Herat Earthquake Humanitarian Response
Key Environmental Considerations Overview
8 October 2023

Introduction

This *Overview* provides a summary of environmental issues and actions which should consider in assessing, planning and delivering assistance following the 7 October 2023 earthquakes near Herat, Afghanistan.

Further information on assessing and addressing disaster-related environmental issues can be found on the WWF Environment and Disaster Management and Environmental Emergency Centre web sites. Specific support on environmental issues related to the humanitarian response to the Herat earthquake can be requested through this link https://envirodm.org/contact/ or by email to havedisastercallkelly@gmail.com. Comments and queries on the *Overview* are welcome.

The *Overview* was developed by the Global Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice. The *Overview* is provided as general guidance and does not represent the official positions of any organization or agency.

Summary Guidance

Sector	Guidance Summary	Environmental/Risk Reduction Implication/Opportunity
Shelter – Winter Conditions	Shelter and NFI planning should consider a shift to Winter conditions over the next 45 days. Humanitarian shelter assistance should transition as quickly as possible from tents or other non-winterized options to transitional shelters designed for winter conditions, including snow loading and adequate and safe heating.	1. Tents are generally not designed for constant use under winter conditions, can be difficult to insulate, and may physically deteriorate over relatively short periods and lead to disposal challenges. 2. Shifting shelter assistance to structure designs appropriate for winter conditions will reduce energy needs and address rights-based sheltering standards.
Energy	1. Provide heating and cooking options which minimize natural resources use (e.g., use of fuel wood). 2. Consider winterization options for lightly damaged structures to permit their use during the winter. 3. Establish heath-and-safety plans and guidance (e.g., for carbon monoxide poisoning) for emergency, traditional and winterized lightly damaged buildings.	Deforestation and environmental damage associated with the collection of fuelwood can be reduced by providing alternative sources of fuel.
Environmental Information in Needs Assessments	1. Incorporate Rural/Urban Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool and Rapid Environmental Assessment information needs into needs assessments and	1. Improve impact of humanitarian response by more clearly matching needs and resources and avoiding, reducing, and/or mitigating negative

	provide environment-based analysis of assessment results.[1] 2. Incorporate environmental expertise in assessment and coordination teams.	environmental impacts from assistance. 2. Environmental information can support recovery to improve human security, water management, livelihoods and landslide risk reduction.
Debris Management	Use established guidance to plan and execute debris management operations (See https://resources.eecentre.org/resources/disaster-waste-management-guidelines-dwmg-online/) and https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/collection/debris-management).	1. Quick clearance of debris will speed up physical rebuilding and reduce environmental sanitation hazards. 2. Expert-developed and implemented debris management plans will lead to recycling, repurposing, and reuse of debris and reduce quantities disposed in landfills or elsewhere which could damage habitats and the ecosystem services they provide (i.e., productive agriculture, drinking water supplies). 3. Efficient management of debris will reduce transport requirements (reducing CO^2 footprint) and reduce anarchic debris disposal (see #2).
Winter and Spring Forecasting	Medium- and Long-term weather forecasts should be used to assess potential impacts from Winter and Spring weather, including risks of flooding, on shelter, energy and other needs and delivery of humanitarian assistance.	1. Winter forecasts of temperature and precipitation can be used to project heating and shelter (including clothing) needs. 2. Spring forecasts can identify the potential for flooding and be used to identify flood zones as well as drainage systems which need to be cleared to reduce flooding risks.
WASH	Damage assessments and response plans should include impacts of earthquake damage, debris management and shelter operations on the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene and include solid and liquid waste management.	1. Shelter sites need sufficient water supplies and sanitation management capacities before occupation. Shelter sites without basic water and sanitation are not likely to be occupied and be a waste of resources. 2. Solid and liquid waste needs to be properly collected and managed to limit environmental damage and threats to public health.
Procurement	1. Avoid air transport of non-life saving or life sustaining supplies. 2. Shift to ground transport as quickly as possible. 3. Shift to local, environmentally and socially responsible, procurement as soon as markets allow.	1. Minimize transport CO^2 footprint. 2. Use environment-impact-based specifications for non-food items (NFI) and in planning distribution of funds to affected populations.

[1] Sphere Standards indicate that environmental impact assessments should be part of the humanitarian response.

	4. Incorporate measures to reduce packaging to minimums. 5. Develop waste management plans as part of supplies procurement planning.	
Fire Safety	Minimize fire risk in emergency and transitional shelter from heating, lighting and cooking (see https://www.kindlingsafety.org/ for more guidance.)	Fires destroy shelter and relief assistance, leading to an unnecessary doubling in the quantity of assistance for affected populations.
"Cash" based assistance	1. Ensure provision of "cash" does not lead to price increases or excessive demand for market commodities, including natural resources. 2. Use vouchers to target "cash" assistance to specific items identified as critical for the humanitarian response.	1. Unrestricted "cash" can lead to price increases, shortages of critical commodities and excessive demand on natural resources. 2. An Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis can be valuable in understanding market and natural resource impacts of "cash" assistance.
Non-Food Items	1. Avoid sending items for which an explicit need has not been identified. 2. Establish an online market place for sharing commodities across response programs.	Matching commodities to needs reduces unnecessary transport and eventual waste management requirements in the disaster-affected area.
Nature-Based Recovery Options- Landslide and Flood Risk	1. The earthquake and aftershocks can destabilized hillsides leading to landslides, particularly following periods of rainfall. 2. Nature or ecosystem-based interventions can be used to stabilize landslide-prone slopes. 3. The potential for flooding should be assessed and managed using nature-based approaches.	1. Nature or ecosystem-based approaches can be implemented using labor intensive public works, using cash or food for compensation, and often are less costly than other engineered options. 2. Nature-based approaches can provide environmental and social benefits (see https://www.ilo.org/dyn/asist/docs/F794146054/Roadside%20Bio-Engineering%20Site%20Handbook.pdf. 3. In addition to reducing landslide risks, environment-based guidance on flood risk management can be found in the Flood Green Guide.