

DISASTER WASTE MANAGEMENT EXPERT (Senior Technical Adviser)

GENERIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit¹

Natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods often result in significant secondary environmental impacts including the potential for polluted water and related health hazards. These secondary impacts can pose immediate, life-threatening risks to humans (both local communities and responders), the aquatic environment as well as longer-term challenges to water monitoring and water use for agricultural purposes. Therefore, a key element of humanitarian response is the rapid risk assessment of water quality and water pollution and the mitigation thereof.

Context

Disasters often generate large volumes of disaster waste, comprised of a mixture of soil and sediments, building rubble, vegetation, municipal waste, hazardous materials (including asbestos and healthcare waste), as well as human and animal remains.

This combination of diverse waste materials poses a serious risk to human health from biological, chemical and physical sources, and may also impede urgent humanitarian access routes. Disaster waste an additional burden on a nation or community already struggling to cope, and often overwhelms existing waste management services and infrastructure. Experiences from past disasters show that wrong handling of waste in the immediate aftermath of a disaster may be the cause for future environmental problems. Disaster waste management is an integrated approach where early interventions may lead to more effective response and recovery operations with less impact on the environment and better utilization of natural resources

In environmental emergencies and natural disasters with major environmental impacts, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU) can mobilize specialized assessment missions and/or deploy associate environmental experts with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team.

The following describes the key responsibilities and required background and skills of these disaster waste management experts. More specific details will be provided according to the needs of each emergency.

Responsibilities

- Provide on-site practical advice and guidance to the relevant local authorities by proposing solutions to minimize environmental and health impacts of disaster waste;
- Assist local authorities in the development of a disaster waste management plan/system, including guidance on proper management of existing waste disposal sites, logistics of waste collection services, and optimization of recycling and re-use options;

¹ For more information on the Joint Environment Unit: <http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>

- Liaise and coordinate with other mechanisms and entities involved in disaster waste issues like the IASC² clusters³ for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Shelter and Early Recovery, and WHO, UNDP and UNICEF;
- Pay particular attention to waste collection and disposal in camps, especially concerning household waste, sanitation, drinking water and recycling;
- Provide advice and guidance to national and international aid organizations with disaster waste management issues if requested;

Expected Actions

Undertake, in close collaboration with the relevant local and national authorities and international emergency responders, an overall assessment of the disaster waste situation, including:

- Identify any needs for further technical assistance, as well as medium and long term needs for capacity building;
- Assess the existing local capacity for addressing disaster waste management issues;
- Identify specific risks posed by unexploded ordnances, asbestos, health care waste, hazardous materials;
- Disseminate and promote the use of the Emergency Waste Management Guidelines of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit
- Communicate rapidly and regularly all findings to the UNDAC team, the local authorities, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and the JEU as appropriate;
- Document, in electronic form, the assessment results, recommendations, and mitigation measures implemented, if applicable.

Note: Contact with media, including interviews, should only be undertaken with consent of the government and in consultation with the UNDAC team, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the JEU.

Education and work experience

- University degree in a relevant discipline, such as environmental science and/or civil engineering;
- Background in solid and/or hazardous waste management issues with at least ten years of experience,
- Experience in environmental impact/risks assessment;
- Working experience in a disaster affected environment and/or developing countries an asset;
- Ability to work under stressful circumstances and/or in hardship conditions for up to 3 weeks;
- Availability for additional follow-up, collaboration and editing of mission report after the official mission deadline, if required
- Fluency in English, French or Spanish depending to the country affected;
- Knowledge of MS Windows and MS Office and ability to operate standard IT and communications equipment.

² Inter Agency Standing Committee: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>

³ Cluster Approach: <http://www.humanitarianreform.org>