

Key messages

- Ideally, an REA should be conducted within the first three months following the establishment of a camp.
- An REA remains a valid approach to environmental management after the initial establishment of a camp.
- An REA should be a multi-agency activity (preferably with a specialist team leader).
- An REA includes a survey of:
 - host communities and the environment;
 - refugee / IDPs and the environment; and
 - the impact of relief activities.
- An REA:
 - provides baseline data that assists in subsequent monitoring and evaluation;
 - provides key information that feeds into sector and camp management;
 - identifies major environmental threats;
 - identifies *potential* environmental threats that can be avoided;
 - identifies environmental threats that can be readily mitigated;
 - identifies environmental threats that may require external technical assistance; and
 - is an ideal entry point for the development of Community Environmental Action Plans (CEAPs).

RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Rapid Environmental Assessments (REAs) are the foundation of decision-making / planning with regards to environmental – including natural resource use – management.

An REA is a structured survey designed to assist camp management agencies and implementing partners to include environmental protection concerns into their programme planning and management.

The format of an REA is not fixed but might include the following series of checklists and activities:

Checklist I: Situation Analysis – Meetings and consultations to determine the general environmental scenario, obvious environmental threats, local expertise, physical area of concern, social customs and practices relating to the environment.

Checklist II: Key Influencing Factors – Interviews, on-site investigations, ranking the seriousness of threats.

Checklist III: Environmental Situation – Presence and condition of the environment, primary users, local rules, values that local communities place on the environment or specific natural resources.

Checklist IV: Environmental Impacts of Relief Operations – Severity, permanence, extent of impact and urgency of remedial measures.

Checklist V: Results Summary – Overview of baseline environmental data, identification of major environmental threats, mitigation measures required – including external assistance – and recommendations for interventions.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

A REA can in theory be conducted by non-specialists, although it is highly recommended that an external, specialist agency or technical expert is involved in the process.

Since natural resources will be used not only by a camp population, but also host communities, it is essential that consultations and interventions include both communities.

CHECKLIST

Before conducting a REA

- √ Wherever possible, reach consensus from all camp implementing partners to undertake an REA.
- √ Identify and hire an REA specialist / organisation to lead the REA.
- √ Ensure that the specialist has access to all relevant documentation – from all agencies – in order to develop the REA survey document.
- √ Share the REA survey document with all agencies prior to the REA for refinement / revision.
- √ Establish a REA team with representatives from all key stakeholder groups.
- √ Provide time for training the REA team in key survey skills, e.g. focus group discussions, visioning and recording information.
- √ Decide on the spatial boundary within which the REA will be conducted.
- √ Ensure that the camp and host communities are aware of the REA in advance, including the rationale, aims and objectives of the REA and how the findings will be used.
- √ Identify key camp and host community leaders who are willing to assist in the REA.
- √ Establish dates / times for community consultations with the relevant community groups.
- √ The lead agency should make all necessary logistical arrangements during the assessment.
- √ Organise for translators – typically national agency staff – where necessary.

During the REA

- √ Ensure that site visits to particular areas of interest coincide with related activities, e.g. fuel use and cooking practices are most readily assessed when camp residents are preparing food.
- √ Before consulting with community members, explain why you would like to ask them questions.
- √ At the end of the field survey, meet with key community leaders to explain the next steps, e.g. how the findings will be shared with the community.

After the REA

- √ Prepare reports for both implementing partner agencies, UN agencies and the communities.
- √ Reporting to the community should include oral presentations as some community members may be illiterate.
- √ Wherever possible, work with the communities to identify and prioritise opportunities for environmental interventions.
- √ Build the costs for environmental interventions into future budgets with the assistance of the REA specialist.

Further reading and resources

FRAME Toolkit, Module III: Rapid Environmental Assessment (UNHCR, CARE, 2009).

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a9690239.html>

Darfur Crisis: Rapid Environmental Assessment at the Kalma, Otash and Bajoum camps (UNEP, OCHA, 2004).

http://www.ees.nmt.edu/Hydro/courses/erth140/Case%20Studies/Darfur_REA_final.pdf

Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters (University College London, CARE, 2005).

Update: Rapid Environmental Impact

Assessment – Sri Lanka Tsunami (University College London, CARE, JEU, OCHA, 2005).

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADD450.pdf

For more resources, please visit the **'Environmental Assessment Tools for Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Operations'** page on our website: www.proactnetwork.org

ProAct Network is a Swiss-based non-governmental environmental organisation. Our work aims to help vulnerable communities improve their resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises, through sustainable environmental management. This briefing note was compiled under an Environmental Awareness and Management Capacity Building Programme in Darfur funded by Christian Aid.

Contact:

Av. Alfred Cortot 7D, CH-1260 Nyon, Switzerland
+41 22 362 5384

email: info@proactnetwork.org

www.proactnetwork.org