

COORDINATION OF ASSESSMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION: A JOINT INITIATIVE

Disasters cause both loss of life and damage to the natural resources upon which societies depend for their well-being. Research has increasingly shown the importance of ensuring that environmental considerations are taken into account at the earliest possible moment of humanitarian action to improve lives and livelihoods and foster resilience. This Joint Initiative aims to improve coordination between environment and humanitarian actors both before and after disasters, with a focus on updating key environmental assessment tools. It is a collaborative effort between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the UN Environment/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Environment Unit (JEU) and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) as well as other member states and civil society organizations. The project will, through better dissemination of tools, resources and environmental data, support efficient consideration of environment and climate knowledge in humanitarian assistance.

OBJECTIVES

The initiative aims to improve engagement and coordination between environmental and humanitarian actors before and after disasters and conflicts. This effort entails three complementary parts:

1. A stakeholder consultation process with key humanitarian and environment experts to identify entry points for enhanced coordination between environmental and humanitarian agencies;
2. Updating and disseminating environmental assessment tools, including the [Rapid Environmental Assessment \(REA\)](#). Updates in technical content will include climate variability, climate change and resilience considerations, and updates in modality will include online accessibility, strengthening the interconnectivity of available tools and pinpointing which ones are used at a particular stage of humanitarian programming or type of emergency.
3. Partnering with agencies and organisations who are interested in piloting sections of the updated tools and methodology in 2018.

To ensure the initiative effectively addresses acknowledged technological, technical, and political opportunities and constraints, a steering committee composed of both humanitarian and environmental/conservation organizations and agencies has been formed and is open to increased membership. Priority will be given to those willing to lend authority to the updated assessment approach and methodology by applying and implementing it.

CORE TEAM

Core partners include USAID, the JEU, UNHCR, WWF and MSB. The initiative is funded by USAID and implemented with support from USAID's Global Environmental Management Support (GEMS II) contract. The Core Team is supported by a Team Leader and additional subject matter experts who provide technical input and guidance throughout the initiative.

USAID serve as the primary financial donor for Phases I and II of this initiative, funded with Climate Change Adaptation funds from USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). The United Nations' JEU, UNHCR, WWF and MSB provide key technical guidance and input.



A woman at the entrance to what is left of her home in Les Cayes, Haiti after Hurricane Matthew (October 2016).

WORK PLAN AND TIMELINES

PHASE I • SCOPING (Complete)

Duration: 6 months, October 2016 to March 2017

Key Components included:

1. Pre-kick-off workshop in Washington D.C.
2. Hiring Team Leader and SMEs.
3. Identification and mapping of key climate risk and environmental assessment tools relevant to humanitarian action with an analysis of their respective strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and overlaps with the current REA.
4. Kick-off workshop in Geneva (February 2017) at the Humanitarian Network and Partnerships Week

PHASE II • DESIGN and PILOTING (in progress)

Duration: 18 months, April 2017 to September 2018

Key Components:

1. Engaging with key environment and humanitarian stakeholders through an ongoing consultation process to involve them in the project
2. Defining and designing the update to the Rapid Environmental Assessment, including technical content, methodology and modality. This includes consulting a range of stakeholders on the proposed approach through workshops and individual consultations.
3. Updating the assessment methodology
4. Partnering with interested stakeholders to pilot and refine sections of the updated methodology
5. Facilitating data and information sharing between environment and humanitarian actors through the launch of an Initiative website and gap analysis of existing online humanitarian sharing platforms.
6. Development of guidance to facilitate support to humanitarian actors by environment/conservation organisations, for example guidance on how to share environmental data in the humanitarian system.

PHASE III - IMPLEMENTATION (currently unfunded)

Duration: 12 to 24 months

Key Components: Details and funding to be determined by outcomes of Phase II. At this time, anticipated components include: additional field testing and utilisation of updated assessment methodology and tool, implementation of dissemination processes including training and awareness raising, and monitoring and evaluation of the tool and its application.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The Joint Initiative is built on collaboration and encourages interested organisations to get in touch to explore how to work together; share information on ongoing related initiatives; be consulted for the assessment tools updating process; contribute ideas on data sharing initiatives and platforms; share data, case studies and contacts. Importantly, the project would like to explore opportunities for partnerships to pilot sections of the updated assessment methodology in 2018 and is continuously seeking further formal partnerships to endorse the initiative's updated tool and its application.

CONTACTS

- Joint Initiative: Mandy George, Team Leader (george14@un.org)
- USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance: Erika Clesceri, Bureau Environmental Officer (eclesceri@usaid.gov)
- JEU: Emilia Wahlstrom, Officer-in-Charge (wahlstrom@un.org)
- UNHCR: Amare Gebre Egziabher, Senior Environmental Coordinator (gebreega@unhcr.org)
- WWF: Anita Van Breda, Environment and Disaster Management Senior Director (anita.vanbreda@wwfus.org)
- MSB: Leif Jönsson, Environmental Advisor (Leif.Jonsson@msb.se)

