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What Now? Looking to the Future of Environment Impact Assessment and Humanitarian Response
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Introduction
From the late-1980s there has been a steady increase of attention to the role environmental issues play in humanitarian assistance.[2] Recognizing the maturing state of efforts to incorporate the environment into humanitarian operations, the **Coordination of Assessments for Environment in Humanitarian Action: A Joint Initiative**, sought "to improve lives and livelihoods by supporting humanitarian action through coordination with environmental actors both before and after disasters"[3].

The **Joint Initiative** focused on four deliverables:
1. Updating the **Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters** (**REA**) (Kelly 2017, Hauer and Kelly, 2019).
2. Developing **NEAT+ - Nexus Environmental Impact Assessment Tool** – an operations-level tool to identify environmental issues.
3. Remote Environmental Data Analysis, to support addressing humanitarian assistance issues in the absence of a field presence.
4. EHA Connect, to serve as an "online toolkit or searchable resource for both environmental actors working with the humanitarian system" (http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/ResultsResources.html).

The organizations involved in the **Joint Initiative** are listed here:
http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/index.html.

With the **Joint Initiative** deliverables finished, this paper looks to where the environment-humanitarian assistance collaboration should now focus attention. The collaboration is at a state where there is a general acceptance that the environment is a factor to be considered in humanitarian response. However, as summarized below, decades of work have not yet led to a systematic and predictable integration of the environment into humanitarian response. A short case study on Cyclone Idai provides an example of current challenges.

A Short Background to the Incorporation of the Environment into Humanitarian Assistance[4]
The **Joint Initiative** rested on efforts to incorporate the environment into humanitarian operations which began in the late 1980s.[5] An early focus was on the environmental impact of refugees in Africa. From the academic side, Black (1989) considered whether refugees caused environmental damaged and found that this was not always or clearly the case. At the same time, UNHCR initiated a range of efforts to assess and address the impact of refugees, with a focus on Africa (see UNHCR, no date, 2002a-d, 2001, 1998a-d, 1997a-b).

Concurrently, interest developed in a quick way, when compared to normal environmental impact assessment procedures, to identify emergent environmental issues during a humanitarian response. This led to UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, the US Agency of International Development (USAID), the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CARE

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[2] Humanitarian assistance is the aid provided to a country after a disaster as opposed to domestic disaster assistance. In general, humanitarian assistance is provided when a receiving country is considered to not be capable of adequately managing a disaster due a lack of resources, lack of intent or both.
[3] See http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/index.html.
[4] Due to space, this paper does not discuss a parallel effort to improve the environmental management of technological disasters.
[5] This is not a comprehensive review and only notes several key efforts and documents.

International and the (then) Benfield Hazard Research Center, University College London, to collaborate on the **Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters** process (Kelly, 2017).

The response to the 2004 South Asia Tsunami included multiple assessments of environmental impacts of the affected countries. The response also led to the development of the **Green Recovery and Reconstruction Training Toolkit**, a partnership of the American Red Cross and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the **Checklist-Based Guide to Identifying Critical Environmental Considerations in Emergency Shelter Site Selection, Construction, Management and Decommissioning** (Kelly, 2005) and the **Ecosystems, Livelihoods and Disasters: An Integrated Approach to Disaster Risk Management** (Sudmeier-Rieux, et al, 2006), among other documents.

The launch of the *Cluster Approach* following the 2004 South Asia Tsunami response, identified the environment as a cross-cutting issue, that is an issue to be addressed within the work of each of the 11 clusters.[6] Funding for development of the *Cluster Approach* led to a range of environment-focused guidance notes, tools, trainings and capacity support, particularly for the Shelter and WASH Clusters (See ProAct Network for many of these and other documents on the environment and humanitarian response.)

A related effort led to the development of QSAND - **Quantifying Sustainability in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters**, focusing on sustainably rebuilding housing after disasters. The Joint Environment Unit coordinated the development of the **Fast Environment Assessment Tool** (UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit, 2017) and **Disaster Waste Management Guidelines** (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Emergency Preparedness Section, 2013).

A review of four web sites, ProAct Network, Environment and Disaster Management, EHA Connect and the Joint Environment Unit Environmental Emergencies Center uncovers a cornucopia of assessments, reports, procedures and other documents developed to date on the environment and humanitarian assistance. There is also a considerable gray literature, often developed in support of humanitarian operations, such as the **Shelter and Environment – An Overview Typhoon Yolanda Response, Philippines** (Shelter Cluster Philippines, 2014) or **Cyclone Winston – Fiji - Environmental Issues** (WWF, 2016).

In parallel, there was increased attention to post conflict peacebuilding and the environment. This led to a six volume series of papers on peace and natural resources[7], creation of an Environment and Peacebuilding Community of Practice web site and the Environmental Peacebuilding Association.

The Present
The current environment-and-humanitarian landscape is broad. EHA Connect, Environment and Disaster Management, ProAct Network and other web sites provide extensive and detailed resources on integrating environment into humanitarian response. The Global Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice (ECoP) brings together shelter specialists with an interest in the environment, includes a HelpDesk to supported field shelter operations and advocates for more pro-environment shelter operations.

The Global Logistics Cluster has begun to focus on the environmental impact logistics operations. Their current focus is to reduce the volume of packaging shipped, and return

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[6] In late 2018, UNDP indicated they would no longer lead an Early Recovery Cluster although it is unclear if this change has become official.
[7] Options to search topics or chapters can are available at this web page: https://environmentalpeacebuilding.org/publications/books/.

packaging for proper disposal where this is not possible at the site of humanitarian operations (see https://logcluster.org/blog/treading-lightly).

The Swedish Civil Defense Agency (MSB) has a roster of environmental experts to support humanitarian operations through agreements with international organizations (IOs). Similar support is available from Swiss Development Cooperation and other organizations. This support has been particularly useful to UNHCR in addressing the environmental impact of refugee camps.

Humanitarian organizations have begun to incorporate the environment into their humanitarian response policy and practice. Examples include the International Red Cross and Red Crescent's (IFRC) **Green Response** (https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/green-response/), and efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to reduce the environmental footprint in field operations (Oppliger and Bellevaux, 2017).

A revised **Sphere Standards** was issued in late 2018 (Sphere Association, 2018). Standard 7 under the Shelter and Settlements section focuses on environmental sustainability (op cit.:270). An implication is that working to create sustainable post crisis settlements will also require that the provision of water, waste management, livelihoods and other aspects of the sheltering process also be sustainable.

The following short case study on the response to Cyclone Idai provides an example of an active effort to incorporate environment into humanitarian assistance and the challenges faced.

Cyclone Idai – A Case Study of Opportunities
Cyclone Idai struck near Beira, Mozambique on 14 March 2019, eventually heading west to Zimbabwe. The storm resulted in over 600 deaths in Mozambique and damage to the urban area of Beira as well parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi.[8]

Initially, a desk-research-based **Cyclone Idai Environmental Guidance Note** was issued through the WWF Environment and Disaster Management (EDM) HelpDesk. This was followed by a reach-out to Shelter Cluster ECoP members and the Shelter Cluster in Mozambique on environment-focused support requirements. At the same time, the Joint Environment Unit began a remote monitoring process. Two dam experts were requested, on a rotational basis, as part of the two waves of UNDAC support in Mozambique to advise national and regional river basin authorities on dam-related flood risk management issues. At a later stage, UNDP and IFRC mobilized disaster waste management experts through MSB.

Steps were taken to identify which organizations or individuals could be used to collect information on the impact of Idai and provide entry points to providing support. A voluntary part time environmental focal point in Maputo was identified to work with the WWF EDM Help Desk and WWF offices in Mozambique and Zimbabwe on the cyclone response. Networking led to links with NGOs, field cluster coordinators, IOs and MSB experts, basically sharing information on who were doing what where. This networking is important as many of the immediate humanitarian activities were cross-sector, such as providing temporary shelter sites, clearing debris or providing water and sanitation.

Reviewing the overall disaster context led to the conclusion that the response to the cyclone in Mozambique would be protracted. As a result, attention expanded to ensuring that environmental issues were included as part of the **Post Disaster Needs Assessment** and, more broadly, integrated into recovery planning.

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[8] Details available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/mozambique.

Three major challenges noted from the Idai response:

- A lack of resources to engage in full time on-the-ground coordination, technical support and planning on environmental issues. This on-the-ground is presence important as it allows for the direct engagement in real time operational decision making where environmental issues may be overlooked.
- A weak engagement by the Ministry of Environment in the response, leaving a gap in the Government engagement on the environment-response linkages.
- Limited preparedness on the part of environmental NGOs to engage with the humanitarian sector on environment-focused activities.

Moving Forward

The integration of environment into humanitarian assistance has reached maturity of sorts. The EHA Connect effort provides a base for continued exchange of information and access to resources. The WWF Environment and Disaster Management program provides a more operational support to humanitarian operations, linked to the Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice. The MSB and other rosters provide a mechanism to rapidly deploy environmental experts to support humanitarian operations.

Significantly, individual NGOs and international organizations are increasingly pro-active in engaging with humanitarian assistance-linked environmental issues. Clearly, more humanitarian practitioners with an interest in environmental issues are on the ground and integrating the environment into their field activities compared to even five years ago.

Yet, this picture of progress is missing a few pieces. First, while **Sphere** (Sphere Association, 2018) and other pro-environment policy and guidance exist, the environment is still not systematically incorporated into the humanitarian response. Experts may be sent to consider single environmental issues (e.g., water pollution), but environment as a whole is not present in assessments of impact, and rarely in funding requests following a humanitarian crisis.

Environment-focused technical advisors are needed following a disaster. But the environment should be truly treated as a cross-cutting theme with a cross-sector orientation. Tools exist for this purpose, but they need to be used in a systematic and predictable way.

Second, the environmental-humanitarian sector divide needs to be bridged. Ministries or agencies responsible for the environmental, and environmental NGOs, are not usually part of humanitarian planning. This is a significant problem. Most initial, and almost all the long term, humanitarian crisis issues involve the environment, including debris management, relocation, resettlement, water supplies, waste and sewage disposal, food security, livelihoods, harvesting natural resources for rebuilding and all infrastructure-related activities.

The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction** calls for DRR to be integrated into development. A similar integration of the environment into the humanitarian assistance efforts, and the inclusion of environmental actors into this process, is needed. Unless environmental ministries, agencies and NGOs are part of humanitarian planning, responses will fall short due to a failure to address the full impact of the crisis.

Third, resources are needed to address the first two points. A humanitarian crisis the size of Idai should not need to rely on volunteers to coordinate operational engagement on environmental issues. Funding for environment-focused coordination, and to support the integration of environment into response, should be a standard part of all humanitarian response budgeting.

Finally, environmental rule of law should be actively pursued in humanitarian planning and response. Most donors and, increasingly, humanitarian organizations, have pro-environmental policies which impact humanitarian operations. All donors have impact assessment procedures.

Any humanitarian organization seeking to comply to the **Sphere Standards** and Shelter and Settlement Standard 7 (Sphere Association, 2018) needs to assess and address environmental issues. More importantly, national environmental laws, regulations and procedures need to be followed in a humanitarian response to ensure that the rights of the survivors are upheld and the causes and impacts of a humanitarian crisis minimized at the time of the crisis, and in the future.

The last decades have seen considerable progress on policy, tools, assessments, trainings and web-based resources linking the environment to humanitarian response. Moving forward means putting the wealth of existing capacity to work in a systematic and predictable way by improving coordination, bridging the gap between environment and humanitarian actors, and following the rule of law. Given the efforts to date, this should not be a major task.

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