



14 MINIMUM SECTORAL DATA: F. ENVIRONMENT

14.1 OVERVIEW AND FUNCTION

The minimum sectoral data presented in these guidance notes is based on the standards and units of measurement set by the *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* (Third Edition), *The SPHERE Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* (2011 Edition), and the Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in Refugee-Related Operations (FRAME). The FRAME Toolkit is available online at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a97d1039.html>, which is designed for managers and field staff to address issues of environmental assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

These guidance notes present key information on what Information Managers needs to know about environmental management from the first phase of an emergency response. The Information Manager should also assist as needed with the provision of information to support sector-specific reports and facilitate the dissemination of sector-specific information products.

14.2 HOW-TO GUIDE

The UNHCR sector specialist generally covers environmental aspects of the camp area and surroundings, including overseeing and participating in the Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) in order to design appropriate environmental interventions during emergency response.

14.2.1 Information requirements

Environmental considerations must be taken into account at the very onset of an emergency, as it is during this phase that major negative environmental impacts typically occur. There is no comprehensive environmental management strategy that can be applied to all emergency situations. Site-specific information can be gathered by undertaking a REA, if possible, within a period of 48-72 hours, followed by a more comprehensive Environmental Assessment (EA). The more in-depth EA requires more time and resources in order to develop an appropriate strategy based on the specific environmental indicators observed, which may be found under the FRAME Toolkit, available here: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a97d1039.html>.

14.2.2 Situation analysis

Full details of the REA process can be found in the FRAME toolkit. Normally, a team of three should carry out the REA, including a local environmental expert (e.g. from an NGO), a member of the local community and a member of the international humanitarian community.

During this period, the following points and processes should be considered:

- Define the “affected area” in terms of boundaries, and document on a map;
- Predominant ecosystem/environmental situation (savannah, rainforest, agricultural land, etc.);
- Issues of land use and land rights;
- Basic characteristics of the site, such as vegetation and other environmental conditions, species and percentage of vegetation cover, nearby floodplains or protected areas, soil condition, geology, topography, elevation, water bodies and sanitation possibilities;

- Possibility for expansion of the area;
- Ratio of refugees to local inhabitants (needed to measure increased stress on surrounding natural resources);
- Type(s) of fuel likely to be used for domestic energy needs (e.g. fuel used by refugees in place of origin, in contrast to what is available for fuel where they are now living);
- Type(s) of construction material likely to be used for shelters, fences, etc.; and
- National/local governance, and whether any of the surrounding areas are governed by local laws (e.g. considered sacred).

From the REA, the initial environmental management strategy should be developed as quickly as possible, along with local Government actors such as forestry departments. This strategy should consider issues of natural resource management, particularly in terms of domestic energy (i.e. managing the harvest / distribution of fuel-wood and/or other fuels) and shelter (materials for construction).

14.2.3 Domestic energy options

Adequate response to domestic energy needs will depend on the situation analysis, particularly the availability of fuel and accessibility of the site. When considering domestic energy options, the firewood/timber situation needs to be classified under one of the following:

- Firewood is abundant;
- Firewood is still an option but needs to be adequately managed; or
- Firewood is no longer an option due to depleted resources or Government restrictions.

With this knowledge, adequate steps can be taken to address the domestic energy situation at the site. If firewood is no longer an option at the selected site, it is suggested that, as minimum assistance, other sources of fuel such as ethanol, pellets, briquettes, gas etc. be provided as a core relief item during the emergency phase of the crisis until sustainable alternative energy sources are identified. However, it must be noted that free supply of fuel is only appropriate in certain cases, as prolonged distribution of fuel without cost may increase consumption, particularly of firewood.

According to the SPHERE Project, the following should be provided to refugees as a minimum standard during humanitarian response:

Item	Distribution
1 fuel-efficient stove	1 per family of 5, to reduce fuel consumption and smoke inhalation
1 heat-retention box	1 per family of 5, to reduce fuel consumption
1 solar lantern	1 per family of 5, to provide safe and sustainable artificial lighting

Solar streetlights should also be considered as much as possible in order to improve safety of refugees at night, as darkness provides cover for crime and vandalism.

14.3 GAP ANALYSIS

An Inter-agency needs assessment should be conducted. The assessment should consider energy needs for cooking and lighting as well as environmental impact factors such as fuel sources, water quality and quantity, solid waste management etc.

This data, coupled with the initial environmental survey, can inform managers on how to adequately address energy needs for cooking and lighting, including identifying the most cost-effective, fuel-efficient stove. This is a particularly useful exercise while the *Access to Fuel and Energy Guidelines and Strategy* is being developed. The full document is available online at: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f11ee6.pdf>.

14.4 COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A comprehensive environmental management strategy should be developed for the site and immediate surroundings as soon as possible. Referencing the FRAME Toolkit a more comprehensive Environmental Assessment (EA), should be developed following a highly participatory community environmental action plan. The FRAME Toolkit also highlights opportunities for using the latest technology with geographical information systems for environment assessments. The Environmental Management Strategy should include components on the management of the harvest of wood for fuel and shelter material, the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves and cooking techniques, awareness-raising programmes, reforestation and improved natural resource management.

14.5 TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If no environmental specialist is available, consult internally within the operation to gather available information and decide how the Information Manager may assist senior managers with required steps.