

Improving Assessment of Disaster Impact: Integrating Cross-Cutting Issues and Sector Specific Assessment Procedures and Results

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The Disaster Assessment Process

- Information to define nature and scope of the “problem”
- Iterative, should build on previous information
- Accepts past information may be wrong, or just outdated.
- Certainty and detail gets better over time (but sometimes there is no final assessment).

The Disaster Assessment Process

- External oriented and externally driven (a major weakness)
- Triggers flow of assistance
- Is more difficult, but gets more detailed, the closer the assessment comes to the individual survivor.

Assessment Tool Overview

- Some established methodologies for assessing disaster impact.
- Some simple. Some complex.
- Most methodologies focus only on specific sectors (e.g., water, health).
- Narrow focus poses a challenge when assessments of different sectors need to be consolidated into a single comprehensive assessment of disaster impact.

Overview – Cont.

- Sector-specific assessments do not usually give full consideration to cross-cutting issues.
- Cross-cutting issues include Children, Older people, Disabled people, Gender, Protection, HIV/AIDS and the Environment.
- “Tunnel Vision” affects assessments as well as relief operations.
- Assessment fatigue often occurs, particularly for major disasters.
- Assessment duplication can be a problem.
- Assessment accuracy can be uncertain.

Overview – Cont.

- Livelihood-based assessment can cover both topical and cross-cutting issues.
- Can be too long and difficult to use in disaster response. And the analysis of the data generated presents challenges.
- Risk of making assessments too complicated when trying to make them comprehensive.

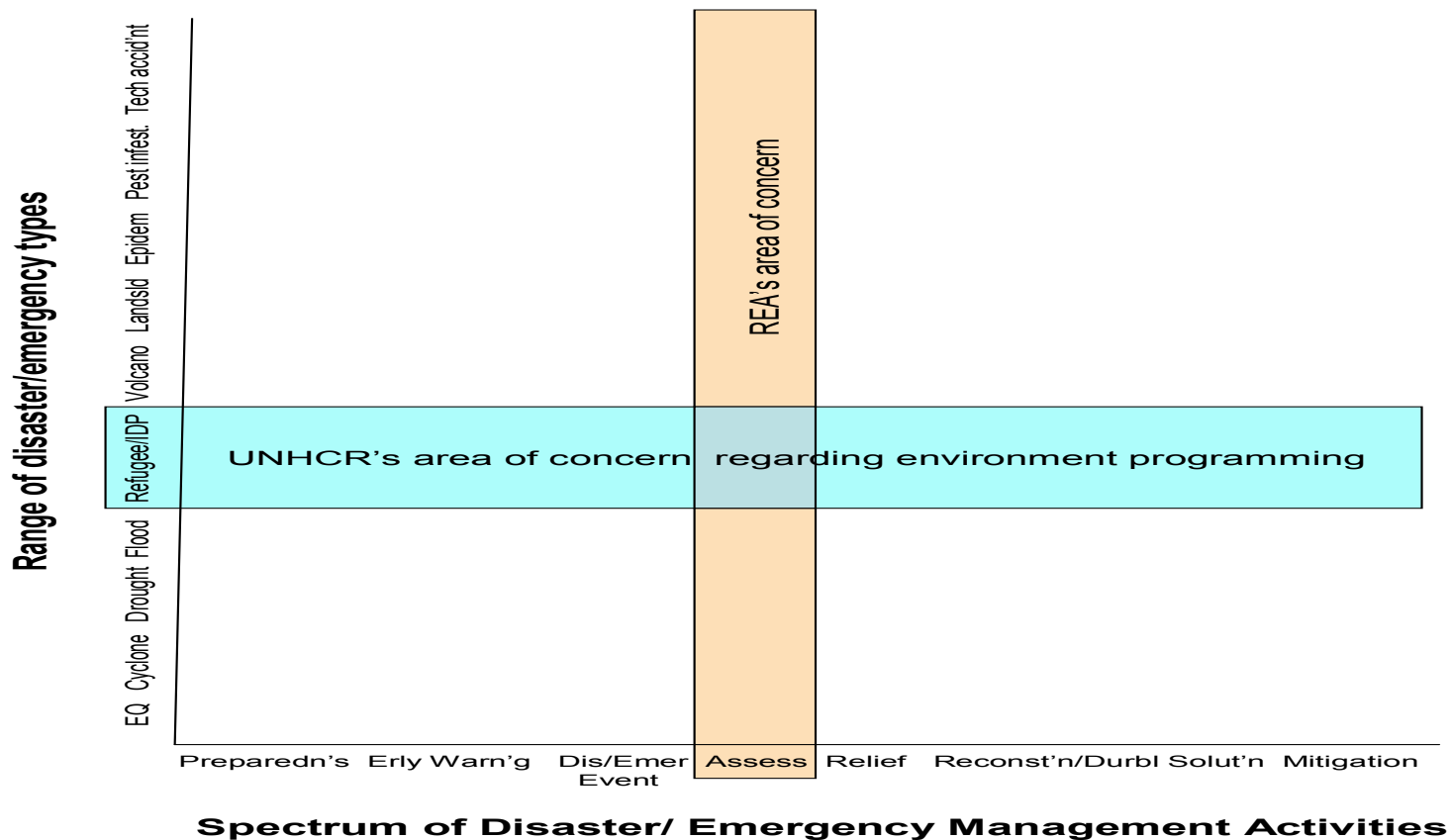
Comparing Assessment Tool Coverage to Needs

Tool Coverage	Categories of Basic Needs of Affected Population								
	Darker the pattern, more specific the assessment coverage is to the need.								
	Water	Health	Personal Safety & Security	Food Security	Sanitation	Shelter	Transport	Non Food Items	Availability of Natural Resources
Education									
Food Security									
Gender									
Health Status									
Livelihoods									
Logistics									
Nutrition									
Protection /Security									
REA									
Sanitation									
Shelter									
Water									

Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment Experience

- Takes a broad perspective on disaster impacts.
- Attempts to be as broad as a normal EIA: Social, ecological, economic and political aspects.
- Is phased and includes outsider and insider (survivor) perspectives.
- Includes sectoral issues (water, sanitation, ...)
- Still faces the challenge of integrating other cross-cutting issues into a cross-cutting approach.

REA / UNHCR Environment Unit Interface



Real Problem – Practical Solutions ?

- Comprehensive assessments
- But how big is too big?
- Multi-sectoral assessments
- But how to make the sum greater than the parts?
- Coordinated assessments
- But what about ownership?

Problems and Solutions ?

- Coordinated assessments
- **But what about ownership?**
- Phased assessments
- **But first in gets the money!**
- Recycling assessments:
- **But do we believe them?**

Process and Approach: Some Suggestions for Discussion

- Clear standards and acceptable criteria
- Link information needs to phases of disaster response
- Formalize ways to determine assessment quality
- Build “onion” assessment tools. Layers added as more information is available without re-doing what is already done.
- Working Together: The practical may be more effective than the theory.

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