Chapter II

Assessments

Assessments

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide OFDA staff and others who participate on OFDA Assessment Teams with a guide to conducting an *initial assessment* for sudden or slow onset disasters. It includes information on the purpose, types, and elements of an assessment: collecting and analyzing data; preparing recommendations for U.S. Government response; and submitting assessment reports to OFDA Washington (OFDA/W). It also provides assessment checklists and reference information by sector and reference annexes for displaced populations at risk.

In addition to providing a guide to conducting an initial assessment, this chapter contains information on assessing specific sectoral needs. However, it is not intended as a complete reference for comprehensive assessments conducted by sectoral experts. When sectoral experts such as epidemiologists and sanitarians are members of the Assessment Team, they will provide more specific materials related to conducting their portion of the assessment. This information will help when team members assist in conducting comprehensive assessments.

The information in this chapter is also designed to assist members of OFDA Assessment Teams to understand terms and concepts and evaluate the design, quality, and accuracy of assessments conducted by other specialists, organizations, and governments. Their information may be incorporated into an Assessment Team's report and be used for developing the team's recommendations.

A. Purpose of an Initial Assessment

The overall purpose of an initial assessment is to provide OFDA/W with information and recommendations to make timely decisions on the U.S. Government disaster response. Initial assessments:

- Identify the impact which a disaster has had on a society, and the ability of that society to cope.
- Identify the most vulnerable populations that need to be targeted for assistance.
- Identify the most urgent food and non-food requirements and potential methods of providing them most effectively.

- Identify the level of response by the affected country and its internal capacities to cope with the situation
- Identify the level of response from other donor countries and PVO's/NGO's/IO's.
- Make recommendations which define and prioritize the actions and resources needed for immediate response, to OFDA/W and to USAID/Embassy (if there). Recommendations should include possibilities for facilitating and expediting recovery and development
- Identify which types of in-depth assessments should be undertaken.
- Highlight special concerns which would not immediately be evident to OFDA/W or non-emergency persons.

Initial assessments should also provide baseline data as a reference for further monitoring. Monitoring systems should be identified so that relief officials will be able to determine whether a situation is improving or deteriorating. The systems must also be able to provide a means of measuring the effectiveness of relief activities. Each assessment or survey should be designed to build upon previous surveys and expand the data base.

Assessments should be conducted whenever there is uncertainty about the nature of an emergency response. If the disaster appears to require more than a $25,000 request, an assessment should be considered.

The Assessment Team must be sensitive to the situation of the affected country. The team needs to structure their assessment questions so that expectations are not created. It should be clear to the affected country what the United States can/cannot and will/will not do. The Assessment Team must also be aware of the pressures they will feel from the affected country and others to "identify needs." A recommendation of "no additional assistance is required" may also be a valid response, given that the on-the-ground site visit yields a disaster that is not as severe as indicated in third-hand reports and media coverage (focused on the most heart-wrenching cases) received in Washington prior to the Assessment Team's departure.

It is important to remember that the Assessment Team is supporting the U.S. Country Team led by the Ambassador. The Country Team will have a strong desire to help. The Assessment Team must consider their desire to help, but it also must be prepared to advise them on the limitations of OFDA, and that the United States cannot solve all the disaster problems alone.

OFDA Assessment Team findings and recommendations must be clear because they become the blueprints for U.S. Government decision-making and planning for the disaster response. Precise assessments are the foundation of what OFDA does.

B. Types of Assessments

Assessment Teams collect two types of information: what has happened as a result of the disaster and what is needed. The type of information that is usually available first to an Assessment Team concerns the effects of the disaster. Collecting this information is referred to as a *situation or disaster assessment.* It identifies the magnitude and extent of the disaster and its effects on the society. The other information gathered is a *needs assessment.* It defines the level and type of assistance required for the affected population. The gathering of information for the situation assessment and needs assessment can be done concurrently. The information collected in the initial assessment is the basis for determining the type and amount of relief needed during the immediate response phase of the disaster. It may also identify the need for continued monitoring and re-assessing of the unfolding disaster.

1. Situation (Disaster) Assessment

This assessment gathers information on the magnitude of the disaster and the extent of its impact on both the population and the infrastructure of the society.

Areas assessed and reported on include:

- Area affected by the disaster (location and size).
- Number affected by the disaster.
- Mortality and morbidity rates.
- Types of injuries and illnesses.
- Characteristics and condition of the affected population.
- Emergency medical, health, nutritional, water, and sanitation situation.
- Level of continuing or emerging threats (natural/human-caused).
- Damage to infrastructure and critical facilities.
- Damage to homes and commercial buildings.
- Damage to agriculture and food supply system.
- Damage to economic resources and social patterns.
- Level of response by the affected country and internal capacities to cope with the situation.
- Level of response from other donor countries and PVO's/NGO's/IO's.

2. Needs Assessment

The initial needs assessment identifies resources and services for immediate emergency measures to save and sustain the lives of the affected population. It is conducted at the site of a disaster or at the location of a displaced population. A quick response based on this information should help reduce excessive death rates and stabilize the nutritional, health, and living conditions among the population at risk. A quick response to urgent needs must never be delayed because a comprehensive assessment has not yet been completed.

C. Assessment Team Composition

An ideal OFDA Assessment Team is comprised of three or four people specializing in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, logistics, communications, disaster management, and OFDA policies and procedures. OFDA draws experts from within OFDA and USAID, other federal agencies, contractors with disaster management experience, bilateral aid agencies, and the PVO/NGO/IO community.

The Assessment Team is led by a team leader usually selected from within OFDA or USAID. Team leaders are familiar with OFDA's mandate and response capabilities. The scope of work for the team is defined by OFDA management and the USAID/Embassy within the affected country.

D. Elements of an Assessment

The following information defines the elements of any assessment. Assessments are generally comprised of six basic elements or activities:

Preparedness Planning: An accurate assessment depends on thorough planning, design, and preparation. Most information needs can be identified well in advance. The means of collecting the necessary data and the selection of formats for collection and presentation of the information should be established as part of an organization's pre-disaster planning. Seek advice widely from survey specialists, statisticians, and epidemiologists. By preparing to undertake assessments well in advance of an emergency, both the data required and the process most appropriate for its accurate and speedy collection can be identified and refined prior to the emergency. Proper design of sampling and survey methods can increase substantially the

accuracy and usefulness of assessment data. Standard survey techniques, questionnaires, checklists, and procedures should be prepared to ensure that all areas are examined and that the information is reported using standard terminology and classifications. Also, consideration of local cultural and other social factors at this stage can help greatly in formulating interview methods and identifying useful sources of information.

Survey and Data Collection: Information gathering must proceed rapidly and thoroughly. In an initial reconnaissance, surveyors should look for *patterns and indicators* of potential problems. Using the procedures developed earlier, key problem areas are thoroughly checked. Sources of all information should be identified. Examples include whether it was observed, reported by an informant in a discussion, collected through a survey of a randomly sampled population, or heard by rumor. The information will be more meaningful to those interpreting it, especially with conflicting reports, if a source is indicated.

Interpretation: Thorough analysis of the information gathered is critical. Those performing the analysis must be trained to detect and recognize trends and indicators of problems, to interpret the information, and to link the information to action programs.

Forecasting: Using the data that has been collected, the Assessment Team must construct estimates about how the situation might develop in the future so that contingency plans can be drawn up. Forecasting requires input from many specialists, especially persons who have had extensive experience in previous emergencies and who might be able to detect trends and provide insights as to what course an emergency might follow.

Reporting: When data analysis and forecasting are complete, it is necessary to report and disseminate the results in a format that enables managers to make decisions and formulate plans and projects. Essential information should be presented and structured so that the main patterns and trends are clear.

Monitoring. An assessment should not be seen as an end result in itself, but rather as one part of a continuing process of re-evaluating the needs and the appropriateness of responses to the disaster situation. This is particularly true in long-term complex disasters.

E. Data Collection Methods

It is useful to distinguish between the terms "data" and "information": data is simply a collection of words, numbers, and other characters with a structure. Information is "useful data". Data becomes information when it is useful, meaningful, relevant, and understandable to particular people at particular times and places, for particular purposes. What is information to one person can simply be useless data to another. Three other considerations are important in assessment data collection:

The Need for Accuracy: The information must agree with the reality it represents. The data on which it is based must be accurate.

The Need for Timeliness and Adequate Frequency: Information must be produced as and when it is wanted. The frequency of data collection and reporting must match the rate of change in the situation being assessed.

The Question of Availability of and Access to Information. Who should get what information? The way in which data is collected or the access to the data can affect the way it is routed, who it reaches, and where its flow may be blocked.

There are several data collection methods. This list outlines some of the most common ways of collecting data in emergencies.

1. Automatic initial self-assessment and local assessment by key elements in the system, e.g., staff of "lifeline" systems. This can involve pre-planned damage reporting by civil authorities, and by military units.

2. Visual inspection and interviews by specialists. Methods can include overflight, actions by special point-assessment teams (including pre-planned visits), and sample surveys to achieve rapid appraisal of area damage.

3. Sample surveying of specific characteristics of affected populations by specialist teams. Well-conducted surveys have a number of advantages, not least being the relative confidence that may be attached to data collected using formal statistical sampling methods. There are several different types of sample surveys:

- Simple random sampling: one in which every member of the target population is equally likely to be selected, and where the selection of a particular member of the target population has no effect on the other selections.

- Systematic random sampling: for example, choosing every fifth, or tenth member on a numbered list (may be wildly inaccurate if the lists are structured in certain ways).

- Stratified random sampling: divide the population into categories (or strata); then select members from each category by simple or systematic random sampling; finally combine these to give an overall sample.

- Cluster sampling: this restricts the sample to a limited number of geographical areas, known as "clusters". For each of the geographical areas chosen, select a sample by simple or random sampling, then combine these sub-samples to get an overall sample.

4. "Sentinel" surveillance. This is a method used widely in emergency health monitoring, where professional staff establish a reporting system that detects early signs of particular problems at specific sites. The method can be applied to a variety of other problems where early warning is particularly important.

5. Detailed critical sector assessments by specialist. This involves technical inspections and assessments by experts. It is particularly required in sectors such as health and nutrition, food, water supply, electric power, and other infrastructure systems. Critical sector assessments may be compiled from reports by specialists in these systems or from outside specialist teams.

6. Continuing surveillance by regular "polling" visits. This again is a technique which is well-developed in epidemiological surveillance of casualty care requirements and emergent health problems.

7. Continuing surveillance by routine reporting. As the situation develops, it will be especially useful if routine reporting systems can be adapted and used to develop a comprehensive picture of events.

8. Interviews with key informants in government and PVO's/ NGO's/IO's and within particular groups of affected people, local officials, local community leaders and (especially in food and displacement emergencies) with leaders of groups of displaced people.

F. The Keys To a Successful Assessment

Several factors contribute to the design of a successful and accurate assessment:

Identify the Users: Every element of an assessment should be designed to collect information for a specific user. The potential users should specify their data needs during the design phase. For example, health workers need certain types of information that will only be useful in certain formats, usually tables, while a procurement officer may need more quantitative or statistical data.

Identify the Information Needed to Plan Specific Programs: Too often, assessments collect information that is incomplete or of little value for planning relief programs or specific interventions. In many cases, information is anecdotal rather than substantive; in others, valuable time is wasted collecting detailed information when representative data would be just as useful. Determine what information is vital, what method is best to obtain this information, and how much detail is necessary for the information to be useful. The type of assistance usually provided by an agency should be considered when listing the data to be collected. For example, an agency that provides food will need to know about availability of transport and fuel, and road conditions.

Consider the Format: It is important to collect, organize, and present the data in a form useful to analysts and program planners. The results must be presented in a format that makes the implications very clear so that priorities can be set quickly. By applying baselines and standards to the presentation, key relationships can be quickly noted. For example, daily death rates in a displaced persons camp should be calculated and compared to the international standard of 1.0 deaths per 10,000 per day.

Consider the Timing of the Assessment: Timing may affect the accuracy of an assessment since situations and needs can change dramatically from day to day. Various types of assessments need to be timed to collect the necessary information when it is available and most useful. Relief needs are always relative

but as a general rule, initial surveys should be broad in scope and should determine overall patterns and trends. More detailed information can wait until emergency operations are well established.

Determine the Best Places to Obtain Accurate Information: If the information must be obtained from sample surveys, it is important that the areas to be surveyed provide an accurate picture of needs and priorities. For example, carrying out a health survey in a medical center would yield a distorted view of the overall health situation, since only sick or severely malnourished people would be in the center.

Distinguish Between Emergency and Chronic Needs: Virtually all developing countries have long-standing chronic needs in most, if not all, sectors. It is important to design an assessment that will distinguish between chronic and emergency needs. Attempt to acquire baseline data, reference data, and/or recognized and accepted standards in each sector. For example, if malnutrition is prevalent in a certain area of a country, a nutrition survey of incoming displaced persons will almost certainly reflect poor nutritional status. The surveyors must differentiate between what is normal for the location and what is occurring as a result of the disaster, so that emergency food aid and health care can be provided to those most in need. (It should be remembered that assessments may bring to light previously unrecognized or unacknowledged problems in a society. Thus, the data collection system should be careful to structure the information so that critical data such as health status and such, can be used for long-term planning.)

Use Recognized Terminology, Standards, and Procedures: Assessments will invariably be carried out by a variety of people operating independently. To provide a basis for evaluating the information, generally-accepted terminology, ratings, and classifications should be used in classifying and reporting. Use of standard survey forms with clear guidelines for descriptive terms is usually the best way to ensure that all information is reported on a uniform basis.

G. Assessment Process Main Points

- An assessment is only a "snapshot in time."
- Information changes over time.
- The significance of information changes over time

- If a disaster manager can identify the unfolding scenarios, monitoring will ultimately be more important than assessment.
- What you can't see is often more important than what you can see.
- It is vital to use the first assessment to establish an ongoing data collection and analysis system.
- Most reports should be iterative, not detailed.
- The initial assessment should provide information that feeds directly into the program planning process.
- Timing of the report is vital. Without a point of reference, most assessment data is of little value

H. Assessment Recommendations and Their Impact on Recovery

It is important that the recommendations made by the Assessment Team do not have a detrimental effect on the long-term recovery efforts of an affected country. Relief programs can set the stage for rapid recovery or prolong the length of the recovery period. Every action in an emergency response will have a direct effect on the manner and cost of reconstruction.

Many common relief programs can create dependencies and severely reduce the survivors' ability to cope with the next disaster. For example, food commodities brought into a disaster area without consideration for the local agricultural system can destroy the local market system and cause future food shortages where self-sufficiency had been the norm. Another example is when relief supplies, equipment, or technology are sent in that are not sustainable by the survivors. When this assistance wears out or is used up, the survivors may be left in the same condition as immediately following the disaster.

Recommendations should be simple, support the use of local materials and systems, and be sustainable by the affected country. Don't discount alternative interventions that may be against "conventional wisdom", collide with bureaucratic obstacles, or need increased relief agency capacity. In the long run they may be more cost effective and sustainable.

OFDA Assessment Cable Reporting Formats

The following cable format outlines should be used by OFDA Assessment Teams when sending reporting cables to OFDA/W following a disaster assessment. A longer, more detailed assessment report may be prepared by the team to address the points outlined in the cable in more depth.

A. Slow Onset Disaster Cable Format

Subject: Country—Type of disaster.

References

Cite any recent cables that are relevant to the report (as appropriate). This is an **action** cable for OFDA (or other office), see paras x,y,z. (These paragraphs will most likely be at the end of the cable, although they can also be at the end of each technical section if the team prefers. A summary of the recommendations should be in the summary section of the cable.

Summary

This section of the cable can be more than one paragraph and should summarize the findings of the disaster assessment.

Describe the disaster. How many people are affected? Where are they? (For example, "a famine of horrifying proportions is developing in x as a result of civil unrest and drought. An estimated y people are affected and will require food for z months.")

Summarize what is currently being done to handle the disaster, on the local, national, and international level. (Mention the presence of relief agencies both local and international, military participation, etc.)

What is the Mission/Embassy doing (briefly)? Has a disaster been declared? What are the team's summary recommendations?

General Situation

This introductory section should give the reader a more detailed overview of the disaster than the summary.

Describe the OFDA Assessment Team. Who was on it? What was their expertise? Where did they go? How did they get there? How long did they stay? Who did they talk/meet with? Has the Embassy declared a disaster? When? Has the USD 25,000 been received? Expended? For whom/what?

Describe in more detail the disaster situation.
(a) What is the extent/enormity of the problem? When did the problem begin? What is the experience of the country in previous similar situations? (b) Where is the disaster occurring? How many people are affected? How many have died/are injured/ homeless/ill/ displaced? If displaced, are they in camps, how many people are in them? What is the population profile (children/men/women/ages)? Are more on the move? Are they moving within the country or is there a potential refugee situation evolving? (c) How is the local government/international community responding? (d) Are there particular political/social/economic/ security factors that influence the event?

Food and Logistics

If it is a famine or food shortage, describe the magnitude of the food needs, numbers of people, tonnages required, tonnages pledged to date (For example, "The U.N. estimates that x metric tons of food are required in the next 6 months to avoid massive starvation. This comes to y metric tons per week.")

Describe the logistics of getting the food to the people, roads, water, air, relative costs, truck and worker availability, and any problems encountered (customs, contracts, etc.), including problems at ports and airports. In a conflict situation note in particular any security problems associated with food movement.

What is being done? Who is distributing? How? Where? What problems have been encountered? Mention should be made of availability of food in markets, prices, potential for a market sales program or other ways of getting food to people, such as food for work.

What kind of rehabilitation programs, if any, are underway (i.e. seeds and tools, fishing equipment)? Who is implementing the programs? Where?

Are there any security issues related to food distributions?

What more needs to be done? Further assessments? More pledges? Different foods? More funds?

Health

Describe nutritional conditions. What is the rate of malnutrition? Has it changed (improved/declined, in what areas/what groups? Be as specific as possible). Cite sources (i.e., "MSF/F surveys conducted in (month) have determined that rates of malnutrition of the under-5 population in x are y. Similar surveys in other areas report the same/different information.)

Describe mortality. What is the death rate? Where?

Describe morbidity. What are the health effects of the disaster? Are there/have there been any epidemics?

Describe what is being done to handle the situation. Who is on the ground? Where? Doing what (therapeutic feeding/immunizations/health clinics)? With what staff (doctors/nurses, local, international)? How are they getting to the area (by road/air/boat)? Are they staying overnight/traveling in by day only? Is there one organization taking the lead? What is the U.N. doing? What role is the host government playing (if relevant)?

Are there any security issues related to these programs?

Water and Sanitation

Describe where the population obtains water (wells/boreholes/temporary facilities/piped city system)? Are there water problems associated with the disaster? If in a camp, note color of water (clear/muddy/yellow/red/green on surface) and smell.

What is being done about the problem? Is the water being treated? How much water is available to people per day (liters/person/day)? Where are they getting it? Who is providing it? Is there a clean water education campaign?

Describe sanitation problems: Is there overcrowding? If so, how is waste being handled? Is there damage to the sewerage system as a result of the disaster?

Are there qualified people available to advise/assist? Is technical assistance needed?

Shelter

Shelter is not likely to be a major problem in a slow onset disaster unless there is massive displacement of people, in which case the team should evaluate shelter needs at the camp or area where the displaced persons (DP's) have gathered.

Describe the need for shelter, clothing, and eventually cooking supplies, water jugs. Where are the DP's living? In abandoned buildings, under trees, in makeshift huts? Are there building materials nearby? Do they have clothing (in a civil war situation, very frequently DP's will arrive without clothing or household goods)?

Describe what is being done Who is in charge? What is the role of local government, U.N., relief agencies?

What additional needs must be addressed?

Capacity

As best as possible, evaluate the overall response to the disaster; the capability of the NGO's; both national and international collaborative efforts between them and problems you identified; the capacity of the host government; its policies, biases, and interests in assisting or not.

Coordination

How is the relief effort being coordinated? Who is taking the lead? Are there donors' meetings or meetings with government officials? With NGO's? Where are they held and how frequently? Did the team attend any of them? What role has the Mission/ Embassy been playing?

What more needs to be done?

Recommendations

Outline immediate actions required (be sure to put paragraph numbers in paragraph 1 of the cable). If commodities are requested, specify the item, quantity needed, other specifications as appropriate, when it is needed, how it will be received, transported, stored, and distributed. If by air, information should be provided about runway capability (dirt/paved, damaged/intact), air traffic control services, possible security problems as appropriate. If additional expertise is needed, specify type and when. Note any issues such as customs clearances, storage, special handling, and any holidays that may interrupt delivery. Recommendations in a slow onset disaster can also include making additional funds available to respond to project proposals, additional assessments by CDC, or mobilizing a DART.

Who Should Get the Cable?

The reporting cable should be addressed at a minimum as follows:

SECSTATE WASHDC (for BHR/OFDA, Regional Bureau, and BHR/FFP also for the State Desk and RP); INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS (for USEC); AMEMBASSY ROME (Rome pass FODAG); USMISSION GENEVA (for AID and RMA); USMISSION USUN NEW YORK; AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in Africa,ME, or Europe); AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in S/L.A.); AMEMBASSY MANILA (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in Asia).

Additional INFO addressees will depend on the situation but could include: (a) the neighboring country missions (i.e., if it is Sudan, send also to Kenya, Addis Ababa, Cairo at a minimum); (b) other European capitals with particular interests in the country (i.e., if it is in Iraq, send also to Paris, London, Bonn); (c) SECDEF WASHDC; (d) JOINT STAFF WASHDC; (e) USCINCXXX - appropriate regional military addressee; or (f) others as situation requires.

B. Fast Onset Disaster Cable Format

Subject: Country—type of disaster.

References: Cite any recent cables that are relevant to the report (as appropriate). This is an **action** cable for OFDA (or other office); see paragraphs x,y,z (these paragraphs will most likely be at the end of the cable, although they can also be at the end of each technical section if the team prefers. A summary of the recommendations should be in the summary section of the cable).

Summary

This section of the cable can be more than one paragraph and should summarize the findings of the initial disaster assessment.

Describe the disaster. When did it occur, where, and approximately how many people were affected. For example, "A typhoon of immense proportions hit the island of X, on Y date An estimated Z people have been left homeless, agriculture destroyed, buildings damaged, ..."

Describe in summary form what is currently being done to handle the disaster on the local, national, and international level. (Mention the presence of local and international relief agencies, military participation, etc.)

What is the Mission/Embassy doing (briefly)? Has a disaster been declared? What are the team's summary recommendations?

General Situation

This introductory section should give the reader an overview of the disaster in more detail than the summary.

Describe the OFDA Assessment Team. Who was on it? What was their expertise? Where did they go? How did they get there? How long did they stay? Who did they talk/meet with? Has the Embassy declared a disaster? When? Has the USD 25,000 been received? Expended? For whom/what?

Describe the general situation.
(a) What is the extent of the disaster? Where did it occur? How many people were affected (killed/injured/homeless)? Were buildings damaged? How badly (cite percentage if available)? Were public services disrupted (water/electricity/transportation)? What is the general mood (panic/under control)? (b) Has there been a similar disaster in the country before or is this the first time? What has been the response by the affected country, donors, NGO's?

Health/Nutrition Situation

This section should provide as much detail as possible on the health situation from as many sources as possible. Wherever possible, cite the source (i.e., "According to a Red Cross worker at the site....").

How many people have been killed, injured? Where are they? Are there potential disease risks? What are they? Who is affected (children/adults/the elderly)?

Describe what is being done in the health arena. What agencies (national and international) have mobilized? Where? What are they doing to address the issues in section 7? What are the constraints to doing a better job (e.g., too many victims and not enough staff, not enough of the right kind of staff, shortage of medical supplies, or problems of access)?

There are usually no immediate nutritional problems associated with a fast onset disaster. However, in certain cases, a food shortage could occur in the medium term if the disaster has destroyed or contaminated food supplies. What is the potential for a food crisis? What is being done about it? What are the constraints? Who is handling the issue?

Shelter

Describe damage to private and public buildings in the affected area. What type of housing has been damaged/destroyed? How many buildings (private and public) have been damaged or destroyed? Has a value been placed on the damage?

Estimate population in need of shelter. Why is shelter important (weather, culture, etc.)?

What is being done to provide shelter? Are people at home? at camp sites? Are there any local solutions—what is the host government planning? Are imported supplies required? How much? Are any agencies responding? What more is needed?

Water/Sanitation

Describe any water problems; for example, broken pipes, contamination, damaged pumping stations. Note color of water (clear/muddy/yellow/red/green on surface), and smell.

What is being done about the problem? Is the water being treated? How? Is there an education campaign? How much water is available to people per day (liters/person/day)? Where are they getting it? Who is providing it?

Describe sanitation problems. Is there overcrowding? If so, how is waste being handled? Is there damage to the sewerage system as a result of the disaster?

Are there qualified people available to advise/assist? Is TA needed? What was standard before the disaster?

Has the impacted population lost its supply of cooking, cleaning, and storage utensils? What is being done?

Infrastructure/Logistics

Describe damage to infrastructure. Is this posing problems of access to victims? What is being done? What logistics support, equipment and facilities are available and undamaged (hospitals, airstrips, ports, aircraft, vehicles, etc.)?

Coordination

How is the relief effort being coordinated? Is the government in charge? Who is taking the lead? Are there donors' meetings and meetings with government officials? With NGO's? Where are they held and how frequently? Did the team attend any of them? What role has the Mission/Embassy been playing?

What more needs to be done?

Capability

As best as possible, evaluate the overall response to the disaster; the capability of the NGO's; both national and international, collaborative efforts between them and problems you identified; the capacity of the host government, its policies, biases, and interests in assisting or not.

Recommendations

Outline immediate actions required (be sure to put paragraph numbers in paragraph 1 of cable). If commodities are requested, specify the item, quantity needed, other specifications as appropriate, as well as when it is needed, how it will be received, transported, stored, and distributed. If by air, information should be provided about runway capability (dirt/paved, damaged/intact), air traffic control services, or possible security problems as appropriate. Note any issues such as customs clearances, storage, special handling, and any holidays that may interrupt delivery. If additional expertise is needed, specify type and when.

If shelter is requested, discuss ability of local authorities to receive, store, and distribute equitably. What NGO's would be involved? Is there the expertise to demonstrate uses of shelter? Is TA required?

Who Should Get the Cable?

The reporting cable should be addressed at a minimum as follows:

SECSTATE WASHDC, IMMEDIATE (for BHR/OFDA, Regional Bureau, and BHR/FFP also for the State Desk and RP); INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS (for USEC); AMEMBASSY ROME (Rome pass FODAG); USMISSION GENEVA (for AID and RMA); USMISSION USUN NEW YORK; AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in Africa/ME or Europe); AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in S/L.A.;) AMEMBASSY MANILA (for OFDA Regional Advisor - if in Asia).

Additional INFO addressees will depend on the situation but could include: (a) the neighboring country missions (i.e., if it is Sudan, send also to Kenya, Addis Ababa, Cairo, at a minimum); (b) other European capitals with particular interests in the country (i.e., if it is in Iraq, send also to Paris, London, Bonn among others); (c) SECDEF WASHDC; (d) JOINT STAFF WASHDC; or (e) USCINCXXX - appropriate regional military addressee; or (f) for others as situation requires.