

**NW Syria Seismic Event Humanitarian Response
Initial Key Environmental Guidance Overview
Issue #1
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Introduction: This Overview summarizes key environmental guidance for the humanitarian response to the damage caused in NW Syria by the February 2023 seismic events. The guidance focuses primarily on on-going response operations and guides response organizations to more detailed information as may be appropriate.

The **Overview** has been developed by the Global Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice with a primary focus on shelter and settlements. The **Overview** however is also relevant for associated responses in early recovery and livelihoods and WASH.

The order of the guidance below is based on a combination of environmental importance and ease of application. Individual organizations may focus on one or more topical areas based on existing projects and planned activities.

All organizations however responding in NW Syria should begin conducting environmental assessments to identify and minimize avoidable additional harm to affected populations. Support is available on conducting these assessments.

Support on environmental issues can be secured through a request to the WWF Environment and Disaster Management [Help Desk](#), at WWF's [Environment and Disaster Management](#) and the OCHA/UNEP Joint Environment Unit's [Environmental Emergency Centre](#).

Note that all the guidance provided below has specific gender and protection aspects which should be considered as part of project design and implementation.

Summary Guidance

Topical Area	Guidance Summary	Environmental Implication
Real-time Environmental Assessments	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use the R or U NEAT¹ tools to identify implementation-level environmental impacts. A 30 minute set of YouTube videos explain the easy use of NEAT+.2. Use the REA² tool to identify strategic-level environmental issues.³	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identifying environmental impacts will support providing assistance which reduces harm to affected populations and improves the effectiveness of assistance.2. Improved understanding of environment-related issues will aid in identifying actions to improve sheltering

¹ Rural/Urban Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool.

² Rapid Environmental Assessment.

³ The REA can be done as an online survey, in English or Arabic over a week or 10 days.

	<p>3. Incorporate environmental expertise into assessment and coordination teams. (See the WWF Environment and Disaster Management Help Desk, above).</p> <p>Note: Environmental reviews are a key action under Sphere Shelter Standard 7 and may be required by donors.</p>	options, human security, water and waste management, livelihood support and flooding and landslide risk reduction.
Energy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide bottled gas to minimize use of alternate sources of energy, particularly the use of disaster debris, fuelwood or charcoal for heating and cooking. 2. Establish health-and-safety plans and guidance (e.g., for carbon monoxide poisoning, fuel storage safety) for energy source stockpiles and household use. 3. Assess needs for generators based on long term energy requirements, fuel availability and noise pollution and consider a buy-back program when generators are no longer needed. 4. Increase the use of solar energy sources, for electricity and water heating, to reduce use of fuelwood, charcoal and generators, and demand on central power generation, when available. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduced use of wood or charcoal fires will reduce air pollution and public health impacts from open fires. 2. Fuelwood and charcoal needs may be met from cutting forests and orchards, reducing livelihoods options and contributing to soil erosion and flooding. See Axed and Burned for a detailed assessment of the impact of cutting firewood and making charcoal. 3. Limiting generators to only critical needs and recovering the generators when no longer needed will reduce air and noise pollution and permit reuse of the generators in other disasters. 4. Using bottled gas for small generators will lead to lower emissions compared to using gasoline.
<p style="text-align: center;">Fuel Source Alert</p> <p>Syria has seen a significant use of low technology refining of crude oil, with significant negative health, environmental and personal safety impacts. See Dying to Keep Warm: Oil Trade And Makeshift Refining in North-West Syria and Scorched Earth and Charred Lives. A crude oil processing site is reported to be located at Chbirane, 18 km north of Al Bab. Humanitarian organizations should avoid purchasing fuel from these low-technology operations and take care to not site camps near these facilities.</p>		
Debris Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess and development plans to recovery usable durable goods (e.g., stoves) and other household supplies from damaged buildings should be developed. 2. Use livelihoods support to fund local debris management activities. 3. Consider debris <i>repair, reuse, repurposing and recycling</i> (4R) as community-based livelihoods support activities. 4. Use established guidance to plan and execute any debris management operations. Consult: 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards-based debris management will reduce negative environmental impacts. 2. Recovering usable durable good and other household supplied, and the <i>repair, reuse, repurposing and recycling</i> approach will reduce the quantity of debris which needs final disposal, reduce the need for external assistance required and expand the resources available to affected populations (e.g., repairing and reusing stoves or light fixtures).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://resources.eecentre.org/resources/disaster-waste-management-guidelines-dwmg-online/), • https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/collection/debris-management). • https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/debrisq46.pdf and, • https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2023/02/DWVG.pdf. <p>5. Contact the Early Recovery and Livelihoods Cluster for more on debris management efforts.</p>	<p>3. Efficient management of debris will reduce transport requirements for final disposal (reduced CO² footprint) and reduce anarchic debris disposal.</p>
Asbestos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote safe management of asbestos in debris management plans, local clearing of debris, light repairs and for livelihood activities which may cause individuals to be exposed to dust from debris or the soil. 2. Do not use asbestos-containing materials in emergency, transitional or permanent shelter. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asbestos is both a human health and environmental contamination issue. 2. Asbestos becomes more dangerous when released into the air during deconstruction, debris removal and repairs to buildings and other parts of the built environment. 3. Given historical building methods, asbestos is likely present in the built environment where concrete has been used, for heat or fire insulation (e.g., heating boilers) or a range of other uses. 4. Additional information on safe management of asbestos is available from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://sheltercluster.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/public/docs/3.3.16.asbestos_in_emergencies.pdf, • https://sheltercluster.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/public/docs/Asbestos%20disaster%20debris%20guide.pdf?VersionId=T292U71a_GyVWwOd078U5wtGLlvbLK4v, and • https://sheltercluster.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/public/docs/asbestos_removal_manual_002.pdf.
Fire Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimize fire risk in emergency/transitional shelter from heating, lighting and cooking. See https://www.kindlingsafety.org/ for more guidance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The increased use of tents and other non-durable shelters increases the overall flammability of shelter and

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Monitor weather for periods of high winds (e.g., thunderstorms) which may contribute to or facilitate the spread of fire. 	<p>settlements, particularly where cooking is done outside formal kitchens and lamps and candles used for lighting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Fires destroy shelter and relief assistance, creating an unnecessary doubling in the quantity of assistance provided.
Flood Risk Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorporate flood risk management into all settlement planning. 2. Expand past site configuration efforts to reduce flood risks. 3. Provide rain barrels and gutters to capture rainfall. 	The NW Syria humanitarian response has been dealing with flood risk for several years. The additional populations living in tents and other non-durable shelter means that flood risk management efforts will need to be expanded.
WASH	Shelter and settlements assistance should include water, sanitation and hygiene and solid and liquid waste management.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shelter sites need sufficient water supplies and sanitation management capacities before occupation. Shelter sites without basic water and sanitation are not likely to be occupied and be a waste of resources. 2. Solid and liquid waste needs to be properly collected and managed to limit environmental damage (see 4R, above).
Procurement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use environment-impact-based specifications for non-food items. 2. Assess environmental impacts of providing funds to affected populations. 3. Air transport should only be used for saving or life sustaining assistance. 4. Ground sea transport should be used as much as possible. 5. Conduct market capacity assessments which consider the environmental impact of sourcing commodities, including sand, soil, wood and water for repairs or rebuilding. 6. Incorporate measures to reduce packaging to minimums in procurement requests. 7. Develop packaging waste management plans as part of supplies procurement planning. (See 4R. above.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessing the environmental impacts of providing funds to the affected or other market-based assistance will reduce unanticipated negative environmental economic and social impacts. 2. A packaging waste management plan will reduce the pressure on existing waste management systems.