

## PART 3 DISASTER RESPONSE

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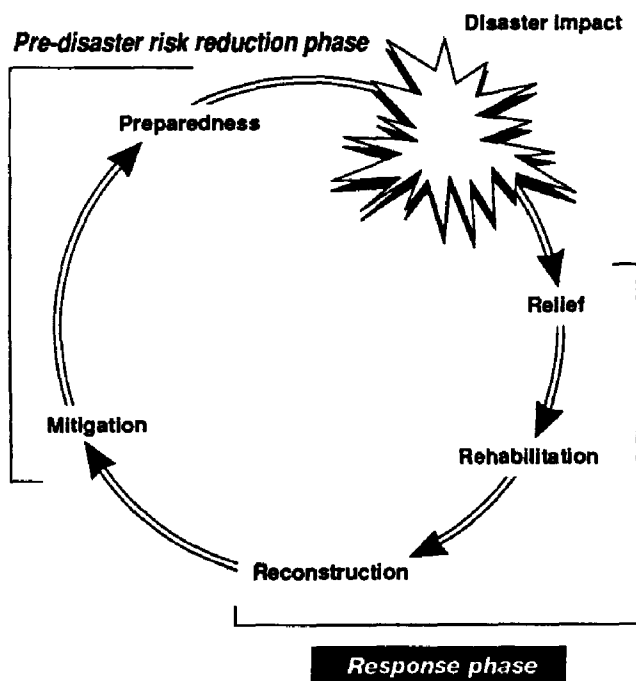
## PART 3 DISASTER RESPONSE

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the material and completing the exercises in Part 3 you should be able to:

- identify the major categories of activities and responsibilities of disaster response
- identify the objectives of disaster assessment and how assessment data is used
- describe the role of your UN organization in the various disaster response activities
- identify key points for action in coordination and information management
- describe development opportunities within the disaster reconstruction phase

### CHAPTER 9 Disaster response



Disaster response is the sum total of actions taken by people and institutions in the face of disaster. These actions commence with the warning of an oncoming threatening event or with the event itself if it occurs without warning. Disaster response includes the implementation of disaster preparedness plans and procedures, thus overlapping with disaster preparedness. The end of disaster response comes with the completion of disaster rehabilitation programmes.

This chapter identifies the principal activities of disaster response. Each activity is, formally or informally, governed by a set of policies and procedures, and each activity is typically under the auspices of a lead agency. In the end, disaster response activities are implemented by a myriad of government organizations, international and national agencies, local entities and individuals, each with their roles and responsibilities.

A full discussion of disaster response would, for each activity, identify:

- Who is responsible for its implementation, who supports it
- What means are required for its implementation
- When are its activities implemented
- What is its scope
- Why does it need to be done

## Aims of emergency and post-disaster assistance

The overall aims of emergency and post-disaster assistance are:

- To ensure the survival of the maximum possible number of victims, keeping them in the best possible health in the circumstances.
- To re-establish self-sufficiency and essential services as quickly as possible for all population groups, with special attention to those whose needs are greatest: the most vulnerable and underprivileged.
- To repair or replace damaged infrastructure and regenerate viable economic activities. To do this in a manner that contributes to long-term development goals and reduces vulnerability to any future recurrence of potentially damaging hazards.

In situations of civil or international conflict, the aim is to protect and assist the civilian population, in close collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and in compliance with international conventions.

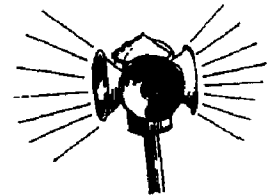
In cases involving population displacements (due to any type of disaster), the aim is to find durable solutions as quickly as possible, while ensuring protection and assistance as necessary in the mean time.

The following are typical activities of emergency response. There are important differences, however, between sudden and slow onset disasters. Differences also emerge when comparing the specific geographical situation and the disaster's socio/political context.

### *Warning*

**SUDDEN ONSET** Warning refers to arrangements to rapidly disseminate information concerning imminent disaster threats to government officials, institutions and the population at large in the areas at immediate risk. These warnings normally relate to tropical storms and floods.

**SLOW ONSET** Early warning is the term used regarding slow-onset disasters, especially famine. Early warning activities include the process of monitoring the situation in communities or areas known to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of droughts, crop failures and/or changes in economic conditions. An adequate warning will enable remedial measures to be initiated before hardships become acute. Early warning is a disaster response activity only if it has failed to detect the warning signs or where such signs were ignored.



### *Evacuation/migration*

**SUDDEN ONSET** Evacuation involves the relocation of a population from zones at risk of an imminent disaster to a safer location. Evacuation is most commonly associated with tropical storms but is also a frequent requirement with technological or industrial accidents. For evacuation to work there must be a timely and accurate warning system, clear identification of escape routes, an established policy that requires everyone to evacuate when an order is given, and a public education programme to make the community aware of the plan.

**SLOW ONSET** The movement of people from the zone where they are at risk to a safer site is not, in fact, evacuation but crisis-induced migration. This movement is usually not organized and coordinated by authorities but is a spontaneous response to the perception by the migrants that food and/or security can be obtained elsewhere.





### *Search and rescue*

**SUDDEN ONSET** Search and rescue, often known by the acronym SAR, is the process of identifying the location of disaster victims that may be trapped or isolated and bringing them to safety and medical attention.

In the aftermath of tropical storms and floods, SAR usually includes locating stranded flood victims, who may be threatened by rising water, and either bringing them to safety or providing them with food and first aid until they can be evacuated or returned to their homes.

In the aftermath of earthquakes, SAR normally focuses on locating people who are trapped and injured in collapsed buildings.

### *Post-disaster assessment*

**SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET** The primary objective of assessment is to provide a clear, concise picture of the post-disaster situation, to identify relief needs and to develop strategies for recovery. It determines options for humanitarian assistance, how best to utilize existing resources, or to develop requests for further assistance. The post-disaster assessment must distinguish among pre-disaster chronic conditions, the needs of disaster survivors and their resources.

This activity is so vital that we will devote the next chapter exclusively to disaster assessment.

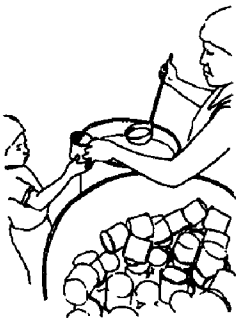
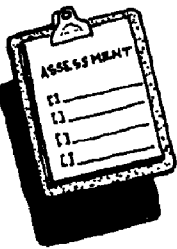
### *Emergency relief*

**SUDDEN ONSET** Emergency relief is the provision on a humanitarian basis of material aid and emergency medical care necessary to save and preserve human lives. It also enables families to meet their basic needs for medical and health care, shelter, clothing, water, and food (including the means to prepare food). Relief supplies or services are typically provided, free of charge, in the days and weeks immediately following a sudden disaster.

**SLOW ONSET** Emergency relief may need to be provided for extended periods in the case of neglected or deteriorated slow-onset emergency situations and population displacements (refugees, internally and externally displaced people). The impact of the disaster may be mitigated for these populations through additional assistance to the host community as well.

### *Logistics and supply*

**SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET** The delivery of emergency relief will require logistical facilities and capacity. A well-organized supply service is crucial for handling the procurement or receipt, storage, and dispatch of relief supplies for distribution to disaster victims. The logistical system is perhaps more vital and of higher priority for slow onset emergencies.



### *Communication and information management*

**SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET** All of the above activities are dependent on communication. There are two aspects to communications in disasters. One is the equipment that is essential for information flow, such as radios, telephones and their supporting systems of repeaters, satellites, and transmission lines. The other is information management: the protocol of knowing who communicates what information to whom, what priority is given to it, and how it is disseminated and interpreted.



### *Survivor response and coping*

**SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET** In the rush to plan and execute a relief operation it is easy to overlook the real needs and resources of the survivors. The assessment must take into account existing social coping mechanisms that negate the need to bring in outside assistance. On the other hand, disaster survivors may have new and special needs for social services to help adjust to the trauma and disruption caused by the disaster.

Participation in the disaster response process by individuals to community organizations is a key to healthy recovery. Through them appropriate coping mechanisms will be most successfully utilized.

### *Security*

**SUDDEN ONSET** Security is not always a priority issue after sudden onset natural disasters. It is typically handled by civil defense or police departments.

**SLOW ONSET** The protection of the human rights and safety of displaced populations and refugees can be of paramount importance, requiring international monitoring.



### *Emergency operations management*

**SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET** None of the above activities can be implemented without some degree of emergency operations management. Policies and procedures for management requirements need to be established well in advance of the disaster. More attention is given to this subject in the following chapter on *Responding to a sudden disaster*.

### *Rehabilitation and reconstruction*

Rehabilitation and reconstruction complete the disaster response activities. As much of this activity is within the scope of UNDP's concern, Chapter 12 is devoted to it.



## CHAPTER 10

**Disaster assessment<sup>1</sup>**

Assessment is the process of determining the impact of a disaster on a society. The first priority is to establish the needs for immediate emergency measures to *save and sustain the lives of survivors*. The second priority is to identify the possibilities for facilitating and expediting *recovery and development*.

Assessment is an interdisciplinary process undertaken in phases and involving on-the-spot surveys and the collation, evaluation and interpretation of information from various sources. These surveys concern both direct and indirect losses as well as the short- and long-term effects. Assessment involves determining not only what has happened and what assistance might be needed, but also defines objectives and how relevant assistance can actually be provided to the victims.

Some assessments are specifically conducted as damage assessments. They include the preparation of specific, quantified estimates of physical damage resulting from a disaster. The damage assessment may also include recommendations concerning the repair, reconstruction or replacement of structures, and equipment, as well as the restoration of economic activities.

**Objectives of assessment**

The first objective of a post-disaster assessment is to determine when an emergency exists. Next, define the actions and resources needed to reduce immediate threats to health and safety and to pre-empt future serious problems.

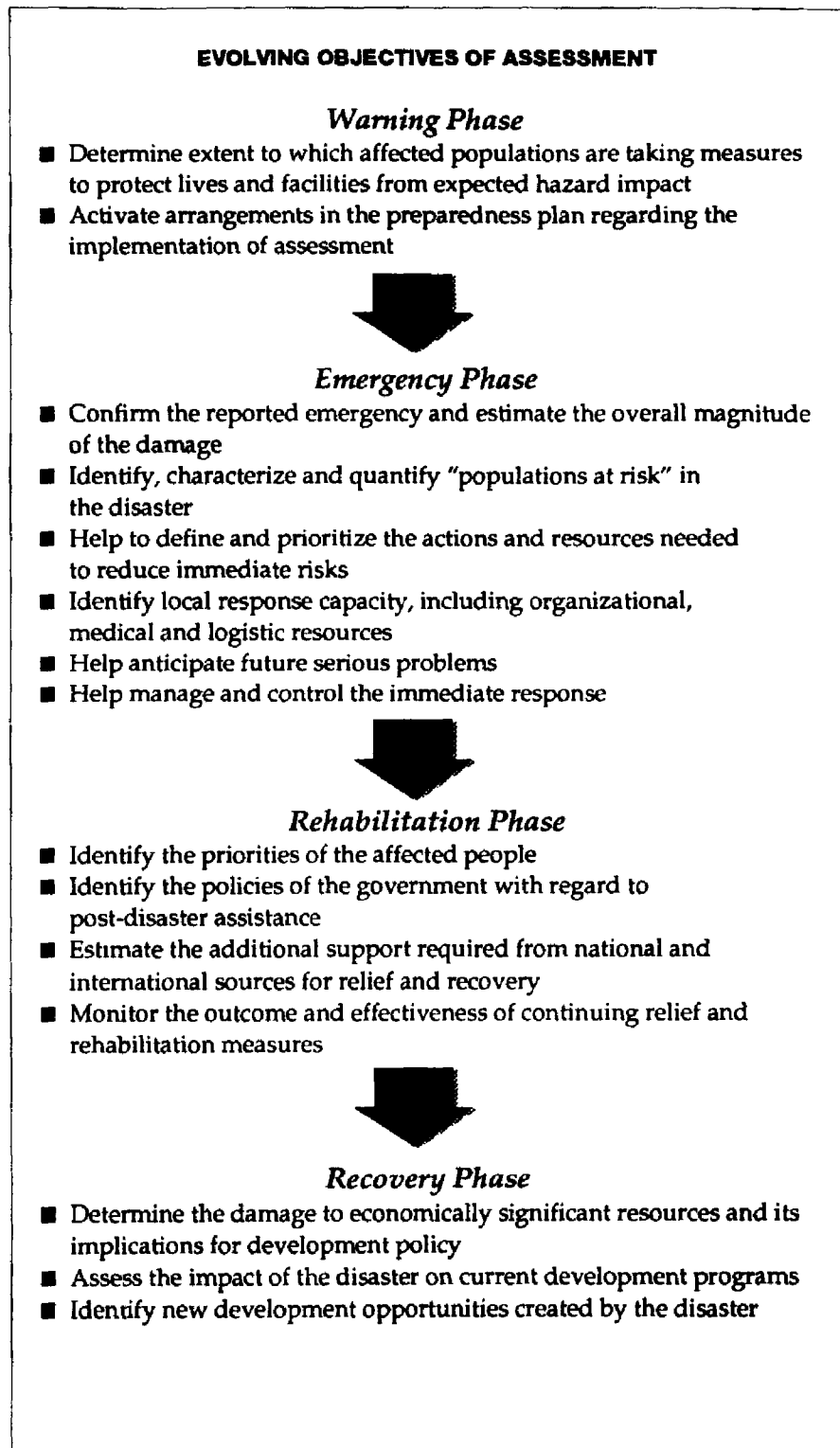
A frequent problem of assessment is to assume that all property losses or survival needs must be replaced or furnished from outside sources only. Instead the assessment must also identify the local response capacity, including organizational, medical, and logistical resources. The assessment must help decide how best to use existing resources for relief. It must also identify the priorities of the affected people themselves.

Another problem is that people making the assessment who are not from the disaster area may have a difficult time distinguishing chronic needs from problems created by the disaster. Knowledge of base line data is essential to identify the "starting point" for post-disaster needs. This information is established in the preparedness checklist in Chapter 7.

If the results of the assessment are to contribute to the design of a disaster response program, then the response agency must also know the policies of the government with regard to emergency assistance. These policies will affect the estimate for the additional support required from national and international sources for relief.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter has been drawn from the UNDP/UNDRO training module *Disaster Assessment* by Rob Stephenson of the Relief and Development Institute

**Figure 10.1**  
*Evolving objectives  
of assessment*



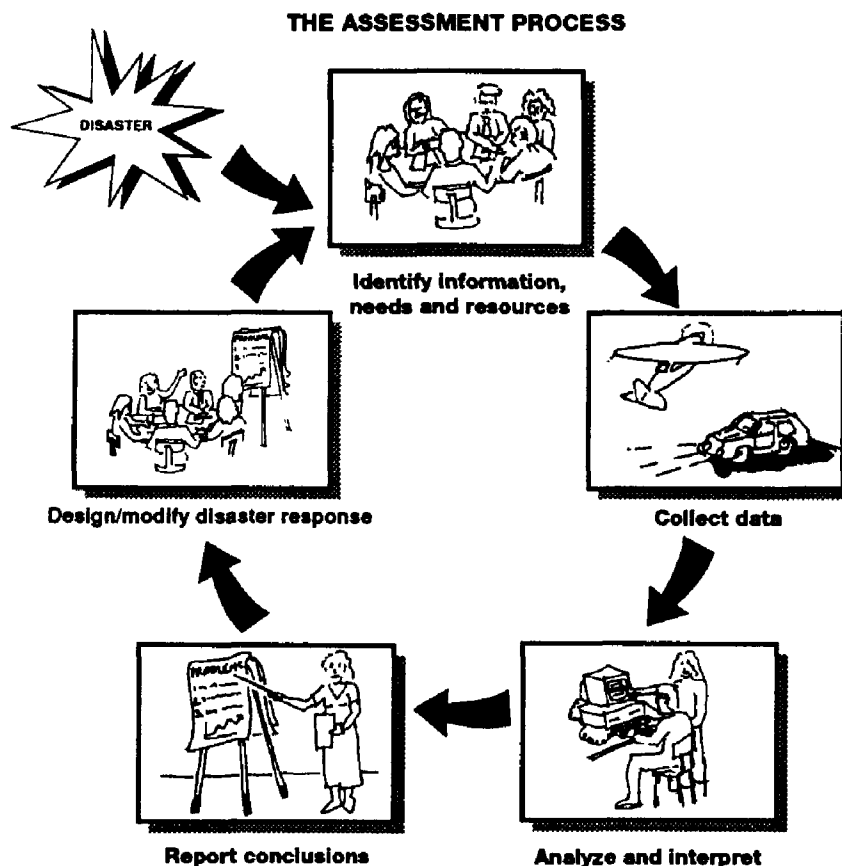


## The assessment process

Assessments must be carefully planned and managed. A sequence of activities is involved and each must be planned in detail. The following activities typically constitute the assessment process:

- Identify information needs and sources of reliable data
- Collect data
- Analyze and interpret data
- Report conclusions, forecasts and alternatives to appropriate planner and decision-makers

As the response actions begin to influence events, assessments become part of the monitoring and control loop, allowing those involved to monitor outcomes and attempt to correct the response. It becomes part of a continuing process of assessment, review, and correction by which those managing the operation begin to restore the framework for survival and recovery.



**Figure 10.2**  
*This figure identifies how the objectives of assessment evolve as the recovery process proceeds.*

## Assessments for different disaster types

The design and execution of assessments are very different for sudden onset disasters versus the slow onset. For sudden onset, there are typically many different needs in many locations involving casualty management, support for local rescue efforts and recovery of lifeline services during the first two days of an emergency. Initially the needs change from hour to hour often resulting in confusion. In fact, some activities need to be done so quickly that action has to

precede detailed assessments, using strategies determined during preparedness planning on the basis of previous emergencies.

For displaced persons and famine emergencies the lead times are sometimes long and donors may be unwilling to commit large amounts of assistance in response to ambiguous information. The initial priority needs which should be assessed include immunizations (particularly measles), emergency water supply, nutritional monitoring, bulk food logistics, and registration systems. Early geographical assessments of the size of the populations at risk are vital.

These prolonged emergencies may last for months, and often for years. This allows for detailed analysis of the assessment system's performance and the opportunity to adapt them as requirements change.

### **How assessment data is used**

Assessment provides support for emergency decision makers. Assessment is conducted for a specific user or group of users who are making decisions about emergency resource allocation and response strategies in what may be a fast-changing environment. There are three aspects involved in the assessment process: picture building, situation assessment, and response planning.

Start by building up a picture of where people are, what condition they are in, what services are still available, and what resources have survived.

The situation assessment involves the identification of operational priorities. The situation itself is usually fast-changing and messy, this leads to the need to be able to forecast how the situation is likely to develop. The assessment data needs to be structured to help with the following:

- recognition and assessment of situations requiring decisions
- formulation of the operational strategies
- objectives and needs
- potential alternatives generated
- analysis of the alternatives: evaluate their impact
- interpretation and selection: alternatives compared by evaluating impacts

The last process of decision-making is response planning. This includes the detailed assignment and scheduling of resources (people, equipment, and supplies) to meet specific relief objectives.

The subject of assessment will also be discussed in relation to the UN Disaster Management Team and the UN response to disasters. See also the specialized training module, *Disaster Assessment*, for a broader discussion of these topics and the UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Manual.

**Q.** *Name an assessment objective for each of the listed disaster phases.*

**A.** **warning:** \_\_\_\_\_

**emergency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**rehabilitation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**recovery:** \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWER

Review Figure 10 1  
for sample answers



**FORM 2. SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR A SURVEY OF FAMILY NEEDS**

The questions in this appendix may be used as a guide to prepare surveys of family needs in the aftermath of major disasters. These questions will help identify the most critical needs. Responses to some questions should be referred to public health authorities or to the public works (or appropriate utility) department.

*Sample assessment format*

By Intertect for the Office  
Of U.S. Foreign Disaster  
Assistance.

<b>SURVEY DATA</b>	
Name of Surveyor _____	
Date _____	
<b>FAMILY IDENTIFICATION DATA</b>	
Name of Head of Household _____	
Pre-disaster Address _____	
Post-disaster Address _____	
Identification Number _____	

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. Family Composition
- |   |        |       |
|---|--------|-------|
|   | Number |       |
|   | M      | F     |
| a. Head of household                              | _____  | _____ |
| b. Spouse   | _____  | _____ |
| c. Number of teenagers (age 13-18) living at home | _____  | _____ |
| d. Number of children (ages 1-12) living at home  | _____  | _____ |
| e. Others living at pre-disaster address          | _____  | _____ |
| f. Total people living at pre-disaster address    | _____  | _____ |

2. Casualties (Write in appropriate number)
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. Number with minor injuries (first aid required)             | _____ |
| b. Number with broken bones or seen by doctor (unhospitalized) | _____ |
| c. Number hospitalized   | _____ |
| d. Number killed   | _____ |

3. Have all survivors been located? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4. If no, how many are missing? \_\_\_\_\_

**WATER**

5. Prior to the disaster, where did household obtain drinking water?
- |                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| a. Water line to house | _____ |
| b. Well on property    | _____ |
| c. Public water faucet | _____ |
| d. Public well         | _____ |
| e. River or stream     | _____ |
| f. Lake or reservoir   | _____ |
| g. Other               | _____ |
6. Where do you get your water now?
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Same place as noted above              | _____ |
| b. Water tank truck provided by _____     | _____ |
| c. Temporary water tank serviced by _____ | _____ |
| d. Other                                  | _____ |
7. Does this water appear to be dirty? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is your normal water supply working now?
- |                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| a. Yes, full-time | _____ |
| b. Intermittently | _____ |
| c. No, not at all | _____ |
9. If paying for emergency water supply, how much are you paying and to whom?
- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. Amount _____ per _____ (lit/gal) |  |
| b. Paid to: _____                   |  |

10. Since the disaster has anyone in the family had

- |                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| a. Severe diarrhea? | _____ |
| b. Vomiting?        | _____ |

**FOOD**

11. Was family able to recover food from house? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

12. If yes, how long will it last?

- |                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| a. 1-2 days           | _____ |
| b. 3-7 days           | _____ |
| c. more than one week | _____ |

13. Can you purchase adequate food from local markets? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

14. If no, how much food do you estimate that you will need?

- |                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| a. 1-week ration           | _____ |
| b. 2-week ration           | _____ |
| c. more than 2-week ration | _____ |

15. Was any member of the family receiving food from any of the following before the disaster?

- |                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| a. Government              | _____ |
| b. UN agency               | _____ |
| c. Church or church agency | _____ |
| d. School                  | _____ |
| e. Charitable organization | _____ |
| f. Other                   | _____ |

**FAMILY GOODS**

16. Remembering that many people need help, does the family require any of the following?

Types of Goods	Quantity
a. Blankets	_____
b. Bedding	_____
c. Plastic tarps	_____
d. Flashlights/lanterns	_____
e. Storage boxes	_____
f. Clothing for adult males	_____
g. Clothing for adult females	_____
h. Clothing for teens	_____
i. Clothing for children	_____

**FUEL**

17. What type of cooking and heating fuel did you use before the disaster?

- |                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| a. Gas supplied by gas line | _____ |
| b. Bottled gas              | _____ |
| c. Kerosene                 | _____ |
| d. Firewood                 | _____ |
| e. Other                    | _____ |

18. If (a) or (b), is any gas leaking now? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

19. If (a), has gas service been restored to your line? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**SANITATION**

20. What type of sanitary facilities did you have before the disaster?

- |                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| a. Flush toilet in dwelling          | _____ |
| b. Communal flush toilet in building | _____ |
| c. Access to public toilet           | _____ |
| d. Bucket latrine                    | _____ |
| e. Pit latrine (earthen)             | _____ |
| f. Other _____                       | _____ |
| g. None                              | _____ |

21. If (a) or (b), is toilet working now? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**SHELTER NEEDS**

22. Will family require assistance for any of the following?

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Temporary shelter                            | _____ |
| b. Building materials/tools for shelter         | _____ |
| c. Building materials/tools for housing repairs | _____ |



# CHAPTER 11 UN response to disasters<sup>1</sup>

## Principal elements and actions in response to a sudden disaster

The vast majority of international emergency and post-disaster assistance is funded by special contributions to the UN agencies, or is delivered bilaterally or through NGOs. Action by UNDRO, the resident coordinator/representative and the UN-DMT is therefore extremely important: information management and exchange, coordination, preparation of appeals, and the mobilization of resources. The extent to which the resident coordinator/representative and the UN-DMT are involved in these activities, and in the provision of direct operational support to the Government, will depend on the nature and scale of the emergency situation, on the capacity and wishes of the national authorities, and on the resources which can be mobilized.

The above applies in emergency situations which require action by a number of UN organizations/agencies (possibly including UNDP) and, in consequence, coordination by the resident coordinator and UNDRO. In situations which fall entirely within the mandate of one specific organ of the UN system (e.g. an epidemic or crop pest attack), primary responsibility rests with the appropriate agency (e.g. WHO, FAO) although the country-level UN Disaster Management Team may, if required, play a role in support of that agency. (The information dissemination services of UNDRO may also be made available to the agency concerned at the international level.)

The following is a list of the principal actions to be taken by the resident coordinator/representative and the UN-DMT immediately before and during a disaster.

### Actions to be taken on receipt of a disaster warning

#### On receipt of a warning of an imminent disaster threat:

- Contact and exchange information with UNDRO: review need for precautionary measures.
- Contact the relevant government authorities: confirm readiness of UNDRO and UN-DMT to assist, if needed.
- Convene the UN-DMT, review preparedness arrangements, alert personnel and review the UN security plan.



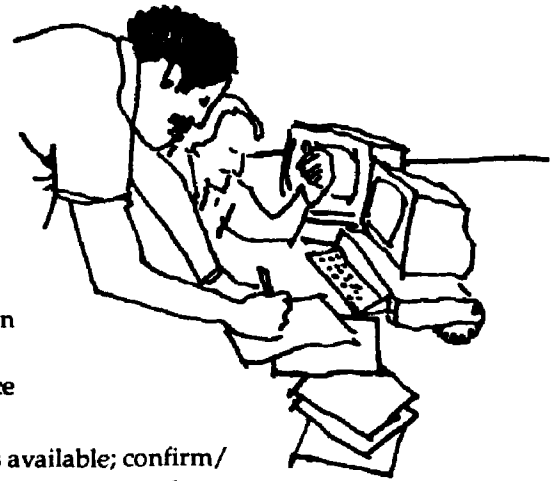
### Actions to be taken following the occurrence of a disaster

#### Immediate action in all cases:

- Ensure the security of all UN personnel: activate the security plan, if necessary.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is condensed from the UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Manual, Chapter 4

- ✓ Ensure reliable telecommunications between the field office and Geneva, New York and the affected areas.
- ✓ Contact and exchange information with UNDRO: send an alert message and then regular field sitreps, and maintain telephone contact, if possible.
- ✓ Contact the government emergency management authorities: get information, offer UN assistance and reaffirm the capabilities of the various agencies; confirm arrangements for ongoing contacts and collaboration.
- ✓ Determine whether the Government requires international assistance and wishes UNDRO to launch an international appeal. Consider needs for:
  - Search and rescue (SAR), or other specialist assistance
  - Relief assistance.
- ✓ Convene the UN-DMT: review whatever information is available; confirm/define responsibilities within the team; arrange follow-up meetings and information-sharing.
- ✓ Gather and collate information on the situation; participate in initial reconnaissance visits to the affected areas. Mobilize and provide technical assistance for the assessment process.



**If international emergency assistance is required:**

- 1) Immediate needs and action
  - Determine, on a provisional basis, the specific functions to be undertaken by the UN at country level in the light of the particular situation and the capacity of the Government.
  - Define any needs for SAR teams or other specialist assistance; inform and consult with UNDRO immediately.
  - Consult with UNDRO concerning the possible assignment of one or more UNDRO delegates.
  - Ensure the convening of an early, broad-based coordination meeting to coordinate immediate responses and arrangements for assessment.
  - Institute necessary organizational arrangements and systems within the field office: redeploy staff, define work priorities, and ensure the availability of office equipment and clerical and administrative support to staff engaged in emergency activities.
  - Put information systems into operation to record and track needs and contributions of international assistance.
  - Consider and, where appropriate, make recommendations for the provision of emergency grants by UNDRO and UNDP, and/or the release of supplies by UNDRO from Pisa.
- 2) Continuing action during the early days of emergency assistance operations:
  - Maintain close contact and exchange information with the Government and other concerned parties (donors, NGOs); participate in and support in-country coordination mechanisms.
  - Maintain a dialogue and frequent information exchanges with UNDRO (through field sitreps and by telephone).

- Help to define priority needs for international assistance:
  - Participate in the overall assessment
  - Make an independent judgement of the priority needs for international emergency assistance
  - Help in formulating and screening requests
- Develop a concerted programme of assistance and a consolidated UN appeal including the proposals and requirements of all UN agencies.
- Disseminate information on needs for international assistance to local representatives of donors and NGOs, and help to mobilize resources to cover unmet needs.
- Help to monitor assistance operations, and provide operational assistance, where required.
- Make arrangements for relations with the news media, and the reception and servicing of visiting missions.
- Undertake a review (post mortem) of the UN assistance to the emergency operation as it draws to a close.

If there are political complications or humanitarian needs which are not being met, advise the Secretary-General through the office of Emergency Relief Coordinator. (See Appendix 1.)

**Additional support functions (on a continuous basis) depending on the need and the capacity of the Government:**

- Convening and providing secretariat services to broad-based coordination meetings.
- Providing operational support to management information systems, logistics, or communications.

**Assistance to rehabilitation and reconstruction:**

- Help to plan and introduce assistance to rehabilitation and reconstruction in phases from the earliest possible moment.

**Assistance to populations in areas of conflict:**

At present the UN has little role in active conflict areas for people in need caught in the conflict. This role is mainly left to the ICRC and certain NCOs. (See also Appendix 1).

**Sitreps—exchanging information with UNDRO**

This section describes the responsibilities of the resident coordinator/representative in respect of reporting to UNDRO, and provides guidelines for the preparation of the required field sitreps. It describes UNDRO's reporting (information dissemination) system in the context of international information flows.



### Contacting UNDRO, Geneva

UNDRO maintains a 24-hour duty system, 365 days-a-year. To contact:

<b>Telephone</b>	(4122)-7332010	(Direct line for use in case of an emergency: out of office hours the call is received by Air Call answering service which conveys the message to the UNDRO duty officer who then calls back)
<i>or</i>	(4122)-7346011	(United Nations Office Geneva switchboard: ask for UNDRO duty officer)
<b>Telex</b>	414242 DRO CH	
<b>Fax</b>	(4122)- 7335623	
<b>Electronic mail</b>	UNX008	Use the UNDP E-mail facility. (Message is delivered to UNDRO via UNIENET)

### Alert message and field sitreps

To ensure a timely, appropriate, and coordinated international response, it is essential that the resident coordinator report rapidly to UNDRO any disaster occurrence, with an early assessment of damage and needs, however tentative. This must then be followed up by regular and systematic reporting of increasing detail.

Send an alert message to UNDRO as soon as information of a disaster occurrence is received, or an occurrence in a remote area is confirmed. This serves to let UNDRO know that something has happened and that the field office is following up. Do not delay while waiting to get more information.

Send the first field sitrep as quickly as possible, and in any case not more than 24 hours after the disaster occurrence. Send whatever relevant information is available: do not delay because certain information is lacking. Send information as it becomes available, indicating what additional information is anticipated and arrangements made to gather more.

Send field sitreps regularly, at least daily during the initial emergency period (typically 10-20 days) and until a reduced frequency is agreed with UNDRO. Always follow the basic format but, if necessary, adapt the sub-headings of the individual sections depending on the needs of the particular situation.

Send sitreps by fax (or Email) when possible. This takes full advantage of word processing facilities in preparing and updating the reports.

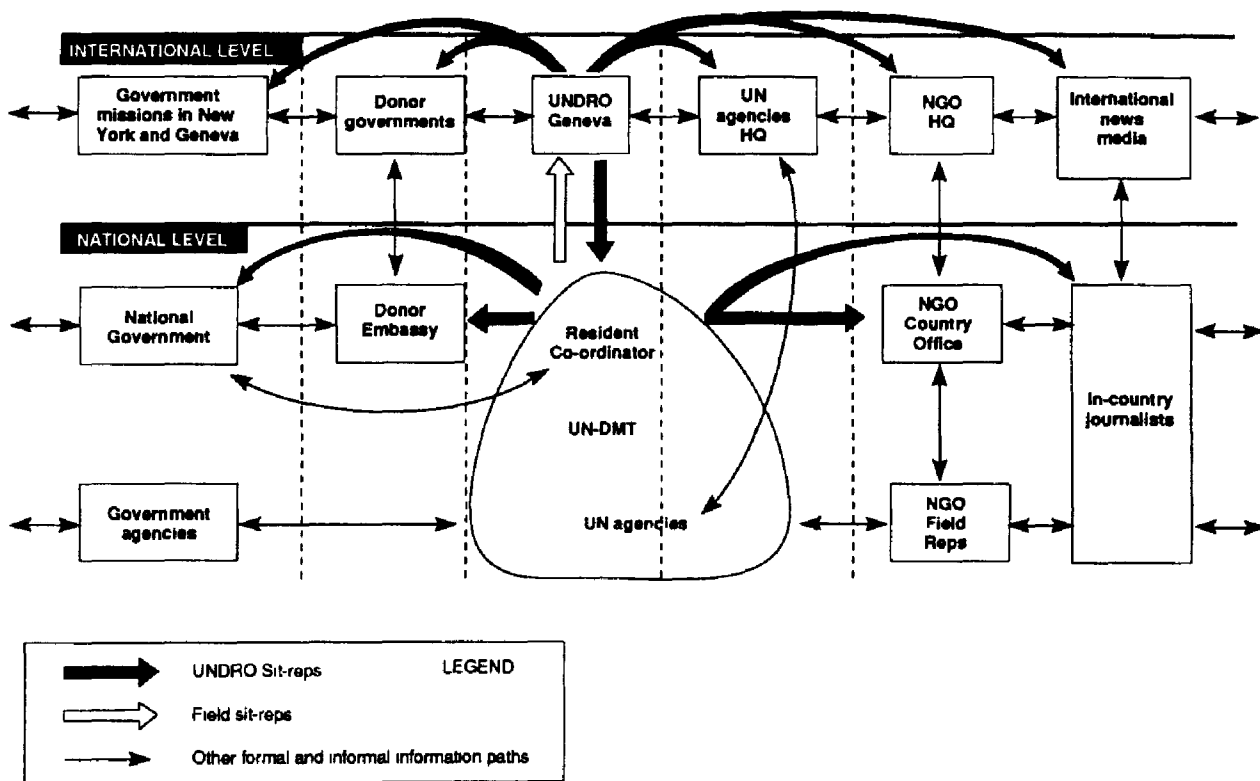
Involve the UN-DMT in the preparation of the sitreps to help ensure comprehensive reporting and a unified UN system presentation to the Government and the international community. The UNDP disaster focal point should normally be responsible for collating information from the various agencies and preparing the first draft. Arrange for copies of the field sitreps to be sent promptly to the headquarters of the UN agencies most directly concerned (normally the core members of the UN-DMT).



For detailed guidelines for the format of the field sitrep see the *UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Manual, Chapter 4, Appendix 4A.*

**Fig. 11.1**  
*Sitreps and international information flows*

- Main headings for field sitreps**
1. General situation
  2. National response
  3. Country-level international response
  4. Requirements for international assistance
  5. Channels for delivery of international aid
  6. International pledges and contributions
  7. Other information



### The importance of coordination and information

Coordination is even more important in emergency assistance operations than in development work: lives might be at risk, logistic and other resources are likely to be limited, and decisions are made quickly. There are many possibilities for duplicating effort, wasting resources, and leaving gaps in both geographic and sectoral coverage.

Timely, reliable information is crucial to planning and implementing emergency and post-disaster assistance operations, and to mobilizing national and international resources. The regular dissemination of relevant information is a precondition for effective coordination and co-operation — at national and local levels — between sectors and between Government, operational agencies, and donors.



**Key action points in co-ordination and Information management**

- Maintain frequent, direct contacts with government focal point, operational departments, donors, and NGOs.
- Review within the UN-DMT and discuss with the government focal point whether help from the resident co-ordinator or UN-DMT is required in:
  - Compiling and analyzing information and preparing reports on needs for and use of international assistance
  - Establishing and operating more comprehensive management information systems in support of the responsible government authorities
  - Convening information and co-ordination meetings involving government bodies, donors, NGOs, and the UN organizations and agencies.
- Ensure the convening of regular, broad-based co-ordination meetings (probably weekly); encourage constructive discussion; promote consensus on actions by all concerned; provide secretariat service, if required.
- Specify the information management functions to be fulfilled by the resident co-ordinator and UN-DMT, and the resources (staff, equipment, office space, budget) required.
- Initiate the needed information systems and services using existing staff and facilities; inform UNDRO, the regional bureau, and local donor representatives of requirements to develop and continue.
- Establish an emergency information and co-ordination (EIC) support unit, where needed, as a collaborative UN-DMT effort; encourage all UN-DMT members to second staff, co-operate in mobilizing other needed resources, and use the facilities.
- Disseminate information regularly to all concerned government departments, donors and NGOs; fax copies to UNDRO.
- Encourage all concerned to be consistent in the use of agreed criteria, standards, and terminology, and to harmonize reporting periods to the extent feasible.
- Help direct the attention of NGOs to areas and activities where they can make the greatest contribution (not necessarily in the most affected areas).

*Q. In your position with a UN agency what would you do in the event of the most likely disaster to strike your country in terms of the following:*

*A. Learning of a warning of an imminent disaster? \_\_\_\_\_*

*Would you be on the UN-DMT? \_\_\_\_\_*

*Do you know the UN personnel security plan? What would you do? \_\_\_\_\_*

*What would be your contribution to the field sitrep to UNDRO? \_\_\_\_\_*

*What would be your role in an assessment? Concerning which sectors? \_\_\_\_\_*

