

MANAGING POST-DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENTS (PDNA)

By Brett Jones

INTRODUCTION

This knowledge note provides an overview of the post-disaster assessment process, extracting lessons learned in the East Asia Pacific Region (EAP) and presenting best practices from recent assessments. The note explains the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment methodology, and outlines: (i) the assessment triggers, (ii) key steps in assessment planning, and (iii) dos and don'ts in assessment execution. More in-depth guidance is available in UN-ECLAC's 'Handbook for Estimating the Socioeconomic and Environmental Effects of Disasters' and 'TTL Guidance for Conducting Damage and Loss Assessments after Disasters' prepared by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).

WHAT IS A POST-DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

A Post-disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) is a government-led exercise that estimates post-disaster damage and losses across all sectors of the economy as well as the recovery, relief, reconstruction, and risk management needs. PDNA also provides guidance to the government and international donor community on the country's short, medium, and long term recovery priorities.

This working paper series is produced by the East Asia and Pacific Disaster Risk Management Team of the World Bank, with support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). The series is meant to provide just-in-time good practice examples and lessons learned from projects and programs related to aspects of disaster risk management.



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PDNA METHODOLOGY

The PDNA is comprised of a ‘Damage and Loss Assessment’ (DALA), a ‘Human Recovery Needs Assessment’ (HRNA) and a ‘Recovery Framework’. The “Tripartite Statement on Post-Crisis Assessment and Recovery Planning,” signed in October 2008 by the United Nations, the European Commission and the World Bank, lays out the various roles these international actors will play in the PDNA process. The World Bank focuses on the DALA, the UN on the HRNA and the EC supports the PDNA team with mapping tools and sectoral experts. By combining these methodologies, a comprehensive assessment of the impact of a disaster is possible, combining financial, economic and social aspects of the effects of the event.

The DALA is quantitative in nature, and is used to value direct damages arising from a hazardous event, and the subsequent economic losses caused by the event. This methodology, developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the 1970s, provides a standardized tool for the valuation of post-disaster damage (in assets, physical, capital, stock, material goods) and losses (in flows of goods and services, income, costs) that arise from the temporary absence of the destroyed assets. The DALA highlights the possible consequences on the growth of the national or local economy, the external sector and the fiscal balances, as well as the impact due to the decline of income and livelihoods of households or individuals.

The HRNA focuses on the social impact of disasters, analyzing how disasters affect local patterns of life, social structures and institutions. An HNRA assessment includes analysis of primary data from household or other unit of analysis, and provides insight into recovery and reconstruction from the viewpoint of the affected community.

The Recovery Framework summarizes the recovery recommendations from the sectoral assessments within the PDNA. It outlines the short, medium and longer term needs and priorities for the recovery process post-disaster.

TRIGGERS FOR A PDNA

World Bank participation in a PDNA is triggered by a government request, preferably in writing. The request may also result from the intervention and recommendation of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the affected country. However, government ownership of the assessment is critical, and the government’s early involvement sets the stage for future engagement.

PLANNING THE ASSESSMENT

The Damage and Loss Assessment should begin when the humanitarian relief operation stage is over and when the natural hazard(s) has abated. Two to four weeks is needed for a typical assessment. This includes a two-day training on the DALA and HNRA methodologies, baseline data collection, field survey for primary data, the sector-by-sector assessment, the macro-economic impact analysis, the analysis at a personal/household level, the estimation of recovery and reconstruction needs, and the report writing process.

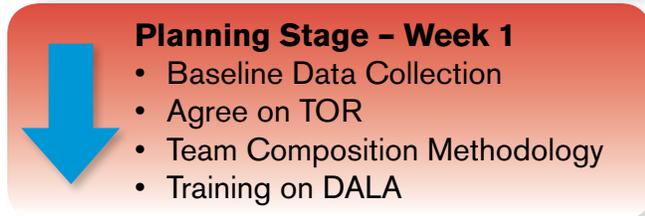
ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

The assessment terms of reference will serve as the assessment roadmap. A clear terms of reference (ToR) will list the purpose, partners and activities to be carried out in the PDNA. Based on past experience, it is advisable to define a clear timeline with deadlines for the expected deliverables. The team should also develop a ToR with assignments on who is writing each section and a sample structure/outline for the report.



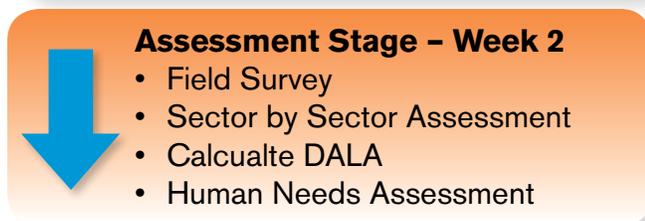
Hazardous Event

- Emergency Relief



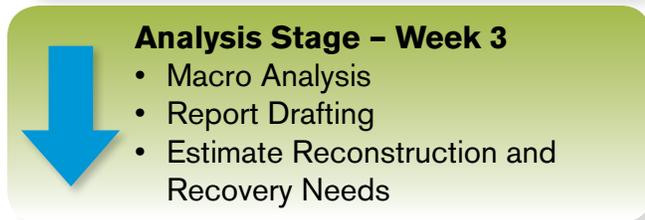
Planning Stage – Week 1

- Baseline Data Collection
- Agree on TOR
- Team Composition Methodology
- Training on DALA



Assessment Stage – Week 2

- Field Survey
- Sector by Sector Assessment
- Calculte DALA
- Human Needs Assessment



Analysis Stage – Week 3

- Macro Analysis
- Report Drafting
- Estimate Reconstruction and Recovery Needs



Dissemination Stage – Week 4

- Publish and Launch the PDNA

Early involvement of development partners in the PDNA can increase coordination and promote buy-in to the process and the results. Under the leadership of the designated Government coordinator, the UN Resident Coordinator and other heads of UN agencies should be involved in the early stages of PDNA planning. Their participation and added assessment capacity can increase the credibility of the PDNA report. Regional offices such as UNESCAP and ILO and bilateral donors may also elect to support the assessment or provide technical experts.

Data collection should begin early in the planning process, drawing on the best available national and international information. Essential baseline data includes the most recent population census, the most recent household surveys, annual production statistics and/or forecasts, annual reports for utilities, annual economic and social surveys and other economic and financial information and data. The team should also collect reports on the disaster produced by major stakeholders, such as the Government, the UN, NGOs, etc.

Clear roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in the PDNA will help participants avoid duplication of efforts and gaps in information. Assessment gaps occur when agencies prefer to assess only sectors or geographic locations where they have projects or available experts. Duplication of effort has occurred when multiple agencies conduct their own assessments and don't share data. International experience in post-disaster assessments has shown that competitive needs assessment processes are often inefficient and unsustainable.

Speed is more important than 100% accuracy, but nevertheless aim for the highest possible accuracy by selecting the best sectoral experts available. Private sector consultants are an option for areas where the government and international community lack technical expertise. When selecting representatives for the PDNA, a balance between senior figures who are in decision-making positions and can implement recommendations and junior technical experts who will be able to dedicate the time needed to fully participate in the entire PDNA process is ideal.

The list of sectors to be included in the assessment is not defined on the basis of institutional preferences. Rather, the combination of the type, extent, and characteristics of the natural phenomena that caused the disaster should define the thematic coverage of the assess-

ment. Cross cutting issues should be included such as gender, disaster risk management, and climate change adaptation. Furthermore, the PDNA should not assess only those sectors for which it is easy to obtain national assessment experts.

There is need for continuity in the assessment process. Each PDNA team member must have sufficient time to fully participate in all stages of the PDNA, including the training, site visit and the damage and loss calculations. The same people who attend the PDNA training should be available for the site visits and report write up. The quality and reliability of the assessment suffers when “part time” team members take leading roles in the assessment report, when key PDNA team members attend the training but miss the site visits, or when PDNA team members are designated to draft the sectoral report without participating in the prior steps.

THE PDNA FIELD SURVEY

The Field Survey visit should be used to verify, rather than collect, data. Data collection should be done during the planning process whenever possible, and the field survey used to verify existing data or to collect sector specific data in an affected area. Local authorities can serve as the best data source, but means of verification – such as an aerial survey or a site visit – are essential.

Sector and time considerations determine the scope of the field survey. The team as a whole can visit affected areas, or can be split by sector to visit specific provinces or municipalities. The length of the visit and number of areas covered in the field survey are at the discretion of the PDNA leads, but should be sufficient to provide a representative sample. Recent field surveys in South East Asia have ranged from five to ten days for localized disasters, to weeks, depending on the geographic scope and magnitude of the natural disaster impacts.

Managing a field survey is time consuming. Some countries have elected to separate assessment team coordination and leadership functions. Coordinating the deployment of sector teams for the field survey is a substantial task. The PDNA lead may choose to nominate a logistics focal point to assist the team (or sectoral teams, if splitting up) to allocate cars and interpretation resources prior to the field survey. An interpreter is needed for the field survey if team members don't speak the local language. Bilingual sector experts may be present, but will be focused on their sector, not on translating for other team members in meetings.

Decision Point: Which Sectors to Include?

1) All sectors and subsectors

Advantages: Provides a comprehensive overview of all damage and losses across the country.
Disadvantages: Can be time consuming and costly.

2) A select range of sectors/subsectors

Advantages: Eliminates the need to verify data and do time-consuming analysis of sectors that were not affected, and process may be more cost-effective and quicker.

Disadvantages: May overlook sectors where the scale of damage was not known or assumed to be negligible at the time of PDNA planning, but which may have been indirectly affected.

THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Credible damage and loss estimations set the basis for a good report. Within three days of the site visit, the PDNA lead should request initial DALA summaries from each sector lead. While accepting that disasters can have vastly different impacts on different sectors, misunderstandings of the DALA methodology and of what constitutes a recovery need could also artificially inflate or deflate the impact. The earlier inaccuracies are corrected, the easier it is to prioritize needs and draft the recovery framework.

Decision Point: How to Organize the Field Survey?

- 1) Traveling together is effective if damage is localized or the team is small.
- 2) Dividing the team by sector is effective if the impact is widespread, the terrain is difficult to cover, or sector-specific damage is limited to only certain parts of the country.

Accuracy versus opportunity. There may be pressure to immediately produce an assessment report or provide early estimates of damage. This should be balanced with the need to produce credible information. Donors may need early figures to start the process of mobilizing funds, but it is important to note that mass media tend to have a substantial influence on the recovery process and may give more publicity than intended to these early figures.

Style versus content. Electing a single lead writer or a writing team can greatly increase the quality of the report. Sectoral experts may have the skills needed to provide both the quantitative analysis and the narrative in the sector report, but others may have limited English or writing skills. For example, the PDNA team in Lao PDR used a lead writer to write the final narrative based on the sectoral experts' analysis. In the Samoa/Tonga assessment, a two-person editorial team, supported remotely by the World Bank Sydney office, wrote, edited and formatted the final report with input from the sector leads. In Indonesia, each sectoral team contributed a portion of the report chapters, and a small editing team was tasked to integrate and edit the final PDNA report.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM RECENT ASSESSMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Experience in highly disaster-prone countries has shown that maintaining updated socio-economic and

demographic data at the national and sub national level is crucial for a comparative analysis of post-disaster impacts. The Government of the Philippines managed a rapid assessment following the 2009 typhoons because of the readily available pre-typhoon economic and demographic data. In other countries, the lack of data slowed down the assessment process and decreased credibility.

Look to the countries' own social capital first. Following the 2009 earthquakes in West Sumatra and Jambi, Indonesia rapidly mobilized experienced government staff to draft the PDNA with almost no external technical support. International experts can bring valuable experience, but are not a prerequisite for a PDNA.

The process of doing an assessment report is, in itself, a capacity-building tool. It can teach line ministries

what to expect the next time a disaster occurs or how to incorporate DRM concepts into new projects. In Cambodia, sector experts with no previous experience in disasters reported that, after the assessment, they better understood how to integrate DRM into development projects and anticipate future emergency needs.

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Attention to planning in the early stages of the assessment can have big payoffs in the later stages.
- Broad ownership of the assessment process increases willingness to implement the outcomes.
- An inflated list of needs can undermine the credibility of the assessment.
- The availability of donor funds should never be the driving force for conducting a needs assessment.
- Needs of the beneficiaries, not the development priorities of donors, should drive the recovery framework.

Do

- *Promote inclusive ownership of the PDNA process from the outset and conduct joint rather than competing assessments.*
- *Pick the right mix of technical experts and policy makers for an effective assessment team.*
- *Balance speed and accuracy when assessing damages and producing the final report.*

Don't

- *Start the PDNA when it will impede the delivery of humanitarian relief.*
- *Neglect logistics; seemingly small details like interpretation and transportation can create real bottlenecks in the assessment process.*
- *Create a system of multiple, competing assessments or ignore a sector because it's not a donor or development priority.*

Information management is important. As recent large scale crises have shown, media attention can drive the recovery process. Some countries have discussed including local media representatives in their assessment team. Others have found releasing estimated damage and loss figures before the report can cut down on inaccurate speculation.

In fragile or post conflict states, intergovernmental or international agencies may have to play coordinating role and refrain from creating duplicative or competitive assessment processes. Following cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, an effective partnership was formed between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the UN system and NGOs to undertake the assessment.

KEY RESOURCES

UNECLAC, Handbook for Estimating the Socioeconomic and Environmental Effects of Disasters (2009).

GFDRR Guidance noted for TTLs Conducting Damage and Loss Assessments after Disaster, GFDRR (2010).

UNDP Volumes II & III, Guide to PDNA/RF (undated).

The European Commission, the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning.

Jha, Abhas. Post-disaster Needs Assessment Methodology (Powerpoint slide) 2010.



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