# Coordination of Assesments
## For Environment in Humanitarian Action

## SCOPING STUDY

*In support of the USAID, UNHCR, WWF and UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit Initiative: Coordinated Assessment for Environmental and Humanitarian Action*

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UN environment · OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs · USAID From the American People · UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency · WWF · MSB Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency · Global Environmental Management Support

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# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| APELL | Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level |
| BHRC | Benfield Hazard Research Centre |
| CARE | Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere |
| CHF International | Global Communities International |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| EHA | Environment in Humanitarian Action |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| FEAT | Flash Environmental Assessment Tool |
| FRAME | Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in Refugee-related Operations |
| GFDRR | Global Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| GRRT | Green Reconstruction and Recovery Training |
| GTZ | German Agency for Technical Cooperation |
| HPC | Humanitarian Programme Cycle |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| JEU | UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit |
| MFA | Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| NEAT | NRC Environmental Assessment Tool |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| OCHA | UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PDNA | Post-Disaster Needs Assessment |
| REA | Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters |
| SEA | Strategic Environmental Assessment |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDAC | United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination |
| UNE | United Nations Environment |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USAID/OFDA | USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

# INTRODUCTION

The ***Coordination of Assessments for Environment in Humanitarian Action: A Joint Initiative***, herein referred to as the Initiative, is a collaborative effort among the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the UN Environment/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Joint Unit (JEU) to achieve the intended goal of **sustaining and improving lives and livelihoods through the integration** of environmental considerations in humanitarian relief operations. The outcome of the Initiative seeks to support coordination among humanitarian and environmental actors and improve access to and use of environmental data.

Throughout the humanitarian programme cycle of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, a range of guidelines, manuals, toolkits and mechanisms have been developed to support the decision-making assessment process. However, no single mechanism or tool is comprehensive or accepted as standard operating procedure. Furthermore, the extent to which environmental assessments are integrated into the overall humanitarian emergency planning process can vary significantly. This patchwork of environmental tools can complicate when, where, and how to integrate environmental considerations into humanitarian projects and programmes; moreover, many tools are not sufficiently updated to include recent developments in the field of climate adaptation and resilience methodologies.[1] Stronger linkages between environmental assessments in the humanitarian, recovery (Post-Disaster/Conflict Needs Assessment) and development (Strategic and Project Level Environmental Impact Assessments) phases should also be better considered.[2] Finally, most environmental assessments are implemented on a voluntary basis and therefore suffer from a lack of follow-up support (i.e., implementation of recommendation, limited financial support or capacity), which requires stronger linkages between the monitoring and evaluation phase of humanitarian action.[3]

The goal of this scoping report is to provide a situational analysis, outlining the challenges and providing draft recommendations regarding the use of environmental assessment tools, with focus on the Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters (REA). The analysis is based on stakeholder knowledge and experiences following the work of the Focus Task Force on Environmental Response[4] and from an evidence-based review of key Environment in Humanitarian Action (EHA) literature. This document will support the Initiative in improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action through the integration of environmental considerations by building a case for the rationale of the Initiative and evidence to support this.

[1] Issue Brief, Focus Task Force on Environment in Response under the Consultative Group on Emergency Preparedness and Response, 2016.
[2] Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, Environment and Humanitarian Action Country Study: Nepal, Geneva, 2016.
[3] Issue Brief, Focus Task Force on Environment in Response under the Consultative Group on Emergency Preparedness and Response, 2016.
[4] The Focus Task Force on Environment in Response is part of the Leading Edge Programme (www.hnpw.org) and has since its establishment in 2015 looked at ways on how to improve the integration of environment in humanitarian action.

# 1. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The environmental impacts from humanitarian response efforts can undermine recovery efforts and reduce the capacity of a community to build resilience to future disasters and conflicts. While the environment was designated as one of four main cross-cutting humanitarian issues in the 2005 Humanitarian Review,[5] the mainstreaming of environmental considerations has not occurred in a coherent and systematic matter. Though the number of environmental-related disasters continue to rise, and the environment and related ecosystem services can previously be degraded prior to the onset of disaster, ensuring the avoidance of secondary negative impacts from humanitarian operations is imperative.

During the immediate provision of emergency response, environmental assessments can provide information to integrate awareness of both humanitarian and environmental response and recovery activities, which can contribute to long-term sustainable management. Though the assessment phase is considered the critical first step of addressing environmental considerations in humanitarian projects and programmes, a patchwork of environmental assessments for humanitarian action exist without connection or sequence (see Annex).

To achieve the intended goal of **sustaining and improving lives and livelihoods through the integration** of environmental considerations in humanitarian relief operations, it is essential to understand the variety of environmental assessment tools available and the challenges experienced in their integration into humanitarian action. Therefore, this report begins with a review of the environmental assessment tools available, and how these tools are connected (e.g., timing, support, agency). Next is an examination of the overall challenges to integrating environmental assessment tools into humanitarian operations. The final section concludes with a roadmap and a discussion of the intended goals for engaging environmental and humanitarian stakeholders in improved cooperation, as well as streamlining the use of environmental data into humanitarian programming.

## 1.1 RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN DISASTERS

The Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters (REA) tool is used to identify, define, and prioritize potential environmental impacts in disaster situations (e.g., natural, technological, and complex disasters), by humanitarian practitioners without requiring technical expertise in environmental issues.[6] Intended within the first 120 days of the complex disaster or crisis, it can aid with prioritizing environmental management activities that can inform the overall recovery effort.

The time needed to complete an REA depends on the disaster context, whether a community assessment is completed, and the level of pre-assessment preparation. It consists of completing four specific modules (Figure 1) and while the REA does not resolve critical environmental issues resulting from a disaster or complex crisis, it provides sufficient information to formulate common-sense solutions or determine the additional information needed to identify solutions.

[5] (Strategic review commissioned by the) UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Coordination and Funding of Cross-Cutting Issues in Humanitarian Action, 2012.

[6] REA developed by Benfield Hazard Research Centre (BHRC), University College London, and CARE International in 2004/5 and funded by the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and USAID/OFDA.

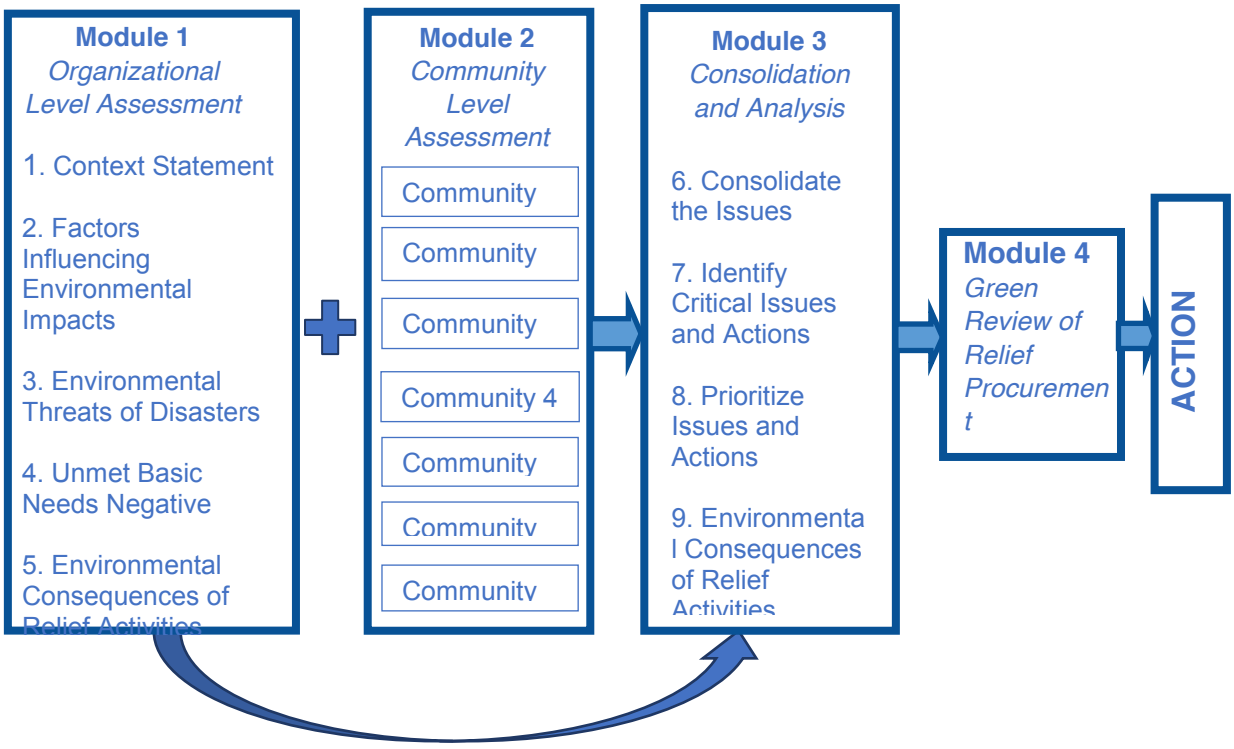


***Figure 1.*** *The REA Process. Adapted from Benfield Hazard Research Centre and CARE International (2003).*

The **Organizational Level Assessment** module focuses on critical environmental issues from the perspective of government, non-governmental, and private relief organizations. The assessment requires approximately four hours to one and a half days to complete. The **Community Level Assessment** module serves as an immediate input to a needs assessment and the planning of relief operations, particularly during short-onset disasters. This assessment identifies environmental issues from the perspective of community groups and can be completed by an individual, but is best managed by a group of 10 -12 field personnel and requires approximately four hours to one day to complete the assessment per community, with one to two days to analyze the results. The **Consolidation and Analysis** module uses simple tables to list and rank environmental issues identified during the assessment processes; while this step can be completed using only one assessment process, results are improved by incorporating both assessments into the REA. The **Green Review of Relief Procurement** module provides a screening of the procurement materials and services to ensure the least negative impact on the environment possible under emergency conditions. Though this process can be conducted independent of the other modules, it is closely linked to determining the negative environmental consequences of relief agencies from the organizational assessment and is therefore recommended to be conducted along with other modules. The Green Review can be conducted by an individual or group and will not add a significant amount of time to the assessment process if integrated into the regular procurement planning and review process.[7]

Table 1 provides a summary of REA case studies over the past 15 years. The studies were selected based on availability of information, as no central database for REAs exist. Furthermore, because REAs can be conducted by a variety of practitioners (e.g., Benfield Hazard Research Centre, Sun Mountain International), but funded by multiple agencies

[7] Quick Guide Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters developed by BHRC and CARE International in 2003 and funded by the JEU, MFA, and USAID/OFDA.

(e.g., CARE International, GTZ, JEU, USAID, WWF), locating an REA requires prior knowledge of an assessment for a particular disaster, and that the agency or practitioner makes the REA available online. In some instances, a partial, or incomplete, REA was made available online, but due to limited information regarding the assessment process it was avoided in the below summary.

**Table 1.** Examples of REAs and key integration challenges of the past 15 years.

| Year / Location/ Type | Partner Agencies & Assoc. Donors | Description | Key Notes | Follow-up Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Feb-Mar 2002** **Afghanistan**[8] **Field Test 1** | CARE Afghanistan and funding from Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) | Community assessment planned, but not conducted due to insecurity. Assessment intended to incorporate environmental issues into new plans considering recent change of government. | Challenges included language and gender barriers between practitioners and individual assessments, time and technical constraints, limited capacity and interest to integrate environment into program decisions. Without strong local demand and buy-in, an REA will not have significant influence on future projects. | No |
| **Aug-Sept 2002** **Ethiopia**[9] **Field Test 2** | CARE Ethiopia and funding from the MFA | The REA included an organizational and community assessment. Assessment occurred along with a natural resource management project from CARE. | Individuals with no environmental background and minimal training could complete the REA process. Gender integration remained a challenge, as did language barriers between practitioners and communities. | No |
| **Jan 2003** **Indonesia**[10] **Field Test 3** | CARE Indonesia and funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) | This assessment coincided with the start-up of two projects to address impacts from fires in the region. This REA was conducted by local staff and included a community assessment. | The assessment process went smoothly because local staff were familiar with the community, though challenges were noted with handling more abstract environmental issues (e.g. sustainability). Language barriers were also present during community assessment. | No |

[8] BHRC and CARE International. (2003a). *Final Report: Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters Project (Phase I)*, 7.
[9] Ibid., 9.
[10] Ibid.

| Year / Location/ Type | Partner Agencies & Assoc. Donors | Description | Key Notes | Follow-up Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2004**<br>**Darfur**[11]<br>**Protracted conflict** | Benfield Hazard Research Centre, in cooperation with CARE International, USAID's OFDA, the JEU, and Norwegian Church Aid in Southern Darfur | Assessment indicated environmental issues not prominent feature in external response to Darfur crisis at policy or operational level. Organizational and community assessments conducted. Short training in REA process also provided. | Partial knowledge of conditions for conflict-affected area limited assessment process. Assessment results will change as new information becomes available. Gaps in assistance provided across camps – unsure what is being integrated/addressed at various locations, as some camps may exist in better or worse conditions that represented in report.[12] | No |
| **Dec 2004,**<br>**Philippines**[13]<br>**Tropical Storms/**<br>**Typhoons** | Benfield Hazard Research Centre, CARE, the Government of Philippines National Disaster Coordination Council, JEU, and UN agencies with funding from USAID and JEU | Organizational and community level assessments conducted. Linkages between landslides and flooding were assessed to avoid future planning weaknesses (e.g., logging and upland farming). | Due to gaps in information regarding relief and recovery operations, the ability to provide suggestions to improve environmental response based on the REA could not occur. Livelihood considerations were of particular concern due to reliance upon environmental resources, and impact from storm, floods and landslides. | No |
| **Jan 2005**<br>**Sri Lanka**<br>**Earthquake and Tsunami** | JEU[14] | Post-tsunami assessment conducted to determine debris, sanitation, and livelihood management scenarios, coordination and coastal zone mapping also included to improve reconstruction. | Initial REA report unavailable, but update report indicated that coordination of relief-related environmental issues remained poor due to limited capacity and lacking mandates for focus on environment. Urgent action requested from UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and others to address poor sanitation and sewage-related problems to the environment. Rapid | Yes,<br>April 2005[15]<br><br>An updated (brief) assessment (A pril 2005) to the initial REA (Jan 2005) was conducted to determine the |

[11] JEU (2004). *Darfur Crisis: Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment at the Kalma, Otash and Bajoum Camps*.
[12] CARE International and BHRC. (2004). *Summary Report: Darfur Rapid Environmental Assessment.*
[13] CARE International and BHRC (2005a). *Draft Field Report: Philippines Flooding/Typhoon Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment*.
[14] REA unavailable. See UNEP (2005) and BHRC, CARE International, and JEU (2005b) for additional information.
[15] BHRC, CARE International, and JEU (2005b). *Update: Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment – Sri Lanka Tsunami.*

| Year / Location/ Type | Partner Agencies & Assoc. Donors | Description | Key Notes | Follow-up Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | screening of donor and international organization projects -planned and ongoing – suggested to mitigate and avoid environmental impacts. SEA also suggested by Netherlands. | extent of the REA's integration (and thus the extent of environmental consideration into humanitarian action). |
| **Jan 2005 Banda Aceh, Indonesia**[16] **Earthquake and Tsunami** | Indonesian Ministry of Environment, with support from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) | Organizational and community level assessment undertaken. Assessment process identified 10 priority issues, including water, sanitation, livelihoods, relief/recovery efforts, shelter, waste, government and capacity to absorb relief assistance. | Lack of data available hampering early assessment. Limited capacity of relief operations is leading to immediate negative conditions for environment. Follow-up actions were provided as well as critique of REA process (i.e., satellite/GIS data would have supported assessment, dedicated team to support assessment would improve process, additional training for local authorities would be helpful). | No |
| **Oct 2005 Pakistan**[17] **Earthquake** | USAID and CARE International | Organizational and community assessment provided. Assessment intended to identify critical environmental issues to be integrated into immediate response activities, and provide input into medium-term relief operations. Disaster waste still being removed at time of assessment, level and extent of damage difficult to determine. | Extensive data available as part of assessment process. Equal gender representation during interview process. Further environmental assessments recommended – community will rely heavily on natural resources for reconstruction, and follow-up regarding environmental considerations should be conducted since no formal development plan exists. | No |

[16] Stone, D. (2005). *Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment: Banda Aceh, Sumatra.*
[17] CARE International and BHRC. (2005b). *Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment: South Asia Earthquake: Pakistan.*

| Year / Location/ Type | Partner Agencies & Assoc. Donors | Description | Key Notes | Follow-up Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Feb-Mar 2010, Haiti[18] Earthquake** | USAID, Sun Mountain International, Haitian Ministry of the Environment, Chemonics, US Southern Command, US Army Corps of Engineers, UNE, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, CARE International, Development Alternatives, and CHF International | Organizational and community level assessments conducted. Extensive data reviewed, and time spent with numerous relief agencies. | Though environmental considerations are generally accepted, the scale and scope of earthquake impacts far exceed coordination and management mechanisms, leading to general inefficiencies, weak focus on environmental issues, and poor sharing of information. A plan for disseminating the REA was shared within the body of the report, and with the large number of agencies supporting the REA to improve coordination. A wide range of environmental management organizations have responded to the disaster, but there is no cross-organizational coordination on environmental issues, there is uneven dissemination and sharing of information, limited funding, and monitoring and assessment of environmental issues potentially suffers as a result. | No |
| **May 2010, Chile[19] Earthquake and Tsunami** | WWF, members of Chile's National Environmental Commission (CONAMA), the Chilean Ministry of the Environment, and representatives from a private foundation funded by Antofagasta Minerals (AMSA) | Organizational and community level assessment conducted. Assessment process included discussion on how to share REA with regional governors and municipal environmental authorities. | Following the REA, local authorities and WWF organized a Reconstruction, Sustainability and Participation seminar, presented the REA findings and conducted a GRRT training on shelter, livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) with people from government institutions, private sector, universities, and individuals from the recovery and reconstruction process. | No |

[18] Sun Mountain International and CHF International. (2010). *Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment: Haiti Earthquake – January 12, 2010.*
[19] WWF. (2011). Chile GRRT Training: A Case Study. http://envirodm.org/post/chile-grrt-training-case-study.

| Year / Location/ Type | Partner Agencies & Assoc. Donors | Description | Key Notes | Follow-up Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2010,**<br>**Kenya**<br>**Fuel spill and Fire** | JEU | Organizational assessment was conducted, but no community level assessment. Suggestions for use of APELL process[20] to better prepare for possibility of future incidents. | Data lacking at the time of assessment; therefore, more detailed assessment recommended to determine levels and types of pollution present. Hazard inventory recommended, as well as the integration of environmental impacts into humanitarian response. | No |
| **May-July 2015, Nepal**<br>**Earthquake** | WWF, Nepal Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment | Extensive assessment undertaken, includes consideration of REA, PDNA, and GRRT. Includes organizational and community level assessments, and stakeholder consultations. The REA team was comprised of 20+ people. | The PDNA's medium- and long-term priorities includes measures to mainstream DRR, but overlooked environmental considerations. Weakened capacity and governance with regard to attention for environmental considerations, but plans for improving this written into GRRT. The follow-up report on EHA suggested five areas remained weak in Nepal: environment in preparedness, the integration of local expertise, improving the application of environmental assessment tools, integrating the energy sector into humanitarian architecture, and enhancing environmental interoperability of surge mechanisms. | Yes<br>July 2015[21]<br><br>(an EHA assessment was conducted (July 2015) to review the overall extent that environmental concerns had been mainstreamed into humanitarian action - but this did not look solely at the REA, it looked at a multitude of factors, including other assessments that had been integrated (GRRT, PDNA). |

[20] See Annex for summary of APELL process.
[21] JEU. (2016). *EHA Country Study – Nepal.*

Reviewing the above REAs revealed the following common challenges:

1. Effectively integrating both environmental considerations and lessons learned from the REA process, into the extended humanitarian and development planning processes can be difficult;
2. Ensuring sufficient training or proper understanding of the assessment process among practitioners posed repeated difficulties;
3. Maintaining equal gender representation during community assessments requires diligence;
4. Language barriers in conducting the organizational or community level assessments of REA between practitioners and community members can weaken assessment process;
5. The full extent of relief operations or disaster data may be unavailable at the time of assessment, often limiting the assessment process;
6. Multiple relief agencies may respond to the disaster, including to environmental management challenges, creating potential conflicts in environmental management plans or objectives if communication does not occur; and
7. Follow-up and extent of implemented activities remains unknown after REA.

Reviewing the above REAs also revealed of the below common learning points:

1. Without strong local demand and buy-in, an REA will not have significant influence on future projects;
2. Mandates regarding inclusion of environment in humanitarian response, or improved capacity, are required to better integrate environment into humanitarian action;
3. Individuals lacking environmental expertise and minimal training could complete the REA process;
4. The REA process is strengthened by the inclusion of both organizational and community input, and relevant local issues can be identified with minimal input from lead researcher; and
5. Due to common challenges regarding limited information among donor agencies and whether they are integrating environmental considerations, the ability to conduct a screening of donor activities – planned and ongoing – would prove beneficial to the REA process.

## 1.2 Overview of Other Environmental Assessment Tools

Predicting, preventing, and mitigating the impact of hazards is most effective when linkages between disasters and environmental damage is recognized. Accessing accurate and timely data, and using an appropriate framework from which to assess the data and determine appropriate response options is key to effective relief operations (Figure 2).

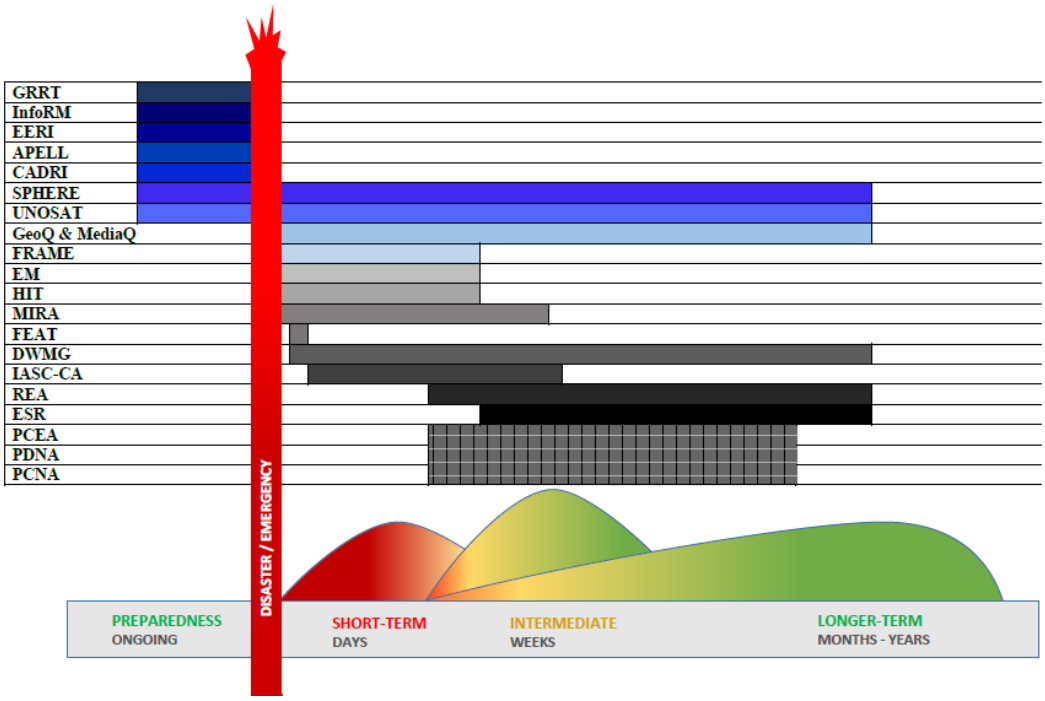


***Figure 2.*** *Use of tools, frameworks and guidelines along the disaster management timeline (Von Culin, 2016).*

Over the past decade, several environmental assessment tools have been developed and applied in a range of circumstances, by a growing number of actors. The following provides a review of the most relevant assessment tools used by humanitarian and environmental actors,[22] while a brief review of the remaining tools can be found in the Annex. These tools are often used in support of the REA, were developed by specific agencies to be used in place of the REA, or are used in follow up to the REA process to complement the extended environmental assessment process.

### 1.2.1 Flash Environmental Assessment Tool

The Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) is often used to assess the secondary environmental impacts of natural disasters, such as the immediate or potential releases of hazardous materials.[23] The FEAT is a simple, yet accurate method of assisting the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams in assessing these secondary impacts and proposing appropriate next steps. While the FEAT is able to identify environmental impacts and support initial response actions in complex disaster contexts, it does not replace in-depth environmental assessments at later stages of disaster response. In 2015, the FEAT was updated into a FEAT 2.0 Pocket Guide for response, with plans to develop an electronic FEAT. The user of an e-FEAT would be able to apply the same knowledge and user-friendly methodology, but without the need to manually search or print large amounts of data. The FEAT is also not intended as an alternative to a REA, but a more specialized tool that can feed into an REA.

[22] Focus Task Force on Environmental Response – Assessing for the Future, February 2017.

[23] FEAT was developed at the recommendation of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) of the Netherlands with support from the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands in 2009.

**Case Study: OCHA Field Assessment in Al-Qayyarah, Iraq**

On 7 January 2017, a field assessment was conducted by members of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the UN Assistance Mission Iraq (UMAMI), and the Danish Emergency Management Agency at the Al-Qayyarah oil field. Fires that began in May 2016 had been monitored via remote sensing data provided by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research's (UNITAR's) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) to support the objective of establishing a perspective of the oil pollution, the landscape, and potential threats caused by the oil. A FEAT Analysis was conducted on 7 February, 2017 to describe the key industrial facilities present in the surrounding area and their distinct priority impact types.

Due to time limitations, the assessment was conducted before engaging with national ministries and local civil protection agencies who may have direct knowledge of both the oil spill and fire and efforts to combat the oil spill and fires, and the direct human health and environmental impacts as a result of these events. Follow-up actions are therefore necessary to account for these challenges to the initial assessment process.

### 1.2.2 POST-DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) methodology was developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Early Recovery Cluster and United Nations Environment to address a gap in safeguarding the environment and ecosystem services in humanitarian response activities immediately following a disaster or crisis. It is a government-led assessment exercise and seeks to integrate environmental needs within early recovery programming, and indicates that it should be conducted within the first one to three weeks' post-disaster. The PDNA can take a minimum of three to six weeks to complete, and the schedule should take into account the availability of primary data before beginning the assessment process. Additionally, it must be ensured that the humanitarian phase of the disaster has concluded and that conducting a PDNA would not impede the continuance of any relief activity. It is also important to ascertain that local government employees have reported back to duty and are available to assist in the task of conducting the PDNA.[24] Though the need for little to no environmental expertise is mentioned to conduct the assessment, the PDNA is reinforced by conducting an initial REA and by contacting national and local authorities to gain a comprehensive understanding of the competing interests involved that can often reduce the environment as a main priority in overall humanitarian response activities.

**Case Study: GFDRR PDNA in Kingdom of Lesotho**

A series of heavy rain events occurred between December 2010 and February 2011, affecting approximately 580,000 and displacing an estimated 3,360 people.[2] Following humanitarian response efforts, a PDNA was conducted between 22 March and 20 April, 2011 as part of first efforts towards recovery and reconstruction. The PDNA process involved background work, capacity building, field assessments, sector reporting, and macro-economic modeling.

While the PDNA report could effectively reflect medium- and long-term recovery needs as well as program needs regarding disaster risk reduction, the PDNA was conducted five months after the initial disaster event. Therefore, the ability to integrate an REA or similar emergency environmental assessment tool into the PDNA process would have supported the extended assessment process.

[24] European Commission, World Bank and United Nations. (2013). *Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Volume A Guidelines.*

### 1.2.3 UNHCR FRAME TOOLKIT

UNHCR's Framework for Responding, Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the environment in refugee-related operations (FRAME) toolkit was developed to ensure environmental assessment, monitoring of programmes and evaluations are conducted in a systematic manner, along proven guidelines, through appropriate means and approaches, and that the information from each stage is employed in a manner that improves environmental management and livelihood security of displaced persons and others affected by the presence of disaster-responders in a particular region or host community.

The FRAME toolkit integrates a Rapid Environmental Assessment into the overall FRAME assessment process in order to survey the environmental conditions of a particular location during a specific time period, and to identify areas of concern in relation to the use of natural resources and the broader social and economic impacts. There are a few differences between the Rapid Environmental Assessment of the FRAME and the Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment as reviewed in the previous section, including:

1. The FRAME assessment is developed for refugee and return situations (e.g., assessment process is focused on displacement, relocation, repatriation, reintegration of communities and the impacts on environment from these activities);
2. The FRAME assessment suggests a 90-day window to complete the assessment process (as compared to 120), and that it should be used in conjunction with the Environmental Assessment (Phase II of the FRAME);
3. Completion window is 72 hours (as compared to 4-5 days of REA);
4. Team of three suggested to complete FRAME assessment, one individual preferred to have environmental experience (compared to team of 10-12 suggested for REA);
5. Sources of environmental data provided for consultation within FRAME Guidelines along with country map information;
6. Community assessment is not part of FRAME rapid assessment process; and
7. Potential implementing partners (including name of organization, type, and areas of intervention) are included in the assessment process.

Though the assessment is designed to be highly participatory, a key limitation of the FRAME process is the time-consuming nature of the assessment, specifically its reliance upon broad skillsets from local facilitators, the needs for multilingual abilities under usually stressful, time-limited conditions. This ultimately raises questions regarding the ability to integrate various sectors, including environmental assessments, into refugee-affected management approaches.

### 1.2.4 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, adopted in 2005, commits donors to reform the way in which aid is delivered to improve effectiveness, by harmonizing their efforts and aligning behind partner country priorities. It also calls upon donors and partners to "develop and apply common approaches for strategic environmental assessments at sector and national levels."[25] Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) refer to a range of analytical and participatory approaches that aim to integrate environmental considerations into policies, plans, and programmes and evaluate the interlinkages with economic and social considerations. The SEA, for example, has been adopted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to supplement the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. While projects responding to an emergency are exempt from the SEA

[25] OECD. (2006). *Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good Practice Guidance for Development and Co-operation.*

process, SEAs are required for non-emergency projects and in the consideration of core funding for organizations such as the World Food Programme, UNHCR, and the ICRC to ensure environmental issues are addressed in their policies and procedures.[26]

### 1.2.5 NRC NEAT TOOL

The Norwegian Refugee Council recently developed a mobile phone-based application to help those working in humanitarian operations understand the environment they are working in and better integrate projects with environmental consideration. The Norwegian Refugee Council Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT) allows for both the assessment of environmental risks of a project, and offers suggestions for how to reduce the risks. Furthermore, the EIA begins by requiring the integration of an REA into the NEAT process in order to ensure sound project planning.[27]

### 1.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are regarded as a 'best practice' for long-term and significant development undertakings with the potential for significant adverse impact to the environment, given the comprehensive collection and assessment of data required to determine overall environmental impacts. However, the time, experience, and financial resources for these to be completed appropriately are incompatible with the compressed time and complex post-disaster conditions encountered in disaster response. Therefore, REAs should precede EIAs to strengthen the capacity to monitor environmental issues before long-term recovery projects are designed and implemented. Failing to conduct a comprehensive EIA for high-risk development projects, increases the possibility for the development of an incomplete assessment that ignores or misstates critical needs, which can shift response to less important environmental problems, or result in more harm than not having undertaken the assessment at all.

Environmental markers are an additional method of integrating environmental considerations into project designs during the humanitarian appeals process. Under normal circumstances, EIAs are mandatory under many national government regulations; in times of emergency due to disaster or conflict, reconstruction activities are often no longer subject to EIAs because of the urgency of recovery efforts. The environmental marker enables humanitarian projects to be coded depending on their potential negative impact on the environment, and whether enhancement or mitigation measures to reduce this impact have been integrated into the project. An environment marker is currently being implemented in Jordan as an environmental screening procedure within the Jordan Response Platform for the Syrian Crisis; once developed, the marker can then be used in other crises and response situations in Jordan to reduce the environmental impact of future projects under various response sectors.[28]

[26] JEU. (2014). *Environment and Humanitarian Action: Increasing Effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability.*
[27] https://www.nrc.no/what-we-do/themes-in-the-field/caring-for-the-environment/
[28] Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. (2017). Jordanian Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis.

## 1.3 CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS INTO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

While there are a broad range of efforts to apply theory and experience to reducing the potential negative environmental impacts from humanitarian operations post-disaster, these efforts are often limited in scope and isolated, rather than part of a larger trend of humanitarian assistance organizations to include the environment as an integral and routine part of their disaster mitigation and response programs; furthermore, many challenges remain with achieving full integration of environmental considerations into humanitarian programming. Identifying the possible or likely impediments to integrating environmental assessments – the REA in particular – into broader humanitarian action is critical should environmental mainstreaming be pursued in humanitarian planning and response.

Therefore, key and recurrent challenges which should be considered when attempting to improve A include: [29]

***Variety of Assessment Tools Complicates Decision-Making Process***

The variety of environmental assessment tools available can complicate an already complex decision-making process for humanitarian responders who lack an environmental background or the knowledge to differentiate between which tool should be selected. While some assessment tools include guidance on when and how to use the assessment, relief organizations need to be able to enter the assessment process equipped with this knowledge ahead of time. The risk of incomplete knowledge, is an incomplete and ineffective assessment. Ensuring that environmental considerations are an effective function of emergency response entails not only mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian programming, but streamlining the environmental assessment framework so that there are clear linkages between the use of a specific assessment tool and how it will improve life-saving operations and long-term livelihood provision.

***Lack of encouraged use, or "best management approach"***

The use of environmental assessments during a disaster is not yet a common practice in relief operations. Furthermore, no agency has a specific mandate to enforce the principle of environmental mainstreaming. This could change with the improvement of the REA process and would require that the assessment process be broadly used and accepted by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), and other stakeholders who may currently regard the environment as an integral part of the humanitarian process, but require specific direction on how to avoid the "business as usual" model historically employed. What requires greater attention is the promotion of the Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment as the common approach, or analytical framework, for identifying which environmental issues require immediate attention and which can be included in medium- to long-term recovery plans. Though environmental specialists can be called upon to assist relief operations, relief operations are still tasked with defining what problems need to be addressed, what types of specialists are needed, and what tasks are expected to be accomplished. In fact, requesting an environmental specialist without first identifying the environmental problem (i.e., with the use of an REA) they are to address can create significant risk of the specialist focusing only on one specific problem within a particular competency, while ignoring additional more pressing problems.

[29] Based on feedback from experts attending the Focus Task Force on Environmental Response – Assessing for the Future, February 2017 and from 2014 JEU Report on EHA.

***Limited understanding of importance of EHA***

Policies on emergency response tend to place primacy with acting quickly to save lives and property in disaster settings, and often exclude environmental impact and assessment procedures. Organizations frequently fail to have alternative policies for considering disaster-related environmental issues, or the guidance provided is so general as to be easily bypassed in the rush to respond. Practitioners can also be unsure of what "environment" means and what specific impacts they should be considering. This can lead to a lack of consideration or reduced prioritization of environmental issues both among emergency agencies, and coordinating bodies. Additional limitations include lack of funding and capacity to integrate environmental solutions at all stages of the programme cycle, or failure to harmonize environmental assessment information among transitioning organizations responding to various stages of the emergency.

***Lack of environmental assessment data, or coordinated access to environmental assessment data***

Improving the technical integrity of the available data, as well as the user interface for the assessment of data, will be an important challenge to overcome. Obstacles most often cited include the inability to access environmental data, lack of awareness of where to find environmental data, lack of trust regarding robustness and quality of data provided, and limitations regarding subject matter (i.e., assessment is limited by information available). This can cause environmental issues to appear as the domain of specialists, too complicated for humanitarian actors to handle. Additional factors include that environmental and assessment data is conducted by an organization and submitted to the national government of the disaster-affected area once performed; access to the data then depends on either the organization's or national government's ability and willingness to share the data.

# 2. ROADMAP

This section proposes five components for accomplishing the Initiative's intended goal of sustaining and improving lives and livelihoods through the integration of environmental considerations in humanitarian relief operations. These options include capacity building and awareness raising measures, operational measures, and policy measures. Addressing these options will take time, and should be undertaken in a progressive and synergistic manner, where multiple levels of governance and various stakeholder groups are integrated into the environmental mainstreaming process.

## 2.1 IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS WITH REA EXPERIENCE

Improved engagement from high-level and key stakeholders is imperative and must begin early in the process of developing the assessment. Priority attention should be given to individuals who can use, apply, or disseminate information regarding the benefits of the REA process. This will ensure a broad dissemination of information through qualified persons who have either theoretical or practical experience with the REA tool.
This includes:

- Academic institutions
- UN Country Teams and UN Agencies
- IGOs
- National NGOs
- Environment / conservation organizations
- Communities
- Local and National host governments
- IFRC and Red Cross (ICRC)
- Private Sector (technology and energy)
- Development agencies
- Peer and technical reference groups

## 2.2 UPDATE EHA ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROMOTE THROUGH HPC

EHA assessment tools, in particular the ones designed for humanitarian programming such as the REA and FRAME, should be updated to reflect sectoral developments, and shared tool and system interlinkages to overcome the assessment tool fatigue and confusion over abundance of available tools. Humanitarian practitioners need clear guidance on what tools are there, how they connect, and which one(s) will fulfil their needs at a particular stage of programming. Emphasis should be given to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), which is considered one of the main vehicles through which accountability can and should be pursued in humanitarian response. This includes mainstreaming and strengthening integration of the environment into the HPC through cluster-specific action plans at the country-level, and through strengthening existing EHA initiatives. The IASC would be best-suited to facilitate and accommodate environmental mainstreaming in planning and response through a range of initiatives, including: directives and guidance to Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators and Cluster Lead Agencies; endorsement of core environmental standards reflected in more than one sector; recognition and endorsement of specific and generic tools (e.g., REA); training and capacity building; and establishment of an accountability mechanism to ensure compliance and validation.30

[30] JEU. (2014). *Environment and Humanitarian Action: Increasing Effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability*.

## 2.3 Pilot priority EHA Tools Under a Variety of Settings

Allowing for complex scenarios to be tested when piloting the updated priority assessment tools will be essential to effective implementation. It can be difficult to achieve cooperation with certain groups and small agencies, but clear understanding of national and local partnership and engagement is key to success. Informal and formal networks should also be considered during this process, in addition to leveraging existing partnerships. Deciding where to focus piloting within the humanitarian cycle will also need to be established (i.e., focus on preparedness, post-disaster, conflict and protracted crisis settings). Previous challenges with the use of the REA included complex disaster situations where there were too many actors, too little information available, and sometimes too much overlap and competing interests. Allowing opportunity for feedback from the practitioner, and integrating observations regarding donor activities during the assessment phase may provide opportunities for future collaboration and improvements to the assessment process. Implementing baseline studies and determining methodologies will be essential to determine effectiveness.

## 2.4 Facilitate Sharing of Environmental Data through Online Platform

Effective sharing of information and engagement of numerous actors and stakeholders should be facilitated using an online platform. This will include determining the management scope, who will host the database, how data will be shared and stored, and how general updates and maintenance will be performed and by whom. The intention will be for the online platform to house data from external sources (e.g., environmental and humanitarian organizations), and results from various assessment tools (i.e., not only the REA); therefore, deciding how to standardize and categorize the data that is shared will also need to be decided (e.g., ensuring that relevant assessments and data are shared, and limiting access to non-related information). Lack of awareness and knowledge regarding environmental assessment tools and lack of sharing of already available environmental data can hamper the mainstreaming of environment into humanitarian operations; therefore, providing improved and more accessible materials on how and when to use the REA and supporting assessment tools can improve visibility and outreach. As more agencies use the tool and assessments are uploaded, a central database can serve a dual purpose of reflecting organizational support and a form of informal mandate to integrate the REA process into programmatic activities.

## 2.5 Raise Awareness and Increase Support for EHA Goal

Raising awareness and gaining donor support will be a significant element for proactively integrating environmental data to support life-saving operations and livelihood provision. Practitioners need to know about the tools to use them, and they need to have the support and endorsement from their management and leadership. In addition, encouraging more environmental actors to participate in the post-disaster space and improve coordination with humanitarian actors will require targeted communication, marketing, and advocacy. Conducting training sessions will be a straightforward measure to undertake; however, securing funding is a primary limiting factor. Visualizing the monetary benefits of integrating the environment into humanitarian programming can stimulate donor support (e.g., providing a cost-benefit analysis), and act as a further incentive for relief organizations to improve environmental practices. There are limited financial resources, but there is growing attention to the cost of disasters – and calls for improved prevention, preparedness, response and recovery operations from environmental emergencies and other disasters. Gaining political and donor support will be essential to increase the humanitarian and financial resources necessary for improving, piloting and implementing EHA assessment tools.

# 3. CONCLUSION

Despite growing recognition of the environmental impacts from humanitarian relief operations, and support to improve and mitigate these practices; there remains little progress in mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian action. This report demonstrates this is due to a variety of challenges, including confusion over the plethora of tools available, lack of coordinated access to environmental data, poor systematic integration of the environment in humanitarian policy and practice, and constraints in financing. Gaining the broad institutional reform and behavioral changes necessary to incite change will require a *streamlined, integrated assessment approach, or abbreviated and complementary set of integrated tools* that can make these options easily and readily available to humanitarian responders. Raising awareness to both donors and humanitarian organizations of the immediate and long-term benefits of environmental integration will be key to achieving enhanced long-term benefits. Consultations and participation must be sought early on to facilitate a dialogue into longer-term planning processes, where cross-sectoral coordination will be most affected (i.e., addressing linkages among water, land and livelihood issues).

This approach should be suggested as a “best practice” or protocol for responding agencies and individuals to be used at multiple levels. The assessment should include consideration of situational contexts and timescales (e.g., entry points for preparedness and early planning, post-conflict or post-disaster), and harmonize existing approaches where possible. It should be standardized, with clear linkages between how integrating environment in humanitarian action is critical to life-saving operations and livelihood provision. It should facilitate access to environmental data and information sharing in humanitarian programming. Central to this will be improving the coordination between environmental and humanitarian stakeholders, which is the intended goal of the Initiative.

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# 5. ANNEX

| Tools/ Frameworks/ Guidelines | Characteristics | Timing in disaster management cycle |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Capacity Development and Coordination Tools, Frameworks and Guidelines** | | |
| Green Recovery and Reconstruction Toolkit (GRRT) | A training program designed to increase awareness and knowledge of environmentally sustainable disaster response approaches. (N.B. Includes tool 3.4 below). | This is preparedness effort done prior to a sudden onset event. |
| Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) | CADRI is an inter-agency program that focuses on enabling the United Nations (UN) and other members of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system to support Governments in building and implementing a coherent framework for developing national capacities for disaster risk reduction, including preparedness for emergency response. | This is preparedness effort done prior to a sudden onset event. |
| The Sphere Project (SPHERE) | Sphere was initiated to create a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian response, resulting in the development of the Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response. | Are part of the response community's preparedness effort and part of the response and recovery stages. |
| Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in Refugee-Related Operations (FRAME) Toolkit | Toolkit tailored for refugee/displacement situations that provides guidelines on environmental assessments, rapid environmental assessments, community environmental action planning, environmental indicators, geographic information systems (GIS) and evaluations. | The timeframe covers potentially a wide timeframe. From 48-72 hours after a disaster through recovery stages. |
| Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) | The MIRA is a joint needs assessment tool that provides a process for collecting and analyzing information on affected people and their needs to inform strategic response planning. | Phase 1: 0 – 72 hours<br>Phase 2: 72 hours – 2 weeks |
| Disaster Waste Management Guidelines (DWMG) | The DWMG was developed with the aim of supporting the full cycle of disaster waste management, from risk reduction and contingency planning through to emergency planning response following a disaster of conflict. | General guidance from identification to disposal of waste and are divided into four phases: immediate (0-72 hours), short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions. |
| Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) | UNEP initiated APELL program to advise national governments on how in cooperation with industry, they could work with local leaders to identify the potential hazards in their communities, and to prepare measures to respond to industrial accidents. | This is preparedness effort done prior to a sudden onset event. |
| IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in | The Operational Guidance promotes a shared vision of how to plan and carry out coordinated assessments. Outputs from coordinated assessments support humanitarian decision-making | From the first 72 hours to four weeks after a sudden-onset event. |

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| Humanitarian Crises (IASC-CA) | by focusing on how to enhance preparedness and coordinate assessments. | |
| **2. Preparedness and Response Support Tools** | | |
| Index for Risk Management (InfoRM) | InfoRM is a composite indicator that identifies the countries at a high risk of humanitarian crisis that are more likely to require international assistance. Core indicators have been chosen to respond to changes in the environment, among other things. | This is preparedness effort done prior to a sudden onset event. |
| Environmental Emergency Risk Index (EERI) | The EERI builds upon existing humanitarian, development and environmental performance indices to support prioritizing work on environmental emergency preparedness and environment in humanitarian action. | This is preparedness effort done prior to a sudden onset event. |
| UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) | UNOSAT provides high-quality geo-spatial information to UN decision makers, member states, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. | Can be used during preparedness efforts through post-disaster/conflict response and recovery. |
| GeoQ and MediaQ | GeoQ is a web-based tool that fuses together data about a disaster site, including maps, imagery, news videos, and even social media from citizens at the scene.<br><br>MediaQ is an online media management framework to collect, organize, share, search, and trade user-generated mobile images and videos by the public. Content can be linked to GeoQ for mobile video data collection and management in disasters. | Can be used from the beginning of sudden onset emergencies through the recovery and reconstruction phases. |
| The Environment Marker (EM) | The Environment Marker is designed to code humanitarian projects depending on their potential negative impact on the environment and whether or not enhancement or mitigation measures to reduce this impact have been integrated into the project. | After the disaster takes place but before the recovery effort. |
| **3. Targeted Disaster/Conflict Response Toolkits and Assessments** | | |
| Hazard Identification Tool (HIT) | The HIT is based on the FEAT and is designed to alert the UN Country Team as quickly as possible after a natural disaster to potential secondary risks posed by large infrastructure and industrial facilities containing hazardous materials located in the affected area. | Can be used at different levels in the disaster management cycle: from response to response preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities. |
| Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) | The FEAT is a “first aid” tool to identify environmental impacts, and support initial response actions in disaster contexts. It is a science-based impact assessment tool that translates large quantities of information on compounds, their environmental behavior, and their toxicity into basic effect types. | Immediately following disasters. |
| Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters (REA) | Used to quickly identify environmental issues that have resulted from the disaster, to help project designers prioritize their environmental activities, and to enable issues identified in the assessment to inform the overall recovery effort. | Designed for use 1 to 2 weeks post-disaster/crisis and within the first 120 days after the crisis |

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| Environmental Stewardship Review for Humanitarian Aid (ESR) | Developed as a tool for evaluating the environmental impacts of humanitarian aid projects with a focus on the recovery and reconstruction phases after the disaster. (N.B. Is included in tool 1.1 above.) | To be completed in one to three hours and can be done during the recovery and reconstruction phases. |
| Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment (PCEA) | PCEAs in general describe the existing condition of the key environmental sectors that have been impacted by conflict or may have contributed to a conflict in each country. The primary focus of a PCEA, however, is on addressing future environmental challenges. | Begins at the request of a Member State when it is possible to deploy field teams safely after the conflict |
| Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) | A PDNA is a government-led exercise that provides a platform for the international community to assist the affected Government in recovery and reconstruction. It provides a coordinated and credible basis for recovery and reconstruction planning while incorporating risk reduction measures and financing plans. | PDNA's begin when national authorities request the assistance. PDNA reports are finalized approximately six weeks after they begin. |
| Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA) | A PCNA identifies key needs in a country emerging from conflict. The PCNA is formally government-led, and usually jointly coordinated by national stakeholders and multilateral agencies. | PCNA's begin when national authorities request the assistance and assessments. Most PCNAs take between two and twelve months to complete and cover two to four years of activities. |