

Your Assessment of My Needs: Contrasting Crisis and Normal Impact Assessment

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Introduction

Differences between normal and disaster impact assessments.

- The disaster assessment challenge: Quickly identify, define and quantify the economic, social and human impacts so that rescue, relief and rehabilitation assistance can avoid further damage.
- Disaster assessment contrasts sharply with the slower pace of a normal impact assessment.

Links

- Normal assessments provide a baseline for disaster impact assessments.
- Normal impact assessments can identify potential impacts so that:
 - They can be avoided or,
 - Incorporated into disaster assessments.
- Disaster assessment results need to integrate into normal impact assessments during recovery planning and activities.

The Nature of Disaster

- We know disasters will occur, but not always when.
- The social context defines the occurrence and impact of a disaster.
- A disaster is an event which exceeds a community's immediate ability to cope and for which outside assistance is needed for a speedy return to normal conditions.
- Effective response needs accurate information and analysis on impact.

Environmental Impact Assessment Best Practice

- Rigorous
- Practical
- Relevant
- Cost-effective
- Efficient
- Focused
- Adaptive
- Participative
- Interdisciplinary
- Credible
- Integrated
- Transparent
- Systematic

From: Principles of Environmental
Impact Assessment Best Practice,
see www.iaia.org.

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Sphere Indicators

- Information collection and analysis is standardized and transparent.
- "Where feasible, data are disaggregated by sex and age."
- Numbers are cross-checked and validated.
- The technical (water and sanitation, nutrition, food, shelter, health), physical, social, economic, physical and security environment, vulnerability of affected populations, and underlying context of the disaster are considered.
- An assessment considers the dynamics of conflict-affected environments.
- "Local capacities and strategies to cope ... are identified."
- Special arrangements should be made for groups which cannot speak openly.
- Host (not-disaster-affected) populations should be consulted as part of the assessment process.
- The operating environment (personal safety, security of the affected population) is considered in the assessment.
- An assessment "takes into account the responsibilities of ... authorities to protect and assist the population ... and ... national law, standards and guidelines applicable where the affected population is found, when they conform to international law."
- Results are made available to the affected population, authorities and other parties involved in the disaster response.
- Assessment recommendations for external assistance are linked to an exit or transition strategy.
- Assessment teams should be gender-balanced, have clear terms of reference and seek to involve the affected population in a culturally acceptable manner.

Source: [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Disaster Response](#)

Contextual Difference

Normal and Disaster Assessments

Adapted from information provided by UNHRC and CARE International

Normal

- Deliberate & pro-active
- Will be thorough & extensive: comprehensive data collection
- "No project" option is a possible outcome
- Completed in months to years
- Project launch planned
- Location chosen
- Duration planned
- Beneficiary population identifiable & static
- Environmental goals may be made compatible with socio-economic ones

Disaster

- Reactive
- May need to be partial in coverage; based on available data
- "No project" outcome is not an option
- Completed in hours to weeks
- Sudden onset
- Unpredictable location
- Uncertain duration
- Beneficiary population heterogeneous & dynamic
- Priority given to life saving activities sometime difficult to reconcile with environmental goals

Needs and Impacts

- Disaster Impact Assessments focus on needs: water, shelter, food, security.
- Normal assessments focus on impacts.
- Post-disaster assessments focus on impacts more than needs.

The Assessment Process

- Rapid collection and analysis of available information to identify the impact of the disaster and the basic needs required for survival.
- Initial assessment leading to more complete and complex assessments as the disaster progresses.
- Eventually merges into post disaster and normal assessments.

A Simple and Complex Process

- Simple, because process and objectives are clear: provide needed analysis to reduce the impact of the disaster as soon as possible.
- Complex, because:
 - Logistics and challenge of getting data and processing information.
 - Most assessments are sector-focused and don't lead to comprehensive (disaster-wide) results.

Options for Comprehensive Assessments

- Livelihoods Approach: Looks at full range of issues surrounding a disaster, but can be challenging to complete in a disaster.

See Livelihoods, Chronic Conflict and Humanitarian Response: A Synthesis of Current Practice, http://www.odh.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp182.pdf & Sustainable Livelihood and Vulnerability to Disasters, http://www.benfieldhrc.org/SiteRoot/disaster_studies/working_papers/workingpaper2.pdf

- Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters, which provides a comprehensive approach, but does not address sector specific issues in detail.

See Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters, http://www.benfieldhrc.org/SiteRoot/disaster_studies/rea/rea_index.htm

Conclusions

- Those who conduct assessments in normal conditions need to understand how assessments in disasters are done so they can formulate their assessments in ways which support disaster assessments.
- Need to identify ways to bridge the gap between the two assessment approaches.

Conclusions - Cont.

- Normal assessments can consider potential disaster impacts in the assessment process.
- Disaster assessments need to collect and present data and analysis so they can be used in normal impact assessments.
- Disaster assessment efforts need to move towards a comprehensive process and outcome.
- Other assessment procedures need to be developed to fill the operational gap between disaster and normal assessments.

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