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Disasters significantly disrupt the built and social environments. Recovery from a disaster can place considerable demands on the environment, ranging from increased resource extraction to new jobs involving new uses of natural resources. The post-disaster period often presents an opportunity to reshape the pre-disaster environment, leading to new settlements and redesigning pre-disaster land use. In non-disaster times, almost all of the actions undertaken following a disaster would be subject to



- The legal requirements for such reviews can be unclear, for instance whether normal environmental impact assessment procedures apply when a state of emergency exists.
- Different funding agencies have different rules on environmental impact assessments, and these procedures may not be applicable where funding is provided in a post-disaster context.
- The normal environmental review process can be seen as too slow for the short time available to start and complete recovery operations.
- The political and public preferences for such reviews are often unclear.



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Verheem *et al.* (2005) also suggest that a SEA should take place somewhat later in a conflict recovery process given the lack of capacity and difficult operating conditions immediately after a peace agreement.

Dolcemascolo (2010) summarizes a number of issues which can make a SEA following a disaster difficult if not impossible, including:

- physical limitations to on-site access;
- securing specialists with appropriate expertise;
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providers, as well as work to polish and refine any outstanding issues, before the report is officially released.

In many cases, the recovery plans include actions to improve conditions existing before the disaster (the *build back better* mentioned above). The recovery plans may also be segregated into phases such as *early recovery* (recovery actions which should start immediately) and longer term *reconstruction*.

The environment is usually included in this damage assessment and recovery planning process in two ways:

1. as direct damage to specific aspects of the environment t eroded hillsides, damage to beaches or reefs, etc., for which specific recovery aid is needed; and
2. as a cross-cutting issue, where it is noted that the environment should be integrated into all other recovery activities.





process in parallel with the assessment and recovery design process. Because the assessment and recovery plan development process is often managed through a number of sectoral working groups (e.g. shelter, infrastructure, health), these groups can be monitored on a real-time basis, with a resulting review of environmental issues which might be arising.

These real-time reviews can both feed back into the work of each sectoral group and provide the basis for comparing environmental interactions between and beyond sectors. This interaction would also be useful in highlighting ways in which environmental issues could be integrated into recovery planning.

Two other factors make the real-time approach workable. First, the objectives being addressed by the recovery effort are usually very simple and clear: to recover from the disaster, and to make things better after a disaster than before (the *build back better* concept mentioned above). Thus, the SEA does not have to define what should happen, but focus on the impacts of how these objectives will be met. Second, although each recovery effort is different, many of the impacts of disasters are similar and lead to similar focuses in the recovery process. The SEA process can learn much about the positive and negative environmental issues related to recovery from previous disasters. For instance, the large-scale rebuilding of physical infrastructure on an island will face a challenge in finding adequate stocks of sand in a way which does not damage the environment (an issue which arose in Sri Lanka as well as Haiti, and may arise in New Zealand and Japan).

#### ANNEX 1

managing a disaster response is usually established within a week post disaster. Where local and national capacities are not strong, the United Nations would like to see <sup>11</sup>, a structure for coordinating international relief and recovery assistance. In addition, most large disasters would lead to a Government-UNDP-International Finance Institution (e.g. World Bank) post-disaster needs assessment<sup>12</sup> which provides an official structure for assessment and recovery planning within which the development can occur.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://onerresponse.info/Coordination/ClusterApproach/Pages/Policy%20and%20Guidance.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.recoveryplatform.org/pdna/>.

While there may be confusion about the chain of command, this confusion normally settles out into an overall disaster response management structure within a few weeks after the disaster. If this structure is not established by the government, it will be established by the international assistance community.

An exception is where a country refuses to respond to a disaster or allow external assistance. Even where a countr





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