concentration of demand caused by the massive population displacement. This has created unprecedented concentrations of demand for natural resources. The humanitarian effort is as dependent on natural resources as it is on external finance – for wood to cook food with, timber for construction, sticks and grasses for shelter and water itself.

Environment as a cross cutting theme has not yet been integrated into the Darfur relief effort. For example, there has been no systematic monitoring of groundwater abstraction despite the arid conditions and considerable increases in concentration of demands. Existing studies show the risks of groundwater depletion and identify that monitoring and mitigation should have been built into the relief programme from an early stage.

###### **Benefits of responding to the environmental challenges of the Darfur relief context:**

- mitigation of the chronic conflict over environmental resources;

(1) Donor funding windows are notoriously short which can place pressure on implementing agencies to act speedily with tangible outcomes.

(2) Concern Universal, 2006. A Developmental Approach to Working in Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

- reduction in the risk of severe localised resource depletion that undermines the provision of humanitarian assistance, which may even lead to secondary displacement;
- effective relief programming to supply adequate energy, shelter and water;
- mitigation of the massive problem of violence against women that is associated with firewood collection; and
- support of livelihoods and coping strategies; and building the capacity for return by restoring assets and resources for reconstruction.

**Outcomes/recommendations:** Sustainable Resource Management (SRM) has been suggested as an appropriate planning framework for the humanitarian response in Darfur – at both the strategic planning and project level. This will require that both resources and demands are managed and brought into balance and kept within the limits of renewable supplies. Building environmental capacity and the integration of REA and community environmental management planning have also been suggested.

**Source:** Tearfund March 2007.

## 2.5

### *OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS*

In simple terms, a humanitarian response can be divided into two phases, relief and rehabilitation/recovery <sup>(1)</sup>. In practice though there may be no clear distinction between the two, particularly from the perspective of affected communities. These 'phases' though do offer a chance to consider the different opportunities for integrating environment within a humanitarian response.

During the **relief phase** the opportunity exists to integrate an understanding of the impact of the disaster on the environment. Tools such as the Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) (see *Box 3.5*) can assist with this process. Undertaking this assessment aims to ensure that the humanitarian response does not do (further) undue damage to the environment, which will make it harder for communities to re-establish their normal way-of-life.

During the **rehabilitation/recovery phase** the opportunity exists to 'build-back-better' so as to reduce people's vulnerability. This is likely to be based around the sustainability of people's livelihoods, which in turn have either a direct link to the environment (*i.e.* rural agricultural communities) or an indirect link (*i.e.* urban communities). The causes of disaster should be identified and the post-disaster political will and humanitarian resources should be utilised during this 'window of opportunity' in an endeavour to ensure that future disasters do not occur. The interaction between the causes of disaster, the environment and long-term development goals should form the basis of this strategy.

These two broad phases of humanitarian response are then followed by a "development" phase, in which longer term development needs are addressed. Although the links between disasters, poverty, the environment and development are becoming better understood, in practice there is still a divide between relief and development activities. Humanitarian assistance and

(1) The phases can be further segregated into emergency, relief, rehabilitation and recovery which in turn leads to development.

development operations are normally carried out by different organisations and individuals; with different mindsets, timeframes, funding sources and goals. Issues surrounding the environment are more often considered and dealt with as developmental issues, which can impede the opportunity to integrate the environment within humanitarian work.

*Table 2.1* provides an illustration of potential environmental impacts associated with humanitarian assistance, as well as examples of mitigation and opportunities during the life cycle of a humanitarian response.

**Table 2.1 Selected Examples of Impacts, Mitigation and Opportunities**

|   | Environmental Considerations   | Potential Negative Impacts of Humanitarian Assistance on the Environment   | Secondary Impacts on Livelihoods and Community Health (local community and aid workers)  | Mitigation/ Opportunities   |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
|   |  |  |  | Relief Phase  | Rehabilitation/ Recovery  |
| <b>ENVIRONMENTAL RECEPTOR</b>   |  |  |  |   |   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantity and quality of available water for drinking and sanitation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groundwater sources may become depleted from excessive pumping.</li> <li>Water resources not protected from refugee wastes and wastewater may become contaminated.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contamination or depletion of surface/ groundwater has implications for agriculture and human/ animal health.</li> <li>Conflict with local users.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment of water needs and availability of adequate water sources.</li> <li>Development and implementation of water management strategy.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing implementation of water management strategy.</li> <li>Monitoring and evaluation of water sources and quality.</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability and quality of land.</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land take for camps.</li> <li>Depletion of local food sources.</li> <li>Decrease in soil fertility.</li> <li>Poaching and subsequent impacts on wildlife.</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for agricultural produce for food can lead to: conflict with existing users; changes in land-use patterns; cultivation of marginal areas; and encroachment on areas that are ecologically sensitive or high biodiversity value.</li> <li>Poaching, particularly in protected areas can decimate endangered species populations and disrupt local communities' revenue streams from commercial hunting ventures.</li> <li>Degradation of soil has implications for future agricultural production.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully considered location of temporary shelter, camps and new buildings to minimise pollution and damage to sensitive natural environments (e.g. fertile land, wetlands).</li> <li>Ensure environmental considerations are applied when sourcing food aid (e.g. distance of food source, support of local/ regional markets).</li> <li>Appropriate storage of food supplies to protect health of workers and consumers of the food (e.g. chemicals, dust from phostoxin tablets used for fumigation).</li> <li>Food provision should have appropriate solid waste management plans.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect against longer-term damage to local land (e.g. salt water intrusion, waste debris etc.)</li> <li>Ensure longer-term food supplies (whether local or regional) are sustainable, affordable and nutritionally appropriate (particularly where farming is not possible).</li> </ul> |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location and availability of wood sources for construction and fuel.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood collection for firewood and construction can deforest large areas.</li> <li>This in turn can lead to the loss of habitats and wildlife,</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fuelwood collectors (generally women and children) can be exposed to assault and kidnapping, especially if there are</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful management and sustainable use of land surrounding temporary camps so that it can be returned to its former, or an improved state.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect trees and other vegetation (e.g. use of sustainable construction materials, soil conservation measures and prevention of</li> </ul>  |

|   | Environmental Considerations   | Potential Negative Impacts of Humanitarian Assistance on the Environment  | Secondary Impacts on Livelihoods and Community Health (local community and aid workers)  | Mitigation/ Opportunities   |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
|   |  |   |  | Relief Phase  | Rehabilitation/ Recovery  |
|   |  | destabilization of watersheds (leading to potential soil erosion, land slides and flooding).  | disputed territories near camps.<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced availability for local host communities dependent on fuel, fodder, timber and non-timber products.</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>illegal logging).</li> <li>Ensure methods of construction are clean and energy efficient. Ensure building design and standards of build quality are supportive of protecting the environment (e.g. adequate levels of insulation to reduce the amount of fuel wood burnt).</li> <li>Ensure efficient use of fuel, particularly wood (e.g. through the introduction of energy efficient stoves).</li> </ul> |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air quality.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smoke from burning low quality fuel wood.</li> <li>Dust from movement of large number of people, animals or vehicles.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dust inhalation and respiratory problems.</li> <li>Burning of fuelwood (particularly green wood for cooking) and kerosene or other fuel oils can release harmful smoke and cause acute respiratory infections.</li> <li>Disproportional effects on vulnerable groups</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate selection of energy supplies to minimise air emissions.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term opportunities associated with climate change mitigation and adaptation.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY</b>  |  |   |  |   |   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability/ effectiveness of existing disposal mechanisms.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollution of local environment (e.g. contamination of water and soils).</li> <li>Habitat damage.</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disease caused by insufficient or unsafe water supplies, poor sanitation and waste disposal, poor drainage and uncontrolled diseases (e.g. insects/ rodents).</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe and hygienic disposal of needles and other medical supplies.</li> <li>Safe management of solid and human waste to prevent spread of communicable diseases.</li> <li>Burial / removal of bodies undertaken appropriately to prevent contamination of water / land.</li> <li>Safely re-use or dispose of debris from damaged</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure safe disposal of solid waste (e.g. related to bottled water provision).</li> <li>Ensure safe management of sanitary waste, particularly in urban or refugee scenarios.</li> <li>Ensure affected population are educated regarding the health and environmental implications associated with waste disposal.</li> </ul>  |

|  | Environmental Considerations | Potential Negative Impacts of Humanitarian Assistance on the Environment | Secondary Impacts on Livelihoods and Community Health (local community and aid workers) | Mitigation/ Opportunities   |                          |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------|
|  |                              |  |   | Relief Phase  | Rehabilitation/ Recovery |
|  |                              |  |   | buildings ( <i>i.e.</i> in an earthquake) to avoid contamination and environmental damage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the implications regarding the longer-term use of providing plastic sheeting, galvanised steel and other 'temporary' shelter materials.</li> </ul> |                          |

**Sources:** Tearfund March (2007); and USAID (2006) - Environmental Guidelines for Small-Scale Activities in Africa; Chapter 10: Humanitarian Response and Natural Disasters (2nd Edition).

### 3 *CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO MAINSTREAMING THE ENVIRONMENT*

#### 3.1 *INTRODUCTION*

A number of factors are considered essential for ensuring effective consideration of the environment into humanitarian responses and delivering the benefits identified in *Chapter 2*. These include:

- inter-agency co-ordination;
- prioritisation and awareness raising amongst practitioners;
- effective policy frameworks;
- monitoring and evaluating environmental performance indicators; and
- effective tools, standards and guidelines.

This section examines each of these issues in turn; reviewing current status, challenges and opportunities. The chapter draws upon discussions with key humanitarian actors (see *Annexes A and B*).

The results of this research demonstrate that the environment is a low priority in humanitarian response activities particularly as there is currently no systematic approach for incorporating the environment within humanitarian activities. Most interviewees agreed that environmental considerations would benefit the response provided, but that the lack of agreed protocols and level of current effort required outweighed more pressing commitments on time and budget.

#### 3.2 *INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION*

Inter-agency coordination is central to delivering the benefits of environmental integration, given its importance in delivering on other opportunities identified in this report.

##### 3.2.1 *Cluster System*

The UN Secretary-General's report on '*Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*' identified significant gaps to humanitarian response in certain sectors where there is no clearly mandated lead agency. The Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) recommended assigning responsibilities by sector to lead organisations and developing clusters of relevant partners to develop preparedness and response capacity. Recognizing this, in September 2005 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed to designate global "cluster leads" specifically for humanitarian emergencies in nine sectors.

The cluster approach aims to improve the predictability, timeliness, and effectiveness of humanitarian response, and pave the way for recovery. It also aims to strengthen leadership and accountability in certain key sectors where gaps have been identified, and addresses the repeated requests of the General Assembly for a more predictable, effective and accountable inter-agency response to the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced <sup>(1)</sup>.

Accountability is a key feature of the cluster approach: under the system, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) – with the support of OCHA – retains overall responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of humanitarian response and remains accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In addition, cluster leads have mutual obligations to interact with each other and coordinate to address cross-cutting issues.

The environment is one of these cross cutting issues but has to date received fewer resources than other cross-cutting themes, such as gender. There is however, significant support amongst interviewees to support IASC and strengthen the cluster system to prevent re-inventing the wheel. As such, this could be a significant opportunity for agencies to work together, so as to spread the load and collectively make realistic and practical decisions. A positive example of collective working is UNEP and TearFund’s assessment of environmental issues in Darfur. Their reports examine the important environmental issues in the Darfur relief context, described an appropriate framework for environmental mitigation and made recommendations in the context of this framework (see *Box 2.3*).

### 3.2.2 *Steering Committee*

The Steering Committee developed as part of this research and hosted by UNEP was eager to maintain the momentum of this research and stay operational as a committee for one year. They felt that the first step in taking things forward would be to create internal commitment, also to advocate for due recognition and resourcing of environmental issues.

#### *Box 3.1 Opportunities for Inter-Agency Coordination*

- **Early participation.** Early participation and buy-in by donors, governments, NGOs and the private sector to ensure the environment becomes an integral and routine part of humanitarian response.
- **Strengthen partnerships.** This need to strengthen partnerships has been recognized amongst the humanitarian community and is an objective of the cluster system. Cluster Heads are not necessarily responsible for leading the overall humanitarian response within that sector but are responsible for promoting close cooperation amongst humanitarian actors working in that sector. It is then the Humanitarian Coordinator at the country level who is responsible for ensuring that all cross-cutting issues are effectively addressed in all sectors.

(1) [http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1355#\\_ftn2](http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1355#_ftn2)

*Recommendations (see Chapter 4): 1) Short study to identify key organisations and key objectives for a task force; 2) Build a task force responsible for driving this initiative; and 3) Cluster system support.*

### 3.3

#### *PRIORITISATION AND AWARENESS AMONGST PRACTITIONERS*

Despite some efforts to integrate the environment into humanitarian response, the findings of this research indicate that field personnel and other humanitarian practitioners tend to have low prioritisation and often awareness of environmental issues. Consideration of the environment is certainly not an integral and routine part of humanitarian response. A key finding of this study was the limited knowledge of environmental issues amongst practitioners which has been attributed to: 1) a lack of requirement for environmental assessments during emergency situations and hence a lack of prioritisation; 2) insufficient reporting and dissemination of good practice; and 3) high turnover of staff in humanitarian organisations, meaning transitory knowledge and institutional learning.

This research further highlighted a lack of integration of assessment results into humanitarian operations. There has been a substantial increase in the number of environmental assessments undertaken over the past four years but a lack of analysis on how they have impacted humanitarian activities. The anecdotal evidence of benefits accruing from environmental assessments would be greatly endorsed by robust reporting of impacts. Cost-benefit analysis reports would be particularly useful as many respondents argued that incorporating environmental considerations was too resource intensive. A demonstration of cost savings would illustrate the win-wins of integrating the environment into humanitarian activities.

#### *Box 3.2*

#### *Opportunities for Prioritising and Increasing Environmental Awareness*

- **Consider the benefits.** Disseminate good practice examples and results of cost-benefit analysis. Despite broad agreement about the benefit of considering the environment, there are a lack of good case studies and solid reasoning for integrating the environment.
- **Share good practice.** Improved information sharing and documentation of good practice, as well as the promotion of appropriate analytical frameworks that minimise demands on time and resources, would be beneficial. As awareness and good practice around environmental issues increases, agencies will start to prioritise this area and recognise it within their organisation policies.
- **Opportunities in a protracted context.** There is increased scope and opportunity for considering the environment when humanitarian responses are longer-term. The additional time available allows space for strategic planning, increased opportunities for collaboration and more time to utilise the tools available.
- **Conditionality.** Incorporating environmental considerations, to improve the response provided by humanitarian agencies, could be made a condition of donor assistance. Any such instructions would need to ensure that they are not overly prescriptive to avoid overloading the agencies.

- **Climate change.** A need for the humanitarian community to continue (and be supported on) work to understand and deal with the humanitarian consequences of climate change given the potentially significant implications.

*Recommendations (see Chapter 4): 1) Information Sheets (including case studies showing the linkages between the environment and humanitarian assistance, benefits and good practice); 2) Evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental assessments and dissemination of results; 3) Post disaster briefings; 4) Information hub; and 5) Continued research to identify humanitarian consequences of climate change.*

### 3.4 EFFECTIVE POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

#### 3.4.1 Policy Framework

Policies set out guiding principles for an organisation, reflecting their stance or position on particular issues. Environmental policy frameworks were found to be scarce amongst the humanitarian actors interviewed, with most only having a vague reference to environmental considerations in their policy statements. Of the 19 NGOs interviewed, only five stated that they had clear environmental policy statements, but some others had environmental guidelines and programmes.

Those actors who did have clear environmental policies tended to be those who approached environment through their ‘mandate lens’. FAO, for example, looks at environmental management with respect to its impacts on food security. Lack of a topic such as the environment suggests a lack of prioritisation. This can mostly be explained by the fact that in an emergency situation, government and humanitarian assistance organisations are not required to undertake environmental assessments, so as not to overload agencies during the immediate/short-term assistance being provided. Humanitarian programmes are also often broken down into many small projects that do not warrant formal Environmental Impacts Assessments in their own right.

#### 3.4.2 Environmental Indicators and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and evaluation are essential for measuring outcomes, comparing the effectiveness of alternative solutions, drawing lessons learnt, informing decisions and justifying costs (see Box 3.3: Vietnam case study). The absence of environmental performance indicators in humanitarian agencies reporting significantly impedes their ability to analyse how considering the environment impacts the humanitarian response.

#### Box 3.3 Vietnam: Reintroduction of Mangrove Forest to Reduce Typhoon Impacts and Improve Livelihoods

##### **Background:**

Vietnam is one of the most typhoon struck countries in Asia. However in coastal areas dykes were built so as to claim the mudflats for agriculture while the protective belt of mangrove forest between these and the sea was cut down or destroyed. This left coastal communities and the dykes exposed to the typhoons and storm surges, with devastating consequences.

**Environment and the Humanitarian Response:**

The Vietnamese Red Cross planted more than 175km<sup>2</sup> of mangrove forest along almost 200km of coastline. Local communities carried out the planting and were granted the right to harvest marine products such as crabs and mussels in the areas they had planted.

**Outcomes/recommendations:**

The planting of the mangroves cost USD 1.1 million, but helped reduce the cost of dyke maintenance by USD 7.3 million a year. The Red Cross also estimates that 7,750 families improved their livelihoods, and hence their resilience to further hazards, through the selling of crabs, shrimps and molluscs.

**Source:** Planting trees to reduce disaster risk in Vietnam by IFRC and Red Cross / Red Crescent Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

The focus of monitoring programmes is also important, to ensure that they work towards the objectives of sustainable development. In Darfur the water sector was driven by targets for the supply of water rather than focussing on resource management. In El Fasher, for example, an important surface water dam (Haloof Dam) was damaged by floods in 2005 and was not repaired during the 2006 dry season despite the fact that the limited resource is the critical constraint on water supply to the town and the camps <sup>(1)</sup>. If water resources and water 'needs' had been appropriately assessed, the importance of El Fasher and its repair would likely have been recognised.

**Box 3.4*****Opportunities for Developing Environmental Policies and M & E***

- **Integrating environment.** Encourage humanitarian agencies to incorporate the environment within their organisation policy and to have appropriate M&E frameworks.
- **Accountability.** There is a responsibility on humanitarian agencies to fulfil their environmental responsibilities and mandates.

*Recommendations (see Chapter 4): 1) Encourage agencies to incorporate environment into organisational policies and performance indicators; 2) Incorporate environment in agency's response protocols; 3) Technical assistance and funding conditions; 4) Improved monitoring criteria; 5) Agency accountability.*

**3.5*****EFFECTIVE TOOLS, GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS***

This research identified a number of tools, standards and guidelines used by humanitarian actors. These are listed in full in *Annex C*. There has been an increase in the number and application of disaster-focused environmental impact tools, particularly following the 2004 Asia Tsunami <sup>(2)</sup> but very few seem to have gained currency among humanitarian actors. Lack of effective tools for environmental assessment was raised as a key reason why the environment is often not successfully integrated in humanitarian response activities. Six of the 19 NGOS interviewed did not use guidelines at all; and 11

(1) Tearfund. 2007. Darfur: Relief in a vulnerable environment.

(2) Kelly, C. 2007. *On the Sequence of Disaster-Focused Environmental Impact Assessments*. Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, University College London.

used them, but tailored them to the needs of their individual agency<sup>(1)</sup>. One problem with ad-hoc assessments is that they are often limited in scope and can not be replicated, which is important in monitoring and evaluating the accomplishments of disaster response activities with explicit or implicit impacts on the environment<sup>(2)</sup>.

*Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA)* was most commonly used amongst NGOs interviewed, with five of them using this tool, but not always consistently across all activities (see *Box 3.5*). This was often as part of *FRAME*, which is a framework for assessing monitoring and evaluating the environment in refugee-related operations (see *Annex C*). *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)* was well recognized amongst those interviewed but rarely used due to the time required to undertake such an assessment. *FAST (Fast Environmental Assessment Tool)*, *Vulnerability Capacity Assessments* and *Disaster Risk Reduction* approaches were noted by a few agencies but the overall finding was that many humanitarian agencies do not use any tools at all and most of those that do, use them in an ad hoc and uncoordinated manner.

The Benfield Hazard Research Centre and CARE International have developed a detailed and comprehensive set of guidelines on *Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA)* in disasters<sup>(3)</sup> (see *Box 3.5*). There were a number of conflicting views about the appropriateness of REA, which is likely to be, in part, due to a lack of familiarity with the tool. REA practitioners are of the opinion that some level of environmental review involving impacted communities can be conducted, even under the most difficult operational conditions.

### **Box 3.5** *Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) Guidelines*

**Aim.** Help a decision-maker to consider the environmental conditions of a particular location during a specific period of time to identify any existing or potential problems or concerns with regards to the use of natural resources, but also considering broad social and economic impacts.

**Scope.** These guidelines focus on:

- assessment of the general context of a disaster;
- disaster-related factors that may have an immediate impact on the environment;
- possible immediate environmental impacts of disaster agents;
- unmet basic needs of disaster survivors that could lead to adverse impacts on the environment; and
- potential negative environmental consequences of relief operations.

**Methodology.** Undertaken by gathering information from a range of sources, completing a series of short descriptions, checklists and ranking matrices and by analysis, discussing and synthesising the findings. The methodology is based on qualitative assessment, drawing heavily on perceptions and often incomplete data, helping to facilitate rapid assessment under difficult circumstances.

(1) Eight respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

(2) Kelly, C. 2007. *On the Sequence of Disaster-Focused Environmental Impact Assessments*. Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, University College London.

(3) The most recent Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters developed by Charles Kelly (Version 4.4) are dated April 2005.

**Application.** The REA guidelines have been applied a number of times including in several REAs undertaken by UN agencies. Two of the 19 NGOs interviewed used these integrated with the SPHERE standards.

**Major Gaps.** *Further research is needed to identify major gaps.*

Source: [http://www.benfieldhrc.org/rea\\_index.htm](http://www.benfieldhrc.org/rea_index.htm)

An REA carried out by UNEP and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of Sri Lanka following the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami highlighted urgent environmental concerns relating to the management of tsunami debris and to sewage and sanitation issues in emergency shelter locations. Similarly, recommendations emerging from a UNEP/OCHA REA of the impact of Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne in Haiti, Grenada and the Dominican Republic in 2004 included the need to address risks to surface- and groundwater in Grenada and immediate and longer-term increased flooding and landslide risks in all three countries <sup>(1)</sup>.

Other environmental guidelines and standards that appear to be used most often by humanitarian agencies are detailed in *Annex C* and include those described in the boxes below.

### Box 3.6

#### **SPHERE (2004)**

A multi-year project sponsored by NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, donor governments, and UN agencies has produced *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*

**Aim.** To improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response.

**Scope.** Includes standards for sectoral issues *e.g.* water; sanitation; food; shelter and health and cross-cutting issues (*e.g.* HIV/AIDS, gender, children, environment) and process standards (*e.g.* participation, assessment, monitoring, evaluation).

**Methodology.** Minimum standards and the key indicators have been developed using a broad networks of practitioners in each of the sectors.

**Application.** The SPHERE standards were the most commonly used by those interviewed during this research with five of the 19 NGOs interviewed using them. Two of these also integrated them with the REA guidelines.

**Major Gaps.** *Further research is needed to identify major gaps.*

Source: [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

(1) Source: Tools for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction: Environmental Assessment (Guidance Note 7) by IFRC / Prevention Consortium available from <http://www.proventionconsortium.org>

**Aim.** To describe the basis for incorporating environmental factors into specific UNHCR guidance/ guidelines; to provide more detailed information and the rationale behind the executive committee policy statement; and to serve as an awareness raising tool for UNHCR and other agencies involved with refugee and returnee operations. Also provide a framework for identifying and evaluating environmental impacts, opportunities to undertake positive environmental interventions and to select interventions, which best combine the interests of refugees and receiving countries, donors and UNHCR.

**Scope.** Natural resource deterioration, irreversible impacts on natural resources, impacts on health, impacts on social conditions, social impacts on local populations and economic impacts.

**Methodology.** Provide operational guidelines during the different phases of an emergency.

**Application.** UNHCR guidelines were used by two of the 19 NGOs interviewed.

**Major Gaps.** *Further research is needed to identify major gaps.*

Source: <http://www.unhcr.org>

**Aim.** The purpose of FEAT is for agencies to be able to move quickly and identify the key problems following an emergency.

**Scope.** Different types of emergencies, but regarded as UNEP/ OCHA mandate-driven assessment rather than the standards/ best practice assessments of EIA and REA either a particularly applicability to environmental hazards e.g. spill.

**Methodology.** A practical top-down tool that can be applied relatively rapidly (at the expense of thoroughness).

**Application.** Used by none of the 19 NGOs interviewed.

**Major Gaps.** Does not insist upon integration of the affected population into the assessment process (therefore at variance from the SPHERE standards).

Source: [http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/programs/response/unep/chemguid.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/programs/response/unep/chemguid.html)

### 3.5.1

#### *Problems with Existing Use of Tools*

- **Lack of awareness.** There does appear to be a growing sensitivity amongst agencies to include environmental management in their operations but acknowledgement that tools are often not well understood or promoted. The findings of the interviews undertaken as part of this research illustrate a lack of clear understanding amongst donors and implementing agencies about which tools are currently used, as well as the main advantages and disadvantages associated with them. Those interviewed suggested that this lack of understanding and awareness has prevented tool utilisation;

(1) The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (Joint Environment Unit) is the United Nations mechanism to mobilize and coordinate emergency assistance to countries affected by environmental emergencies and natural disasters with significant environmental impacts.

also that these tools were for the domain of specialists, often being too complicated for relief workers. REA practitioners, however, do not see relief-related environmental issues as complex but do identify that a good analytical framework (that has minimal demands on time and resources) is needed to identify how issues should be dealt with.

### Box 3.9 *Example Analytical Frameworks*

There are numerous tools available <sup>(1)</sup>, and some, such as Tearfund's 'Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk' <sup>(2)</sup>, include a consideration of the environment. *Strategic Environmental Frameworks* (SEF) were used by UNEP in Banda Aceh to provide a practical tool for mitigating project impacts (see Box 3.10).

Some *Community Risk Assessment* methodologies (also referred to as Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment), that attempt to aid communities and organisations understand disaster risk in a predictive way so as to develop risk reduction strategies, can be adapted and applied in a rehabilitation/reconstruction context.

### Box 3.10 *Indian Ocean Tsunami: Housing Reconstruction in Banda Aceh*

**Environment and the Humanitarian Response:** A UNEP assessment of Aceh two years after the 2004 Asian tsunami clearly shows that the reconstruction process has significant impacts on the environment. Some of the environmental concerns identified include:

- The locations chosen for the reconstruction of houses are not always adequate. Houses are sometimes built in highly disaster-prone or environmentally sensitive areas, or in areas where the water table is shallow.
- Inadequate or sometimes absent sanitation facilities for reconstructed houses are a major source of ground and surface water pollution, particularly in areas with very shallow water tables.
- The excessive use of burnt clay bricks for the reconstruction of houses, together with the fact that brick kilns mainly use production techniques with very low energy efficiency, results in a demand for huge quantities of fuel wood, which often comes from illegal logging operations.

**Outcomes/recommendations:** Strategic Environmental Frameworks (SEF) are designed to assist decision-making in a project cycle's early stages and to provide a practical tool for mitigating project impacts. The (SEF) for a more environmentally sound reconstruction of Aceh Province is a set of policies, structures and operational guidelines ensuring that environment is properly considered in Aceh's complete reconstruction programme and project cycle. To this end, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, UNEP has prepared a 'Sustainable Construction Guidance Manual' for use by NGOs and UN agencies in Banda Aceh. The manual provides information on sustainable construction materials and techniques, energy efficiency and conservation, alternative water supply and sanitation systems, and waste recycling and composting.

**Source:** Environment and Vulnerability: Emerging Perspectives by UN / International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and UNEP

(1) The Community Risk Assessment Toolkit documents various methodologies:  
<http://www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=39>

(2) <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Reducing+risk+of+disaster+in+our+communities.htm>

- **Perceived complexity of existing tools.** The general reasons for tools not being used were because they are cumbersome, too time-intensive and generalised. This review indicates general agreement amongst practitioners that tools such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are too complex to be readily applied in emergency situations; but Rapid Environmental Assessments (REAs) <sup>(1)</sup>, designed to be simpler and more straightforward (recognizing that those who respond to disasters have little time for in depth research) still seem to be viewed as impractical and lacking in flexibility. The requirement for participation by affected communities was also suggested to be an impediment to their use. This was not to underestimate the benefits of providing impacted individuals with an involvement in decision making, but simply that it was impractical under the time constraints of an emergency. It is likely that this is reflective of a lack of awareness and training as REA practitioners believe some level of environmental review involving impacted communities can be conducted, even under the most difficult operational conditions.
- **Lack of standardisation.** A lack of standardised procedures for incorporating environment into the different types of humanitarian response can also result in inaction due to a limited awareness of the variety of options available. *“Consolidated guidelines for conducting environmental assessments [should be produced that] correspond to key field areas such as waste disposal, health care waste, natural resource use [etc.] and distributed at the start of each mission <sup>(2)</sup>”*. This lack of a consistent approach also hinders monitoring and evaluation efforts due to a lack of replication and therefore an ability to analyse the effectiveness of considering environment impacts in a humanitarian response. This is not to suggest that all agencies should undertake exactly the same process in every situation, but that standard tools could be used, which are by their nature, designed to be adapted to specific contexts.
- **Lack of evidence of success.** A further reason is that a lack of evidence exists for the success of these assessments. Charles Kelly noted in his paper submitted to the 2007 IAIA conference in Seoul, Japan: *“There is a need to link and integrate procedures and results to ensure assessments provide useful and effective input into crisis management operations.”* In his paper earlier this year on disaster-focussed EIA tools he also noted that: *“The last four years have seen a considerable increase in post-disaster environmental impact assessments and reports. Yet the impact these reports have had on actual relief and recovery operations is unclear.” <sup>(3)</sup>*

(1) The Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters developed by Charles Kelly (Version 4.4, April 2005) are 109 pages long ([http://www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster\\_studies/rea/rea\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster_studies/rea/rea_guidelines.htm)), although the ‘Quick Guide’ version has been reduced to 42 pages.

(2) UNEP/OCHA. 2006. Environmental Emergency Response to the South Asia Earthquake.

(3) Kelly, C. 2007. *On the Sequence of Disaster-Focused Environmental Impact Assessments*. Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, University College London.

- **Integration.** A further area of discussion was whether tools used for environmental assessment should be stand alone assessments or whether there should be a focus on integrating them more successfully into other assessments undertaken during relief and recovery operations. Humanitarian agencies all have response protocols that they tailor for each situation. Having environment firmly integrated into these protocols would ensure that the critical linkages between the environment and disasters are recognised, ensuring a more holistic assessment.

**Box 3.11**

***Opportunities for Development, Awareness and Training on Tools***

- **Integrating environmental assessments.** Integrating environmental assessments within other non-environmental focused assessments was suggested by interviewees. Limited information was gathered to explore this issue, but analysis of assessments and standard protocols used by key agencies would be required to identify commonalities and build consensus and good practice.
  - **Improve understanding of environmental issues.** Training of agency staff in environmental issues is an area where respondents felt value would be added. Despite the fact that tools such as REA are not focussed at environmental specialists there is some agreement amongst agencies about the importance of ensuring that competent fieldworkers are available to deal with environmental issues. It has been argued that the broadening scope of humanitarian activities has led to a thinning of technical skills (*e.g.* engineering) with implications for key issues such as managing the technical side of climate change. Provision of training would not only increase awareness but also arm staff with the appropriate skills to undertake environmental assessments.
  - **Improve understanding of tools.** The lack of understanding around tools was identified as an area where agencies could benefit from assistance.
  - **SPHERE update.** An update is scheduled for 2010 and it is recommend that humanitarian agencies are engaged in this process so as to have buy-in and ownership of the revised guidelines.
- Recommendations (see Chapter 4): 1) Tool promotion and training; 2) Tool refinement; 3) Integrated environmental assessment; 4) training needs assessment and environmental training where appropriate; 5) Cooperation with local organisations and relief workers; 6) Focussed recruitment.*

The following table outlines key recommendations coming out of this research. The Task Force has been identified as a lead organisation to systematically drive key initiatives and ensure the development and dissemination of best practice.

|   | Opportunity (driver)   | Recommendations   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION</b>                                  |  |   |
| Task force  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates a group with responsibility for taking forward key initiatives.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a short study to identify the key organisations and key objectives of the Task Force.</li> <li>Develop a Task Force to drive key initiatives, with a clear mandate and objectives for integrating environment into humanitarian response.</li> </ul>   |
| Cluster system support  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers a good opportunity for inter-agency coordination.</li> <li>Will continue to incorporate environment as a cross-cutting issue and ensure humanitarian programme outputs are measured <sup>(1)</sup> and mitigation implemented.</li> <li>Identify common ground therefore reduce effort.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider improving environmental expertise within the cluster system, through training <sup>(2)</sup>.</li> <li>Investigate funding opportunities to support the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in its activities (so as not to re-invent the wheel). Focus on the promotion of tools and training in environmental expertise.</li> <li>Encourage shared analysis thematically, geographically etc. where there are issues of mutual concern/ interest.</li> </ul> |
| <b>INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES</b> |  |   |
| Information sheets  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise awareness of the linkages between the environment and a humanitarian response.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop intelligible information sheets that unpack humanitarian activities to show their linkages to environmental issues.</li> <li>Include case studies to illustrate impacts and illustrate the value added to humanitarian interventions through an enhanced understanding of environmental issues.</li> <li>Identify appropriate methods for disseminating information (e.g. through workshops or training).</li> </ul>   |
| Evaluate assessment results                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide evidence of the costs, cost savings and benefits of considering environmental issues in a humanitarian response.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate recent environmental assessments undertaken as part of humanitarian responses and undertake a cost- benefit analysis.</li> <li>Lead agencies to organise post-disaster de-briefs to share ideas and discuss improvements.</li> </ul>  |
| Climate change  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognition of the issue by major humanitarian actors.</li> <li>Broad consideration of this issue from disaster risk to advocacy evident in recent launch of 'Stop Climate Chaos'.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further research and analysis to continue work on understanding and dealing with the humanitarian consequences of climate change given the potentially significant implications.</li> </ul>  |

(1) Work in the environment sector is often qualitative.

(2) This recommendation was backed up by UNEP in the reporting of the South Asia earthquake as they observed that due to the environment's cross-cutting nature it does not always fit neatly in the cluster structure. They recommended that an environmental expert be present at all cluster meetings to make sure that environmental issues are addressed.

|   | Opportunity (driver)  | Recommendations   |
|---|---|---|
| Information hub   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a central, accessible hub of useful information.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a web-based information hub for disseminating tools, training materials and case studies.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>INCORPORATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b> |   |   |
| Environmental policy and performance indicators                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and good practice around environmental issues will mean higher prioritisation of environmental issues within agencies.</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage humanitarian agencies to incorporate the environment within their organisational policy and performance indicators.</li> <li>• Encourage agencies to incorporate the environment in their response protocols.</li> <li>• Technical assistance and funding conditions should be considered.</li> <li>• Funding agencies should review their monitoring criteria to ensure they consider the broader aspects of humanitarian response.</li> <li>• Individual agencies should be accountable for fulfilling all commitments stipulated in their mandate (including environmental commitments).</li> </ul>       |
| <b>TOOL DEVELOPMENT, AWARENESS RAISING AND TRAINING</b>                               |   |   |
| Tool promotion and training.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To raise awareness of existing tools and to dispel any misconceptions about their use.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a needs assessment to identify the likely uptake of tools training.</li> <li>• Investigate potential funding opportunities for tools training.</li> <li>• Provide training and refresher training on the key tools available to humanitarian agencies (e.g. Benfield Hazard Research Centre for REA).</li> </ul>   |
| Tool refinement   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of simple analytical and decision making frameworks.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore potential for refining/ improving existing tools/ protocols to ensure that they are simple and practical (e.g. simple checklists or guidelines as recommended in the UNEP report following the South Asia earthquake or standardized briefing packs for experts prior to deployment).</li> <li>• Obtain consensus amongst agencies to make tools more practical.</li> <li>• Undertake a study to examine the pros and cons of existing tools, to fully understand what is required during refinement.</li> <li>• Engage humanitarian agencies in the SPHERE updates to ensure buy-in and ownership.</li> </ul> |
| Integrate environmental assessments   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate environmental assessments into other assessments during relief and recovery operations to ensure a more holistic approach.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a focused study on assessments undertaken by humanitarian agencies so as to identify commonalities and opportunities for environmental integration.</li> </ul>   |
| Environmental skills training   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness and arm staff with appropriate skills to undertake environmental assessments.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a training needs assessment and then potentially provide environmental assessment training to agency staff.</li> <li>• Provide agencies with access to environmental expertise for additional support (e.g. through cluster system)</li> </ul>   |
| Partnering  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation with local organisations and relief workers to improve the effectiveness of the relief response due to local understanding and ownership of environmental issues.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop useful links with local organisations and relief workers. Local understanding and ownership of environmental issues will facilitate a more effective relief response.</li> </ul>   |

|             | Opportunity (driver)   | Recommendations   |
|-------------|--|---|
| Recruitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the balance of environmental expertise within humanitarian agencies. (There has been a thinning of technical skills (e.g. engineering and hydrogeology) in the broadening scope of humanitarian activities).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include technical specialists in recruitment policies (increasingly significant for addressing key issues such as climate change variability related disasters where the technical side of resource management is increasingly important <sup>(1)</sup>).</li> </ul> |

(1) Tearfund (2007) Darfur: Relief in a Vulnerable Environment.

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## 5.2 OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND REFERENCES

### 5.2.1 Tools, Guidelines and Standards

- Benfield Hazard Research Centre. Rapid environmental impact assessment in disaster response (REA). [http://www.benfieldhrc.org/rea\\_index.htm](http://www.benfieldhrc.org/rea_index.htm)
- IFRC's Code of Conduct. <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/>
- Joseph Bishop, *Guidelines For Environmental Assessment Following Chemical Emergencies* (Geneva: UNEP/OCHA Environmental Unit, 1999)
- SPHERE Project. [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)
- UNHRC Environmental Guidelines. <http://www.unhcr.org>

### 5.2.2 Other resources

- *Environmental Documentation Manual* (Washington DC: USAID Environmental Working Group, Food Aid Management, January 1999).
- European Commission – Environmental Impact Assessment. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm>
- Food Aid Management (resource and procedure documents on environmental impact assessments): [www.foodaidmanagement.org/envmt3.htm](http://www.foodaidmanagement.org/envmt3.htm).
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International. <http://www.hapinternational.org/en/>
- Richard Black, *Refugees, Environment and Development* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).

- Stop Climate Chaos initiative. [www.stopclimatechaos.org](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org)
- The International Association for Impact Assessment: [www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org).
- The UN Environment Programme: [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org).
- USAID Africa Bureau Environmental Assessment Capacity Building Program (ENCAP): [www.encapafrika.org](http://www.encapafrika.org).

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