

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Ministry of Water and Environment

Minister Office



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**The National Report on Disaster Risk Reduction to be submitted to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction**  
**(Kobe-Hyogo, Japan, 18-22 January 2005)**

**Introduction;**

The Republic of Yemen is a country that has undergone significant changes from unification in 1990 until today, and these changes are expected to continue and pose a challenge to improving the human development conditions in the country.

The Global Human Development Report (2003) ranked Yemen 148 out of 175 countries, with a human development index (HDI) value of 0.470, placing it among the least developed countries in the world.

In addition, the concentration of more than 70% of the country's population in rural areas, who are financially poor and lack of access to basic services such as, safe drinking water, education facilities and, sanitation.

Government resources are very limited to elicit the needs of geographically distant, vulnerable, and isolated communities programs including the effects of natural hazards and risks, which include flash floods, earthquakes, technological hazards, civil conflict, population growth, urban migration, extreme climate events, desertification, soil erosion, landslide, mudflow, locust invasions, depletion of groundwater aquifers and disease epidemics.

Challenges facing the Government are mentioned above only with the purpose to emphasize the diversity and complexity the nation is currently facing in its continuing efforts to develop and modernize.

In the past two decades, Yemen has experienced different types of disasters that include earthquakes, flash floods, as well as influx of Refugees, civil war and epidemics of communicable diseases. According to the World Disasters Report 2000, within the period 1990-1998, the annual average people affected by disaster were 52,516 while the annual average killed individuals were above 100 units. The report estimated that in 1999 alone, about 19,782 persons were affected by disasters in Yemen. Most of those affected have been the vulnerable segments of the society including women and children.

In addition to that, many unaccountable disasters continuously take place in Yemen. A good example is the elevated number of car accidents every week. The number of casualties rarely goes below 50 deaths a week.

**General Information about Yemen:**

The Republic of Yemen lies in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula between latitude 12°40' and 19° 00' North, and 42° 30' to 53° 05' East longitude. The country covers an area of 555,000 square kms, Rub-Al-Khali area excluded, with about 2000 km of coastline along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Its altitudinal range extends from sea level up to 3760m at label Al- Nabi Shauib, the highest point in the Arabian Peninsula.



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Socotra Island in the Arabian Sea is the largest Yemeni Island (3650 km<sup>2</sup>) and lies some 510 km from the mainland coast. Besides Socotra, more than 112 Yemeni islands are scattered. The many different landscape of Yemen can be grouped into five main geographical regions (modified after Robertson, 1991): 1) The Coastal Plains 2) the Yemen Mountain Massif 3) the Eastern Plateau Region 4) The Desert 5) the islands.

**Climate:** The weather in Yemen changes from area to area according to changing geographic patterns. The summer is moderate in the mountain areas, and hot with high humidity on the costal area and the islands. During the dry season, from October to March, it is moderately cold in the mountains, and moderate in the islands' coastal areas.

**Population:** The population of Yemen is (18.000.000) eighteen millions. According to the census of 1994.

**Language:** Arabic is the official language with English as the second language.

**Time zone:** Greenwich main time (GMT) + three hrs.

**Currency:** The Yemeni Riyal (YR) is the official currency.

#### Methodology of reporting:

- By using the guidance of the reference guide for preparation of National Information, a team from the Ministry of Water and Environment was formed as the following:
  - Eng. Abdulkhalik Alghabri – Director of Environmental Emergency Unit-Ministry of Water and Environment (MoW&E)-Team leader and Reporter.
  - Eng.Senan Al-Sharafi -Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
  - Eng. Abdul Fattah Al-Meqdad- EPA
- The team made lists of questions and required documents to all relevant governmental agencies to be answered and collected according to the guidelines.
- The team collected information from all available sources in the relevant ministries and authorities.
- All collected information and documents have been reviewed and answers were obtained according to the guidelines.

#### Component 1: Political commitments and Institutional Aspects:

1.1-Are there national policy, strategy and legislation addressing disaster risk reduction? If yes, Please describe to what extent current national efforts and main priority areas of the policy, and mechanisms to enforce the implementation of the policy and legislation are applied.

No,



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Currently no clear policy or legislation on a national level has been implemented to address the Disaster Reduction theme as a main area of action.

Nevertheless, after the many flood disasters in the last decades, the latest having taken place in 1996, the issue of strengthening and establishing disaster management policy and entity received greater attention from the Government. In this direction, the Government took many significant steps such as follows:

- Decree No. (24) on Civil Defense law (CD) on April 1997, supportive of effective disaster management. Articles under this decree outline Civil Defense procedures and the Composition of the Supreme Council of Civil Defense (SCCD), the temporary powers of the Civil Defense are also outlined in the Decree.
- In 1998 the Republican Decree No. (7) 1998 was issued regarding the function of Civil Defense Councils in the governorates and districts
- In 1997 the Council of Ministers issued decree No. (52) to form a committee to prepare an approach for Disaster Management.
- The Minister of Planning and Development issued Decree No (123) on 7 October 1997 to form a committee to prepare a proposal to establish an institute for managing natural disasters.
- Decree No (201) in 1997 issued the Civil Defense By law
- The Minister of Water and Environment No (28) issued a decree in the year 2003 to establish an Environmental Emergency Unit to initiate and coordinate the implementation of institutional capacities to face all aspects of Environmental Emergencies and Disasters (see Annex n.1) .
- In addition to the above mentioned decrees, there are a few other laws such as the Environmental Protection law, Water law, Civil Defense law but to implement these laws the Government needs to pay attention in establishing a national policy addressed only to disaster risk reduction.
- The water law no. (33) For Year 2002 allocate Chapters 6 and 7 for water pollution prevention and floods risk reduction.
- The National Water strategy does not give priority to the subject of disaster risk reduction while giving more attention to Drinking Water Shortage and Depletion problems.
- Discussions between the GoY and UNDP on disaster risk reduction resulted in the Disaster Management project. The project's cost, which is of the amount 1.2 m US\$, is shared between the Government of Yemen-Ministry of Interior and UNDP. The project has just become operational..

A national policy in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction can be expected to be delivered in 2-3 years if the financial and technical capacities will be available.

1.2 Is there a national body for multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration in disaster risk reduction, which includes ministries in charge of water resource management, agriculture/land use and planning, health, environment, education, development planning and finance? If yes, please give detailed information (name, structure, and functions). Attach any relevant documentation or indicate source of information:



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Yes .

1. The first national body for Multi-sectoral is the Supreme Council of Civil Defense ), which is established under the leadership of the Minister of Interiors. The temporary powers of the Civil Defense are also outlined in the Decree No. (24) Year (1997).

It should be noted that the GoY has recently signed an agreement with UNDP for a Disaster Management Multi Sectorial program. The first objective of this programme is to establish a disaster management unit in a separate building, which will house Civil Defense authorities as well as representatives of the Ministries. The unit will be operational at 1.July.2004.

**The Civil Defense Council (CDC) consists of the following governmental agencies:**

- Ministry of Interiors, Supreme Council for Civil Defense (SCCD);
- Ministry of Public Health and Population(MHP)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation;
- Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)
- Ministry of Information(MI)
- Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology (MTI).
- Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation(MPIC)
- Ministry of Local Administration (MLA).
- Ministry of Education (ME).
- Ministry of Justice (MJ).
- Ministry of Defenses(MD)
- General Authority for Survey and Land Registration (GASLR);
- Civil Defense Councils (CDC) /Committees at the Governorate level.

The functions of the Civil Defense Council have been obtained from the Civil Defense decree as follows:

- Use all financial and material available resources in the country during wars and natural disasters.
- Manage the Disasters response implementations procedures during the Emergency disasters.
- Monitor and control food, water, and power supply sources during war status and natural disasters.
- Formulate and implement technical and professional groups to deal with disasters at the time of happening
- Indicate all procedures of civil defense
- Review responsibilities and tasks for every member of Civil Defense Council following the current political changes and needs



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- In case of emergencies, the civil defense council is to indicate the procedure, which should be followed by the commercial, educational, industrial, and real estate institutions.
- Assign the annual budgets to implement the plans civil defense departments in the capital and the branches.

2. The Environmental Emergency Unit (EEU) by the Ministry of Water and Environment has been initiated in early 2003 is now operational and is establishing an Environmental Response Team. This proposed body consists of the 25 established focal points from the relevant governmental and NGOs agencies to help, enhance, and put into practice the unit's mandates on environmental emergencies and disasters.

1.3 Are there sectoral plans or initiatives that incorporate risk reduction concepts into each respective development area (such as water resource management, poverty alleviation, climate change adaptation, education, and development planning)? If yes, please indicate some examples and challenges / limitations encountered. If no, does your government have any plans for integrating disaster risk reduction into development sectors? If no, please also specify the major difficulties.

Yes,

- The National Plan of Water Action specifies that the protection of natural resources in any waterfall from pollution to disasters should have a priority of action.
- The National Communication Report of Climate Change Adaptation assigned the vulnerable areas and proposed the necessary mitigations to reduce the risks of sea level rising.

1.4 Is disaster risk reduction incorporated into your national plan for the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), National Adaptation Plans of Action, National Environmental Action Plans and WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) Johannesburg Plan of Implementation? If yes to any of these, who are the main contacts for these initiatives.

Yes,

The National Environmental Action Plan calls all governmental and private sectors to develop environmental contingency plans in their sectors to reduce the risks.

The main contact is the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE).

1.5- Does your country have building codes of practice and standards in place, which takes into account seismic risk? If yes, since when. Which are the main difficulties in keeping with the compliances of the codes?

N/A



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**1.6 Do you have an annual budget for disaster risk reduction? If yes, is this commitment represented as part of the national budget or project based? Through which institutional? If no, what other financing mechanisms for risk reduction initiatives are available?**

Yes ;

This budget aims to respond to the national emergencies disasters only. The Prime minister gave order to all governmental agencies to allocate 1% of their annual budget for emergency situations. This budget will be under the order of the CDC.

In case of significantly important disasters, a high committee is to be formed from the President office and the Civil Defense Council in close cooperation with linked ministries to generate and manage the financing budgets.

**1.7-Are the private sector, civil society, NGOs, academic, and media participating in disaster risk reduction efforts. If yes, how? Indicate existing coordination or joint programming between government and civil society efforts in disaster risk reduction, or major difficulties or constraint for this to be effective.**

Yes ,

- This participation is not regular due to the lack of coordination, instruments, sources, and capacities in the governmental institutes to initiate such program.
- The private sector does not play any relevant role in the promotion of disaster risk reduction activities.
- There is some coordination in the frame of UN Group for Disaster Management in Yemen, Oxfam NGO and Red Crescent organization with the leadership of the WHO representative in Yemen.
- Limited resources, the lack of awareness and high poverty levels in the society are the main difficulties and constraints that the national and civil society organizations are facing to be completely effective.

## Component 2 ; Risk Identification

**2.1 Has your country carried out hazard mapping/assessment? If yes, please describe for which hazards, when they were updated and for what geographical scale they exist. Do they include characteristics, impacts, historical data, multi-hazards approach? Which institutions are using it?**

Yes. Hazard Mapping/Assessment was carried out for:

- Earthquakes and Volcanism:
  - The National Center of Seismic Monitoring has carried out mapping study for seismic and volcanic activities in 1991 in all land area of Yemen, Red Sea, and Gulf of Aden. The maps contain historical



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background, topographical, and geological information, about the earthquake activities happened in the near past.

- Mapping assessment was delivered in 1999 by climate change study which focused in the western part of the country for the vulnerable areas for sea rising.

**2.2 Has your country carried out vulnerability and capacity assessments?** If yes, please describe the methods used and major social, economic, physical, environmental, political and cultural factors considered in the assessment(s). Who are the main contacts for these assessments (or attach any relevant documentation or contact information.)

Yes

- Four assessment studies were carried out by several teams from Sana'a University under supervising of Environment Protection Council (now Environmental Protection Authority) for the expected effects of rising sea levels. These studies resumed many coastal areas of Red Sea and Arabic Sea coastal Area as vulnerable areas (National communication for Climate Change )
- Many relevant studies revealed that the western highlands part of Yemen is vulnerable to several types of disasters such as landslides, floods, soil erosion and earthquake.
- An initiative was promoted by EEU for the Ministry of Water & Environment to carry out an assessment survey for Environmental Emergencies in the country. This project aims to construct a database and publish the first statement report on EE in Yemen. (Summary of relevant activity is attached-Annex 2).

The main contact is the MWE

**2.3 Does your country have any mechanisms for risk monitoring and risk mapping?** If yes, who is responsible?

N/A

**2.4 Is there a systematic socio-economic and environmental impact and loss analysis in your country after each major disaster?** If yes, are the results available?

Yes.

In a few cases for social ,environmental and economical aspects only, the results are available at the civil defense department, MAI, MWE, and MOME.



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2.5 Are there early warning systems in place? If yes, for what hazards and for what geographical scope. Do you have any example when the system was activated lately? Which are the main institutions involved? Please indicate any relevant lessons-learned from the use and public reaction to early warnings issued.

Yes.

The Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation in coordination with National Water Resources Authority, in association with the MoWE, is the main governmental body for the monitoring and managing of early warning system for floods. Unfortunately, this system is only potentially active in limited areas of the western highlands of the country.

In most cases these early warning systems, originally established by projects funded by international organizations came to an halt as soon as the projects came to an end. The main reason of this halt is that there is no clear national mechanism to regulate and control these issues.

### Component 3 Knowledge Management

3.1 Does your country have disaster risk information management systems (governmental and/or non-governmental)? If yes, what kind of information on disaster reduction is available, how is it collected, how is the information disseminated and who are the main users? (Indicate relevant sources of information, if applicable).

Yes, even though only in partial cases.

There are information departments in many of the relevant Ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Oil and Mineral Resources – Geological Surveys and Minerals Explorations Authority has an information department that contains seismic and volcanic active cores, information and maps. Vulnerable floods areas, groundwater depletion, water basins, water shortage areas, and survey information are the main kinds of information available.

This information was obtained through academic studies, field assessments studies, minerals surveys and mapping projects for water resources projects.

3.2 Are the academic and research communities in the country linked to national or local institutions dealing with disaster reduction. If yes, please describe the mechanisms for information sharing and indicate any example of usefulness and effectiveness. Which are the main research and academic institutions dealing with disaster reduction related issues (please list, if available, and indicate how their research work is related to the country's disaster risk reduction needs.)

Yes.

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In some cases, a few governmental organizations invite the academic community to attend to workshops or seminars. Nevertheless, there is no established mechanism for sharing information.

The Water and Environment Research Center and Faculty of Science in Sana'a University are ones of the main academic and research institutions to have given a contribution on this theme.

Moreover, under the supervision of the Environment Protection Council (now the Environment Protection Authority) a team from Sana'a University has conducted a study on rising of the sea level individuating the vulnerable areas on the Red Sea shore.

**3.3 Are there educational programs related to disaster risk reduction in your public school system? If yes, for what age-range? Do you have any educational material developed to support the teachers in this area? (please attach any relevant documentation)**

NO.

**3.4 Are there any training programs available? If yes, please list (if available indicate scope and target audiences of the courses). Do you have any indication on how these courses have been useful to change any practices at local or national scale?**

Yes.

Within the newly established Disaster Management Unit a training workshop on Disaster Management elements and contingency planning has already been implemented. More training on specialized themes will be carried out by the unit in collaboration with other UN agencies.

**3.5-What kind of traditional indigenous knowledge and wisdom is used in disaster-related practices or training programs on disaster risk reduction in your country?**

Increased poverty leads to more vulnerability to disasters.

The traditional practice of preserving trees in certain areas was widespread until the increase of poverty led to an indiscriminately use of the land, such as cutting wide forests, the disappearance of terraced cultivations.

The use of natural methods of healing is also common practice during disaster emergencies in rural areas.

**3.6 Do you have any national public awareness programmes or campaigns on disaster risk reduction? If available, who are the main players for raising public awareness? How are the mass media and schools involved? Who are the targeted groups and how do you evaluate the programmes?**

Yes, in partial areas only.

Many Institutes play a limited role in raising public awareness in areas of Disaster risk reduction for example to these agencies:



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General Departments of Civil Defense usually take care of carrying out fire safety awareness campaigns.

The Ministry of Health conducts regular awareness campaigns for reducing epidemics.

The Ministry of Water and Environment, in the field of water disasters.

Ministry of Information, as a tool.

There is no awareness program in the schools regarding this topic.

#### Component 4 Risk Management Applications/Instruments

4.1 Is there any good examples of linking environmental management and risk reduction practices in your country? (Key areas of environmental management may include coastal zone, wetland and watershed management, reforestation and agricultural practices, amongst others). If yes, please indicate in what areas. (Attach any relevant documentation ore references)

Yes.

There are two existing officially protected areas while ten more areas are being availed to become natural parks. Three of these are coastal areas while the rest are inland.

The most relevant protected area in Yemen is the island of Socotra, which was announced by UNESCO as International Natural Heritage Area and since 2000, the island is protected by the presidential decree. A good example of environmental management and risk reduction is the approval of the zoning plan devised to protect the endemic flora and fauna of Socotra. UNDP has been involved in the preservation of the island and the sustainable development of its inhabitants through the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme.

4.2 Are financial instruments utilized in your country as a measure to reduce the impact of disasters? (E.g. insurance/reinsurance, calamity funds, catastrophe bonds, micro-credit finance, community funds, etc.)? If yes, please describe what these instruments are and when they were established, who manages them and who are eligible to them.

No.

4.3 Please identify specific examples of technical measures or programmes on disaster risk reduction that have been carried out in your country (see below, case studies).

Taiz and parts of the area laying between the highlands and the plane of Tihama used to experience flash floods. To prevent this some projects have been implemented: a drainage and a converting dam system in Taiz, and converting dam and canals systems in Tihama.



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## Component 5; Preparedness and Contingency Planning

5.1 Do you have disaster contingency plans in place? Are they prepared for both national and community levels? If yes, please describe their main components, who is responsible for activating the plan(s)? Are the plan(s) updated on annual basis? Have you ever used the contingency plan(s) that was or were developed? If yes, what was the result?

No. but;

- There is an initiative National Disaster Management Plan by UNDP through the Disaster Management Unit at the Ministry of the Interiors implement a Contingency Plan in collaboration with the Civil Defense Council.
- A primary proposal of a national plan was developed by Civil Defense.

The main components of this proposal are:

- The classification of disasters.
- The policies and implementations in the following stages:
  - Pre-disaster stage -preparedness implantations.
  - Disaster or contingency stage - Response to the disaster procedures.
  - After disaster stage -Recovery of the disaster of Contingency statement.
- The mandates of CDC members during three mentioned stages.

The CDC is the responsible for activating plan.

The plan needs to be reviewed and approved.

The country has not used contingency plan.

5.2- Has your government established emergency funds for disaster response and are there national or community storage facilities for emergency relief items -mainly food, medicine, tents/shelters? If yes, please provide some details.

There is no emergency fund for disaster response in the country.

At the present there is no national facility for emergency relief.

5.3- Who is responsible for the coordination of disaster response preparedness and is the coordination body equipped with enough human and financial resources for the job? Please comment on the effectiveness of the coordination work done so far?

The Civil Defense Council (CDC) is responsible body in the country for coordination in disaster response preparedness



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This body does not have sufficient human and financial resources. There is a lack of basic tools for communications and warning systems. The new efforts proposed in the project of Disaster Management, funded by UNDP, is starting to meet the minimum requirements for coordination.

The coordination now is active with the help and support of UNDP, but the financial resources are very limited to achieve an effective coordination program in the area of response preparedness.

#### Component 6: Call for good practices in disaster risk management

Nowadays, environmental protection practices should rely more on the traditional habits of the past generations. Our past generation witnessed very few flash floods in the mountainous areas of Yemen. On the contrary, the new generations have been experiencing both floods and droughts at the same time, together with environmental degradation, desertification, soil erosion, and landslides.

#### Component 7: Priorities you want addressed at World Conference on Disaster Reduction The main topics to be addressed in the conference are:

- The poor people are the most affected by disasters so giving priority to strengthening the policies and building capacities of the poorest countries will fulfill the maximum benefits of the investments. To make sure that donor governments implement disaster management and disaster risk reduction in order to be integrated into all development projects financed in the developing world.
- Enhance technical measures, tools and equipments so to reduce disaster risks.
- Support 3<sup>rd</sup> World countries to enhance and strengthen there national policy and practices to reduce risk
- More assessment studies are needed to identify vulnerability to natural and technological hazards.
- A more practical approach needs to be implemented in order to reduce the gap between the theoretical policies of the risk reduction and field practices. Moreover, women should play a greater role in disaster risk reduction awareness programmes.
- Improving the level of welfare and infrastructure and identify clear safety standards are very important tool to reduce disasters risks.

Reported by: Abdulkalik Al-Ghazeri

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### Annex 1:

#### **The Mandates of Environmental Emergencies Unit:**

- Participate and coordinate with stakeholders for preparing the national disasters strategy.
- Identify the locations and activities that may come or contribute to mitigation of natural environmental disaster.
- Develop and ratify safety standards and guidelines for industrial, agricultural, constructional and other activities that have hazardous effects on the environment.
- Coordinate with other environmental and natural resources agencies to develop databases of hazardous substances and activities.
- Work with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to build capacity for dealing with environmental emergencies, and facing hazardous accidents and disasters.
- Support and coordinate for establishment environmental monitoring networks and assess their performance.
- Propose and apply appropriate mechanisms for assessment of environmental emergencies and mitigation their impact.
- Develop national, programs to face and deal with environmental emergencies and disasters.
- Participate and develop raising regional and international cooperation for public awareness regarding to natural or man-caused environmental disasters.
- All other tasks relevance to the unit goals or empowered to the unit by the minister.



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## Annex 2

### Summary of Proposed Environmental Emergency (EE) Survey Project.

#### Introduction:

The survey will be conducted under supervision of his Excellency Dr. Mohammed Lotf Al-Eriany the minister of Water and Environment. It can be the premise for right action to establish suitable mechanisms and plans for Environmental Emergencies reduction.

#### The Goal :

To establish a suitable National environmental Emergency Mechanism.

#### General Objectives:

- To establish Environmental Emergency database to be used in the developing of environmental emergencies response mechanisms and plans..
- To promote national partnership program between all governmental and non-governmental organizations through involving there delegates in the activities of Environmental Emergency Unit and making official arrangements.

#### Expected Outputs:

- Define the current situation of the Environmental Emergency Response systems in Yemen.
- Define the needs, requirements and weakness points .
- Develop projects proposal to enhance and develop National Environmental Emergency Mechanisms and sup-plans

#### The Main information Areas should be covered by this Survey.

1. Regulations and legal system on the EE.
2. The level of EE awareness.
3. All records information about the past Environmental Emergencies and Disasters.
4. The planning, preparedness ability and equipments of the related agencies.
5. Available human and financial resources of the related agencies regarding to EE..
6. The current and future needs.
7. The level of organizations acceptability to be involved in partnership programs regarding to EE.
8. The International Cooperation offices in Yemen and projects abilities to support such activities to enhance Environmental Emergencies response systems.



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**The Sources of information:**

- Ministries and their branches in the governorates.
- Universities and Research centers.
- Local councils.
- Economic sector ( public and privet)
- Field sampling and Assessments..
- Internet.

**Main Activities :**

- Establish focal points in the relative agencies.
- Conduct the first meeting for focal points to discuss and approved the survey and future plans.
- Conduct training course for the survey participants.
- Conduct the Environmental Emergency Survey.
- Compile documentation operation for collected the information.
- Analyze and report the collected information.
- Make the National statement report for Environmental Emergencies.
- Make several projects proposals on depends of the requirement will reveal from the survey results.
- Conduct the first national seminar on Environmental Emergencies to Discuss and approve the National Environmental Emergency Statement Report(the donors will be invited ).

Note. Environmental Emergency Unit welcomes any national or international organization which will be willing to share work or help in support such effort on environmental emergency preparedness, prevention, and/ or response and recovery.

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