

Research Report

ECOSOC

Funding guidelines for post natural disaster areas



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Forum	ECOSOC
Issue:	Funding guidelines for post natural disaster areas
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Introduction

The hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the Indonesian Tsunami events, the earthquake in Haiti, the floods in Pakistan, the 8.9-magnitude earthquake in Japan causing a devastating tsunami as well as a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima plants and the droughts causing starvation in Somalia. These are all examples of the most devastating natural disasters in the last few years. After the impact of such a disaster, it is of the greatest importance that the response in the affected country is handled well, in order to reduce the chaos caused by the disaster. Natural disasters like these greatly affect the economy and the lives of the surviving in the months and even years following the disaster itself.

Even though a lot is being done to prevent natural disasters from happening, we are not able to fight nature. Destruction by natural disasters can be lessened by warnings, evacuation plans and dikes, but cannot be entirely prevented. The force of nature is too strong for our technologies to stop. This means that in case of a natural disaster great devastation is very probable. This issue concerns the funding of guidelines for post-natural disaster areas. It has been proven very important to take effective and efficient action after a natural disaster has stricken a country. The key word is preparedness. If not effective preparedness against the natural disaster itself, the planning of crisis prevention and disaster recovery. This planning has to be done both nationally as well as regionally. Good guidelines for recovery are needed to cause as little stress as possible on the economy and the lives of the surviving after a natural disaster.

Definition of Key Terms

NGO

A Non Governmental Organisation is an organisation that operates internationally and is not under the supervision of a government. It is therefore an independent organisation. Many NGOs are linked to the United Nations.

LEDC

Less Economically Developed Country (This is the official term used by the UN to address the comparatively poorer or 'Third World' countries).

MEDC

More Economically Developed Country (This is the official term used by the UN to address the comparatively richer countries. (Mostly Western countries, but also countries as Japan and South Korea.))



General Overview

Important questions to consider when funding guidelines

The experiences of every natural disaster in the past years provide for a lot of information. The analysing of this information can help to set and improve existing guidelines on response and recovery and the resources needed for the recovery.

What should be kept in mind when funding good guidelines is:

- What kind of devastation is caused? What is the impact on people's lives, infrastructure and economy?
- What are the priorities in the aftermath of a natural disaster?
- What resources are needed to handle the chaos and devastation caused by a natural disaster?
- How will these kind of resources be provided to states that lack them?
- How will the collaboration between different agencies be coordinated?
- What are the agencies responsible for the response to the natural disaster?

Issues that need responding after a natural disaster

Examples of the chaos caused by natural disasters

Japan: The consequences of the earthquake and the tsunami following it in March this year, were shortages of supplies as for example food and gasoline. Aside from shops and important buildings being flooded or destroyed, the infrastructure suffered great destruction, meaning that people could not transport or buy supplies. Only after months were the supplies back in stock. A week after the earthquake people began fleeing Fukushima and tried to find refuge in the surrounding areas. The shelters that were set up were immediately crammed full. Half a year after the disaster, tens of thousands of people still live in these shelters. They cannot return home, often because their homes were destroyed by the disaster.

Haiti: Not only was Haiti hit by an earthquake; in the aftermath a cholera epidemic broke out in the shelters.

Pakistan: Affected people in need of help after the floods were reached far too late, mostly because of the lack of infrastructure in the country.

Somalia: affected cannot be reached, because of the affected areas being too dangerous to enter.

Especially since the flood in New Orleans in the USA, caused by hurricane Katrina, systems of disaster relief have been criticised and tried to be improved. The improving and extending of disaster relief assistance has been on the UN agenda for some time. Often help comes too late and emergency response systems are not tested sufficiently. When needed and implemented they prove not to work efficiently and effectively enough. The delayed relief assistance and lack of effective response to disasters as for example the hurricane Katrina, are caused by mismanagement and lack of preparation to emergency situations. Evacuation plans and other response systems are not sufficient when it comes to a real emergency and when governments have to deal with the panic that such an emergency causes.

Concrete issues to be solved

-lack of supplies: Lack of primary goods could lead to unnecessary casualties caused by starvation and sickness due to tainted water.

-displacement: Survivors often lose their homes and end up crammed in improvised shelters or government buildings where the environment is not safe or healthy (diseases spread easily). Sometimes the displaced have to live in these shelters packed with people for more



than a year, having no place to return home to. In the case of a severe earthquake it can be very hard to find safe and adequate buildings to provide shelter.

-rescuing of trapped people: Persons who did not or were unable to evacuate and are trapped in debris and flooded -or in another way dangerous- areas should be rescued.

-injury: Doctors, medical equipment and medication should be provided for the wounded and sickened. Hospitals in both MEDCs and LEDCs do not always know how to respond to an outbreak or natural disaster and how to handle the enormous amount of patients that come to them in such a situation. In a lot of countries, programs are not designed rightly to be able to effectively deal with the panic that is caused by the emergency. And especially in LEDCs the hospitals are not build to receive such a big amount of patients and are not equipped with enough technologies and resources to deal with the patients.

-losing of income: Survivors can permanently lose their way of making a living. Those who were living in poverty before the disaster will find themselves in a worse situation after the disaster. Many will after having lived in economic stability enter a life in poverty.

-permanent loss of businesses: When a country is hit by a natural disaster, many businesses can be greatly harmed. Companies can suffer the loss of personnel, data and work-space after a disaster. In the worst case they may not be able to recover from the blow and will be lost to the economy of the country. The loss of or the damage to big companies can be quite harmful to a country's economy.

-determining number of casualties: One of the first crises to be dealt with is the determining of the number of casualties; the trying to find missing persons (the dead and the living) and the dealing with the dead and the injured.

-Infrastructure and methods of transport of supplies: Insufficient infrastructure in LEDCs forms a big obstacle to emergency responses. Especially people in rural areas are too often not reached by the response. An example of a natural disaster that caused an unnecessary high number of casualties do to aid-workers not being able to reach the affected is Pakistan. Help to the people affected by the floods came far too late.

-Security: A very important problem to be dealt with is the problem of security. A natural disaster causes a lot of stress and chaos to the affected. In chaotic and fearful situations as these, lawlessness is probable to be one of the consequences. Even a state's army may not be able to cope with the consequences of a natural disaster.

-Loss of Social Cohesion: People are separated from their friends and family and thus from their support. Also there may be no government institutions left unharmed where an affected person can turn to in need of help. It can take years before a country's social system is back to normal. Inhabitants will not be able to get the usual support and care from their government during this time, which will cause a lot of distress.

- Psychological harm: Many people may have lost loved ones because of the natural disaster. Also they may have injuries that will change their way of living for ever or they may have family or friends with life-long injuries. Adding to that, their homes, their jobs and their possessions may be lost. People may be seriously traumatised by the consequences of a natural disaster.

Time-line of Key Events

- **1991** – From this year on, the General Assembly of the United Nations has considered the question of Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. Since 1991 there has been a resolution on this issue yearly. (link to resolutions in the appendices-section)
- **2000** – The GOARN was set up.
- **2005** – The late and inefficient response to Hurricane Katrina that struck New Orleans raised global awareness on the importance of improving of emergency-response systems.



Major Parties Involved

Main Organisations Involved

GAR (Global Alert and Response system)

The Global Alert and Response (GAR) system is a system set up by the WHO (World Health Organisation) for the publication of and response to public health emergencies, including the consequences of natural disasters. The WHO works in collaboration with a network of institutions that are concerned with the identification, confirmation and response to public health emergencies following the operational concepts of the International Health Regulations of 2005. Through this network of involved institutions the WHO is provided with information on health emergencies. If for example a natural disaster is confirmed to be a threat to the health of the international community, the Global Alert and Response system issues a health-warning and provides information on how to respond to the warning. The WHO's Global Alert and Response Mechanisms should be ready to respond to the warning in an effective way to provide help to the people threatened by the health emergency. People should be informed in an efficient way, so that their response is as effective as possible.

To keep the amount of victims due to the consequences of natural disasters as low as possible, it is very important that the issued warnings of the WHO reach not only governments, NGOs and international organisations, but also the threatened people. The people should be provided with enough information on how to respond to warnings to cause the least possible panic.

One way of informing the people is through the site of the Global Alert and Response system on the website of the WHO. The idea behind the website is to make sure that the public remains well informed, to keep the disruption of the public services as low as possible. The website offers updates on how to respond to the consequences of a natural disaster. Of course, this website is often not accessible to people in developing countries or people suffering from a natural disaster.

From experience we know that the GAR system is not always effective and efficient enough. Help often comes to late. This is mostly because people were not prepared; because they had not been warned; or because they did not know how to respond to the warning. In the MEDCs this is not as big a problem as in LEDCs, because people normally can be sufficiently informed through the media and help can easily reach the affected. However in LEDCs this is not always the case. Though LEDCs form the biggest problem, it should not be forgotten that emergency response systems also fail to be effective enough in MEDCs, mostly because planned programs are not adapted to the panic the consequences of a natural disaster cause. The consequences of the disaster often causes deaths that could have been prevented or an unnecessary amount of refugees living under inhuman circumstances.

OCHA

“The Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is the arm of the UN Secretariat that is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also ensures there is a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort. OCHA's mission is to mobilise and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies; advocate for the rights of people in need; promote preparedness and prevention; and facilitate sustainable solutions.” (Source: OCHA)

UNICEF

United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund

UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the United Nations refugee agency. “The agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe



refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.”

WFP

The World Food Program. In emergencies the program gets food to where it is needed, saving the lives of victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters.

The Red Cross

(international and national agencies)

Médecins sans Frontières

“Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international humanitarian aid organisation that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in danger in more than 60 countries. “ (Source: official website MSF)

International Rescue Committee

“The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or disaster.” (source: IRC)

UNDAC

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination consists of a team of professionals who are funded by UN Member States, the OCHA, the UNDP and other operational humanitarian UN Agencies such as the WFP, UNICEF and the WHO. The team aids disaster stricken countries.

OSOCC

On-Site Operations Coordination Centre: Assists governments with the management of the aftermath of a disaster.

PAHO

The Pan-American Health Organisation works with a team of health workers to respond to public health emergencies in the Pan-American region which can not be dealt with by a country on its own because it lacks the capacity to deal with the consequences of the public health emergency. In the case of an emergency or crisis the PAHO establishes a regional emergency response team that aids the affected country's population. The PAHO works with numerous experts. According to the PAHO these experts include:

- epidemiologists
- water and sanitation specialists
- information and communication specialists
- laboratories and health services
- immunization specialists

These specialists are available always when a health-emergency takes place. They can make a diagnosis of the help that is needed, help with the technology that is needed for the aid, establish emergency centres and coordinate their health response with the local authorities.

Main Countries Involved

Indonesia (South-East Asia) Is very prone to natural disasters. South-East Asia is often hit by tsunamis and earthquakes.

Haiti In January of 2010 Haiti was struck by a severe earthquake.

India Is a country threatened by floods, tsunamis and earthquakes.

Pakistan Suffered severe floods in July 2010. Emergency responses came very late. Many people were very difficult to reach and the government got completely overwhelmed.



Japan Often has to endure earthquakes and tsunamis and is still dealing with the consequences of the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima caused by the latest grave earthquake. However, their disaster reduction technologies, resources and infrastructures usually work well.

Greece Often has to fight against enormous fires that break out due to the drought and the heat in summer.

USA Every year the USA suffers from natural disasters such as blizzards, tornadoes, hurricanes, cedar fire and floods. The USA contributes greatly in emergency responses by financing aid and sending supplies.

China Is struck every year by earthquakes, erosions, mudslides, floods, tsunamis etc.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Guidelines for post-natural disaster areas of course have already been funded by the United Nations and other organisations. A good example of one of the official, global response systems is the Global Alert and Response system. Many other response systems (official or unofficial) similar to the GAR already exist. However these response systems and guidelines should be revised and new guidelines may have to be funded. Especially guidelines concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of the response to natural disasters should be improved by even better coordination of agencies and an even better supply of resources and equipment.

Possible Solutions

One of the major reasons of response to natural disasters not being efficient or effective enough, is the lack of good coordination between local, state, regional and national agencies, and government functions. The hurricane Katrina showed what situations can occur when the coordination during the planning of the response as well as during the execution of the response is not good enough. The coordinating of relief assistance and the dealing with the chaos and enormous amount of problems (as described earlier) caused by a natural disaster is incredibly hard. The number of issues to be dealt with is overwhelming. Therefore detailed and effective guidelines for the response to natural disasters are of the greatest importance.

The cooperation between UN organisations and the government of countries has to be improved so that relief assistance will be more efficient. The planning of the emergency response programs often fails to work when implemented during a real emergency. These planned programmes need to be revised and adapted to local circumstances. The cooperation between government and UN organisation also has to be improved because of the resistance of the governments to help from the UN. In countries that are unstable and in a crisis, help from the UN is often refused, because countries fear that help from the UN will affect their sovereignty and they fear that once UN organisations enter their country they will not leave in the near future. People who have been affected by a health emergency are then left to themselves because the government itself has not got the resources to provide the help itself. This calls for better agreements and regulations between governments and UN organisations on the sovereignty of the countries in need of assistance, while keeping in mind that, in order to help, the UN organisations need to enter or closely work with some of the countries' organisations.

The hardest and currently unsolved problems

The problem of security: Help in some cases cannot reach the people in need, because it is too dangerous for relief assistance agencies to enter the affected area. An example exists at this time in Somalia. The population in Somalia is suffering starvation due to the drought in the country. However, help is almost impossible to give to people far out of the capital Mogadishu because of the danger of aid-workers being attacked by armed groups controlling areas outside Mogadishu. It is of great importance to find a way of bringing assistance and supplies to dangerous areas so



that in the future the whole of a country's population will be reached, at the same time causing less fleeing and thus less displaced persons.

Harm to the country's economy: A country's government may take an enormous hit due to a natural disaster. Government officials may be among the harmed, important government buildings may be destroyed and essential data may be lost. Businesses may be harmed so badly by the loss of personnel, data, IT-resources and working-space, that they may not recover from the blow. This means that a country's economy may suffer a lot from a natural disaster. Backup systems and recovery plans should be established by government institutions and private companies. It is important to think of the acceptable 'down-time' (the time that the business and government institutions can be off-line without causing severe problems), backup of data and the loss of personnel and working-space. Institutions in risk area's should be well-prepared for the consequences of a natural disaster.

Appendices

Relevant UN Resolutions and Useful Websites

The resolutions published by the UN on Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, mentioned earlier:

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/63/plenary/E_ha_emergency.shtml>

Here you will find a useful but short explanation of the work done by the GOARN:

<<http://www.who.int/csr/outbreaknetwork/goarnenglish.pdf>>

Recommended by MUNISH for individual research:

<http://publicpack.nl/mun/munpack.php>

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