Terms of Reference

Working Group on Environmental Analysis for Humanitarian Action

Introduction

Background

The Working Group on Remote Environmental Analysis for Humanitarian Action has been set up as part of the *Coordination of Assessments for Environment in Humanitarian Actio*n (the Joint Initiative) project, led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Environment / United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Unit (JEU), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Further to project completion in December 2018, the Working Group is being managed by the JEU as part of its operations. The Working Group is set up as a sub-group under the Remote Analysis and Assessment Cell maintained by OCHA's Needs Assessment and Analysis Section, following its protocols and procedures and reporting directly to the group.

Objective

The objective of the Working Group is to improve the quality of humanitarian analysis by ensuring that environmental factors and data, including those related to climate change, are included at an early stage through a collaborative effort. Specifically, the group aims to strengthen the involvement of environmental actors in remote analysis in support of humanitarian action. The group is chaired by the JEU.

Members

Around 30 experts representing around 20 organizations are currently part of the group. To be added to the group, please contact the JEU (ochaunep@un.org).

Outline of process for environmental actors to engage in humanitarian analysis

Context

This paper outlines a proposed process whereby environmental actors can feed into ongoing humanitarian analysis. The suggested process has been set up on an experimental basis in early 2018, linking to the Joint Assessment Initiative. The process is led by the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit (JEU), where it is expected that other members of the group will take an active role. Eventually the activities should become self-sustaining, with JEU acting only as a facilitator.

For more information on data and information sharing in humanitarian settings, please refer to this document.

Entry points for environmental actors

A number of entry points for including environment into the Humanitarian Programming Cycle exist. These include, but are not limited to, the following[1]:

- Protracted crisis:
    - o Feeding environmental data into the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), which are done on an annual basis in August-September. Entry points are primarily related to the sections looking at the characteristics of people in need. The need to conduct detailed environmental assessments in certain countries or areas can also be raised here.
    - o The Common Country Assessment (CCA) – which forms the basis of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – would ideally link to the HNO in those countries where there is an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Disaster risk reduction (including eco-DRR) and climate change adaptation is increasingly being addressed in CCAs and UNDAFs.
- Sudden-onset crises:
    - o The Flash Appeal process offers similar opportunities as the HNO, but is designed to mount a response much more quickly in the first few days of the crisis. This could also later become a Consolidated Appeal.
    - o Rapidly providing inputs to the Remote Assessment and Analysis cell. This is a good entry point for targeting assessment work being done outside the formal UN system. It is important to communicate key information based on preliminary data and implement quick action in parallel to compiling a more detailed assessment report.
    - o The Multi Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) has many entry points for environment and is primarily applied in sudden-onset emergencies. If environment is included in the underlying analytical framework (for example in the "Underlying factors" under the "Scope and scale of the crisis"), then it would automatically be included in the follow-up questions.
    - o Post-Disaster Needs Assessment usually contains a specific section on the environment, where inputs can be provided to actors responsible for these sections.
- Common to both protracted and sudden-onset emergencies:
    - o Inter-sectoral analysis aims to get a common and independent picture of the people's needs. Provided environmental actors are involved in this process, environment can be raised at each of the eight steps of this process. The analysis focus is on the persons in need, and their specific needs, while the process seeks to link vulnerabilities and needs to the response planning. Ideally, environmental organizations would be involved at the country level in this process and if not possible, then remotely from HQ level.
    - o Response monitoring framework, whereby clusters report on indicators (provided these have environmental focus)

Additionally, there are multiple opportunities to share environmental data with people and organizations outside the HPC processes, for example as part of ongoing Rapid Environmental Assessments. These opportunities should also be explored, and are listed in more detail in the guidance document on data sharing.

Additional areas of interest to explore are:

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[1] From the outcomes of the Joint Initiative Stakeholder Workshop in Washington, 26-27 October, 2017.

- How to link up more robustly with first responder teams for sudden onset disasters or rapidly escalating migration crises: exploring what data and methods are relevant for the tasks of these mechanisms and how these first assessments feed into environmental action and further assessments further along the programme cycle.
- National capacity building and engaging with national authorities to provide actionable information in an easy-to-understand manner
- Addressing the issue of the lack of requirement there be a specific type of analysis of data presented and used. What is the legal requirement for environmental issues in CAPs and Flash Appeals, what will be needed sectoral plans, PDNAs, projects and programmes?
- Analysing the funding request formats used by donors to see what is needed, and what can be used.

Proposed process

Note: *the establishment and use of the process is work in progress. The below procedures will be revised and updated as part of the pilot phase of the working group. As required, templates and detailed instructions for the various steps will be worked out.*

While the best way of ensuring that environmental data is included into the relevant humanitarian programming analysis and tools is by engaging in the relevant processes and working groups at country level, this paper outlines a proposed process for supporting country-level analysis remotely. Remote support can also be provided to facilitate cross-border data exchange and integration in the event of transboundary crises. The objective is to strengthen the humanitarian analysis by bringing in additional actors and data, who might otherwise not be feeding into the process, as well as shifting from simply sharing information to conducting collaborative analyses. The provision of remote support will work through the existing Remote Analysis and Assessment Cell activated by the OCHA Needs Assessment and Analysis Section (NAAS). Support will concentrate primarily on the following:

1. Inputs to HNOs (examples of data include, but is not limited to: water/wastewater quality and quantity data, rainfall information, land productivity data, forest cover in various regions, pollution levels, soil erosion, disaster waste, information on agriculture and livelihoods linked to natural resources)
2. Inputs to initial analysis for sudden-onset crises, including baseline, pre-crisis data, to be used as base for a subsequent MIRA assessment and Flash Appeals (examples of data include, but is not limited to: damage to vegetation/agricultural production/livestock, biodiversity/natural heritage loss, percentage of buildings destroyed or debris expected, number and location of infrastructure and hazardous facilities affected - more details on expected data to be developed).
3. Other, ad-hoc, requests for environmental inputs

The timeline for providing remote inputs to the first output is 1-2 weeks, for the second output 24-48 hours (to be adjusted as part of subsequent revised appeals / needs overviews). The timeline will closely follow that of the overall remote analysis task teams in place, supported by OCHA (NAAS).

The following entities will be involved:

Focal point: JEU will act as focal point for the analysis, liaising with OCHA NAAS ahead of the HNO period as well as in case of a large sudden-onset emergency, to establish the ongoing process as well as the type of environmental inputs and support relevant for the overall humanitarian needs analysis.

Group members: The group members are informed through an email message in case remote analysis will be required, and added to a new skype group on the specific context/output. Group members are required to indicate their level of availability to provide support. One group member is nominated as lead for the particular situation.

The following steps are followed:

1. Activation

Following confirmation from NAAS that a specific sudden-onset or protracted emergency would benefit from environmental support or direct request for remote environmental support from the field, JEU activates the group by email, sets up a dedicated skype group on the emergency/crisis as needed, and interfaces with NAAS. JEU also clearly defines the deadlines and expected deliverables of the group. Group members indicate their availability, where one member is expected to take the lead for the specific emergency.

2. Data analysis

Group members reach out to their own networks to gather environmental data and information on the context. This should be shared by email or via the dedicated skype group in the form of actionable points, while avoiding information overload as a consequence of an accumulation and duplication of data. The group lead is responsible for compiling and synthesizing the data.

3. Sharing of findings

After the lead has synthesized the data, it is shared by JEU with NAAS together with the underlying data. In case of additional queries, the group / lead provides support.

4. Synthesis and lessons learnt

After the support has been provided, JEU reaches out to NAAS to get feedback on the outputs produced. A call is organized with the group to capture lessons learnt and to improve the process. This should include a mechanism to ensure continuity in spite of frequent turnovers (eg. handover notes, key action points, detailed list of participant contact information and their role as part of the analysis, etc.).