

1. **How well did the project accomplish the targets set out in the project performance matrix?** This question was addressed by comparing the targets set out in the Project Performance Matrix with actual accomplishments. Narrative is provided where targets were not fully met indicating why the target was not met, and whether comparable outcomes were reached through other means.
2. **What impacts, either planned or unplanned, did the project have which may have contributed or impeded achieving specific project objectives or the overall project goal?** In the interview process, the responses to this question considered all project activities including assessments, training, consultations and use of REA resources in the development and use of other assessment tools or field activities.
3. **How were REA assessment results, training and training materials, perceived by target audiences in terms of appropriateness and utility?** Responses to this question were separately directed on the training and operational use objectives and took into account the different operational contexts involved when appropriate.
4. **How well did the project management structure work, in terms of efficiency and integration of effort?** Respondents were asked to take into account the decentralized team approach used to manage the project, relationships with OFDA, and links between the project and cooperating parties, including organizations with which training was conducted and collaborating partners such as the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit.
5. **How can the integration of the REA into the disaster relief mainstream, in terms of processes and products, be improved?** Responses to this question include a summation of lessons learned.

2. KEY RESULTS

The REA Guidelines have gone through several iterations over the course of this project. During phase I, the REA progressed from version 3.1 to version 4.2 by the time of the commencement of *REA II* two years ago, and has now progressed, through an iterative process, to Version 4.4. Those involved in revising the tool and materials have learned from a number of pilot efforts to utilize the assessment during the major REA events, which have included the Sri Lanka tsunami, the Indonesia tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake, the Bolivia floods, and the Philippine floods.

By far the most substantial modification and improvement to the REA came from the Ethiopia experience during *Phase I*, when CARE Norge suggested adding a community assessment component, which was developed and refined by CARE Ethiopia during field testing and is now considered by many of the respondents to be one of the most important elements of the *REA II* tool.

2.1 Project Performance Targets

Table 1 provides information tracking specific project accomplishments relative to targets defined in the project performance matrix.

Table 1: Project Performance Matrix

Expected Results	Indicator	Target	Outcomes
Training			
Increased number of persons trained in the REA	Number of persons passing post REA training testing at the 75% level	290 individuals	92 in Year 1; 138 in Year 2 230 total to date
A set of training products designed to fit different training needs and situations	Training materials developed and translated	1. One REA translation 2. Completion of a simulation addition to basic module 3. One revision of the “eLearning” module	1. French translation complete 2. Simulation module completed Sept. '04 3. eLearning module revised in Year 2
Increased number of trainers	Number of persons completing (1) TOT and (2) as trainer in training	44 new trainers	44 in Year 1; 114 in Year 2 158 total 6 “apprentice trainers”
Inclusion of REA based materials in the curriculum of organizations providing training internationally	Use of the REA training module or derived materials	1. Two REA trainings in association with local, region or international training organizations 2. Use of materials from the REA modules in other training by two organizations	1. 15 REA trainings held in association with other organizations 2. REA materials used in other trainings by eight other organizations
Operational Use			
Incorporation of disaster-environment issues into assessment planning and operational activities during major disasters	Number of issues identified during an REA which were addressed during relief operations or as part of recovery or rehabilitation activities	Four major issues per disaster	Some issues identified but integration into relief and rehabilitation activities highly limited
Link REA procedures and outputs to other sectoral disaster assessment procedures	1. Identification of avenues for collaboration between the REA and other assessment tools 2. Development of hybrid or integrated assessment procedures based on the REA and other assessment tools	1. Avenues of collaboration identified for three other assessment tools 2. One hybrid/integrated assessment process developed	1. Avenues of collaboration have been identified for 4 other assessment tools 2. One integrated assessment process discussed ²
Project Management			
Regular Reporting and Integration with project management staff	1. Status Reports 2. Exchanges with REA Advisory Board 3. Meetings with project management staff	1. Quarterly 2. Monthly 3. Twice-annually	1. Quarterly reports completed 2. Exchanges with Advisory Board ad ho 3. Twice annual meetings held

Training Targets: The project has nearly met all of the targets proposed in reference to training. The target for number of persons trained in the *REA II* phase is 290; 230 persons have been trained to date.

² The IUCN method used in the tsunami incorporates the REA as did the method developed for Darfur by the Joint Unit.

All of the new training products have been produced and are in use. The REA Guidelines have been translated into Spanish and French with a summary in Arabic. None of the REA Training Materials have been translated to date. They are available in English only. Work is complete on a number of simulation exercises developed for the three-day version of the REA training. (They have also been adapted to fit a one-day version of the REA training). Revisions of the eLearning module are also complete and the module has been linked to CARE Academy and other websites.

The training strategy has shifted over the course of *REA II*. Early trainings were three days in duration. The strategy has shifted to a 3-day REA training plus a 2-day TOT with an emphasis on training potential trainers on how to implement an REA as well as train others. Approximately sixty percent of participants to date have been involved in both sessions.

The project has significantly surpassed the projected target (n=44) for individuals participating in a TOT; 158 individuals completed TOTs. A significant number of REA trainings have been held in conjunction with other organizations. A presentation was made to the South African Disaster Management Institute in Cape Town on the REA and other post-disaster environmental impact assessment tools. A workshop on the REA and other post-disaster tools was conducted in Kingston, Jamaica at the request of USAID Jamaica where consultations were also held with GoJ authorities, and a presentation was made to the Jamaican Institute of Environmental Professionals as well.

From the beginning of *REA II*, the REA materials have been used by other organizations. REA methods and techniques were integrated into the Haiti assessment following Hurricane Jeanne. CARE Ethiopia conducted a REA training that included CARE field staff, GOAL, and representatives of three woreda government offices and zonal DPPC experts. Chemonics has made plans to undertake REA training in the Caribbean.

By the second year of *REA II*, the project added another category of outcome for training capacity building, which became known as the apprentice trainer. Those who were facilitating TOTs observed during the training exercises particularly qualified participants and identified ways to include them in the REA training cadre. A total of six individuals have taken an active role in REA training within the scope of this grant. One such apprentice trainer has been the lead trainer in four workshops.

Operational Use Targets: One of the areas that still needs work is that of integrating issues identified during an REA into relief and rehabilitation activities. Although the Darfur, Sri Lanka and Philippines REAs produced recommendations, country offices have rarely been able to actually implement the recommendations. One of the major constraints in the REA exercises has proven to be the difficulty in encouraging the country offices to incorporate the recommendations into their planning, given their own priorities and resource capacity limitations, particularly staff capacity limitations. Much work remains in promoting follow-up with country offices to induce environmental actions and activities following REA assessments. For example, the Darfur assessment resulted in some planning, consultations, and work on assessment tools with the UNEP/OCHA Joint Unit, but the scope and scale of activities following that assessment was limited at best.

A number of avenues of collaboration have been identified in reference to integrating the REA with other assessment tools. In Sri Lanka the CARE team has looked closely at adopting parts of the REA assessment tool as it relates to the shelter sector. With the help of IUCN, CARE in Sri Lanka is promoting environmental standards in resettlement activities, particularly in shelter activities. REA project Staff participated in the Shelter Project exercises in Geneva; the emergency shelter proved to be a natural focus area for cross-cutting REA assessment issues.

In addition, Food for Peace has explored the possibility of incorporating REA methodology into its food security assessment workshops. Informal feasibility studies have addressed the integration of the REA into food and livelihood security assessments. Additional plans include pursuing this possibility further by focusing on:

1. the standardization of post-disaster food security assessment procedures,
2. the use of livelihoods-based assessment tools following disasters, and
3. the development of an environment review process for food aid similar to that developed for shelter.

CARE and BHRC collaborated to chair a session at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) to discuss ways to harmonize different assessment methods and approaches and to foster inclusion of the REA process into other disaster assessment methods.

Project Management Targets: The main concern in the area of project management has occurred in reference to the REA Advisory Board. Project reporting over the course of the two year period has been excellent and the project management staff has also been meeting at least twice annually. Although a new REA Advisory Board was established at the beginning of Phase II of the project, concerns were voiced that the representation of the group was too narrow and needed to be expanded. The Board has played a minor role, remaining fairly inactive during Phase II of the project; however, they have been consulted on technical issues. Only ad hoc correspondence has taken place with this Board and project staff over the LOP.

2.2 Project Impacts (Planned or Unplanned)

The ***training components*** (workshops, products) provided by *REA II* have successfully introduced environmental issues into the disaster response conversation and expanded the practical understanding and use of the REA tool. The project impact derived from training activities has been substantially positive. Approximately 230 individuals have participated in REA training workshops and passed the workshop test and 158 individuals have participated in TOT trainings.

Having participated in the training, few participants have had the opportunity to apply the training in an actual disaster emergency context. This is mostly good news – a disaster has yet to occur in that context warranting the need for environmental or emergency assessments. Along these same lines however, because few people who have gone through the REA training have actually experienced a disaster, the REA tool has yet to be widely used. As well, there has been little opportunity for follow-up to monitor and track the outcomes of the trainings because many of the trainees have not had a disaster event to use it.

While it can be argued that it is good that not all 230 trainees have had to work recently in a disaster situation, thereby providing the opportunity to pilot the REA tool for themselves, several evaluation respondents have commented that lack of experience of use is a drawback to learning how to more effectively use the tool through direct experience. The choices in this case are not ideal; it is too late to introduce training after the disaster has occurred; therefore, the strategy of pre-disaster training is important and appropriate in the realm of preparedness activities. The intent of the training strategy, which has been successfully applied, is to pre-position skills and resources to act appropriately in the event of a disaster.

The *operational use* of the REA has seen mixed results. The REA was most successfully adapted in the Sri Lanka situation. The UN requested the REA and the process resulted in a set of practical recommendations including an appropriate strategy. The outcome was a shelter project that continues to be funded and operated by CARE. One positive but unplanned outcome resulting from the Sri Lanka REA was CARE's promotion and implementation of a partnership with IUCN. In addition, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment, Unit, CRS and UNHCR collaborated on the shelter check list, which was also an outcome of the REA.

The Pakistan REA was only partially successful. In the process of conducting the REA, participants began to think about the environment, and the process resulted in recommendations pertaining to rebuilding shelters and water contamination. But at the same time, CARE was new in Pakistan, lacked capacity to participate in the REA, had substantial staffing constraints, and as a result ignored some of the recommendations. Following the REA, which was conducted at an early stage, suggestions were then ignored for several months and the recommendations were ultimately employed only after several relevant agencies had made strategic decisions to proceed.

The Indonesia REA was requested by the Indonesia Government, which was significant because someone working for the government actually accessed the website to request the assessment. The Darfur REA was the least successful. The Darfur REA was proposed by the CARE Mission. The UN provided support and edited the report based on the assessment. The UN also secured funding for follow-up, which was not implemented.

In summary, as reported by respondents, the most salient outcome from the operational use of the REA has been an increased awareness of environmental issues in disasters. One weakness is the problem surrounding follow through, that is, a lack of capacity and resources to adopt recommendations and to capture outcomes after the REA has been conducted (more discussion on this issue in Section 2.E.).

Some unintended impacts, both positive and negative, include:

1. Requests from other organizations (UN, NGOs, governments) for REAs and incorporating REA techniques into their own disaster work;
2. Fostering collaborations and partnerships – CARE and IUCN is the most prominent;
3. Coordinating other environmental assessments with REA techniques and tools such as FRAME, the UNHCR assessment tool; and

4. Creating unrealistic expectations in terms of possible assistance to follow-through on recommendations, especially in coastal areas where serious funding constraints exist for some zones.

Case Study: UNDAC REA in Sri Lanka: Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster of December 2004

In response to the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit supported the deployment of two members of the UNDAC team, as well as a third expert from CARE International. These experts conducted the REA using a combination of approaches. The intent of the study was to develop a checklist to avoid or address damage from transitional shelter activities. The assessment process also took note of results from other evaluations conducted in Sri Lanka, including work by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean.

The REA effort in Sri Lanka is considered a successful testimonial to CARE International's commitment to address the environmental sector. This effort has resulted in a number of important steps taken to integrate the environment into CARE's efforts for tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation:

- CARE Sri Lanka collaborated with the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, CRS, and UNHCR to commission a study to identify and mitigate environmental damage.
- CARE initiated a MOU with IUCN, resulting in a partnership between the two organizations to work together to develop guidelines for tsunami livelihoods rehabilitation from an environmental angle. CARE and IUCN are currently exploring options to partner on a regional basis throughout Asia.
- Local Staff in various CARE offices have been provided with training and environmental guidelines to integrate environmental concerns into their on-ground operations.
- In CARE, as a policy, all new project proposals include the environment as a cross-cutting theme.

2.3 Responses from Target Audience

The most substantial result of the *REA II* activities has been the increased awareness of environmental issues in disasters as well as the recognized need for systematic environmental analysis contextualized in specific disaster situations in specific geographic regions.

Training Activities: Table 2 provides responses from interviews with workshop participants identifying their perceptions of both the strengths and weaknesses of the training sessions. A majority of the interviewees identified the disaster/REA simulation exercise, which is highly participatory and involves working in small but diverse groups, as a major strength of the training approach. The simulation exercise is based on local conditions, forcing participants to work together in teams as if working during a disaster. This component, which was added at a late stage to the training and did not exist during *REA I*, promotes team-building and problem-solving in a simulated disaster scenario.

All of the interview participants acknowledged that the training facilitators were experienced and effective. One training strategy improvement from Phase I that participants felt was effective involved a re-structuring of training staff. Most of the *REA II* trainings had a facilitator *and* a resource person, with InterWorks handling the facilitation and BHRC assisting with technical support. Participants also cited the flexible structure of the workshops as effective; training facilitators were able to adapt the training materials and approach to the specific country or regional context, where risks of different types of disasters predominate and the training participants vary.

While all participants felt that the trainings and materials were well organized and largely effective, an overwhelming concern was the language barriers fostered by presenting the workshop topics and materials exclusively in English. Many of the respondents felt that many participants in several of the training workshops apparently had limited English comprehension and speaking skills; they were not comfortable with such an intense use of English. Because the subject matter of the training is so dense and the time required to present and explore a lot of material during the workshop is so short, translation is out of the question. Many participants however, recommended that training workshops held in Latin America, for example, should be offered in Spanish and that some held in geographic regions such as West Africa should be offered in French. Some of the participants felt that the short time frame of the REA workshop (1-3 days) was a limitation, particularly when compounded by these language barriers. On the other hand, REA training facilitators noted that limited financial and time resources for language management precluded the luxury of translating training materials or presentation into local languages or training sufficient trainers to professionally run or facilitate the workshops. The limited resources also disallowed the possibility of simultaneous translations during the workshop proceedings, which would have substantially dampened the interactive participatory approach adopted by the training facilitation team and as well required another two days of training for each session.

Others felt that the diversity of professional backgrounds of the participants was an additional challenge and sometimes limited the efficiency in covering certain materials or conducting the simulation exercises. A few respondents felt that, after completing the workshop, they were still not qualified to lead a REA assessment. No one who participated in both the REA workshop and the TOT expressed this concern.

Although the demand for training is high, the perception is that CARE has not successfully lobbied for sufficient funding to allow for more training events. Some respondents felt that CARE was not effective in motivating the country offices to send participants to the training. Many of the CARE training workshops were populated with far more people from other organizations than from CARE. This last point could be considered a strength of the training exercises as well; more organizations were exposed to the REA techniques and methods, fulfilling one of the major objectives of the project – to increase awareness of the importance of environmental incorporation into disaster assessment and response activities. Dissemination of information about the training was not always efficient. In at least one case, in Kenya, the training had to be postponed at the last minute because insufficient numbers of people expressed enough interest to attend.

Table 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of REA Training Activities

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iterative process of evolution of the training strategy <p>Workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation exercise • Contextualization • Small, diverse working groups • Participatory • Flexible process • Effective visuals • Excellent training facilitators • TOT workshop opportunity <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressive CD • Excellent Guidelines (version 4.4) • Development of library of training materials <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of environmental issues in disasters • Practical integration with other assessment tools • Training offshoots • Increased demand for trainings 	<p>Workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barrier: trainings in English only • Intensity: Short time frame • Not enough integration of humanitarian context • Little use of videos • Simulation is somewhat artificial • Diversity of professional backgrounds of participants can be a challenge • Low aptitude of some participants to undergo the TOT <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some materials in Spanish but none in French or other languages • Lack of follow-up and monitoring after training • Lack of core funding for an institutional home • Lack of a planned integration with other disaster associated assessment tools <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some trainees do not feel confident they can conduct a REA after training • Longer term integration issues: roster remains small • CARE did not motivate own CO staff to participate • Demand for trainings could not be met (which is also an indicator of a successful training strategy as well as of interest in the REA).

Despite these shortcomings, other organizations, having heard about or participated in the REA training, have requested trainings. An important end result is that there is now a cadre of potential trainers from throughout the world. Finally, participants appreciated the flexible structure of the workshops, and all respondents felt that one of the most important contributions of the REA training was the increased awareness of relationships between environmental issues and disasters.

Tools and Materials: Responses about the quality and usefulness of the training materials and REA tools have been overwhelmingly positive. The REA Resource Packet CD is excellent. It includes the guidelines, the PowerPoint training materials, the assessments themselves, many contextualized materials, supplementary training materials, and a self-learning REA course. One focus of *REA II* has been to simplify the tools and the end result is a tool that most feel is user-friendly. Many felt that the community assessment component, which involves the community in analyzing environmental damages and issues, is the most helpful and therefore effective part of the REA process. A few participants commented that video footage of disasters and environmental issues would add to the workshop. The main concern expressed by only a few was that they still found the

REA tool, as a whole, to be cumbersome in terms of length and detail, requiring a lot of time to review and learn.

List Serve and BHRC Website: The website is acknowledged by users to be an excellent source of information, providing a very useful service for anybody interested in environmental issues related to disasters, including environmental assessment methods. There are currently 134 members on the list serve, which has developed into an email discussion group and serves as a good example of how a community of practice is forming. While some respondents found the discussions highly valuable, others found the dialogues to be less than stimulating. Others expressed disappointment in the topics but felt the information on the website was extensive and helpful. Several respondents felt strongly that the website information is useful in preparation for a training; many feel the case study examples are particularly useful. Several explained that they feel the website is now known as a good place to access the latest versions of REA tools as well as other tools such as FRAME and important updates on the environment and emergencies. It should be noted that although the number of users is small, all expressed gratitude in the efforts to develop and update the material.

While the posting of papers is one service, the listserv provides a mechanism for posing questions and clarifying issues. The site has also been used to run a virtual conference on the use of assessment tools. Several of the respondents made the comment that if BHRC were to abandon this cause, the list serve as well as the website would fall apart. Some respondents feel that the list serve is not particularly well used which raises the question of perceptions about and the utility of the REA tool. It would be helpful to be able to document the number of hits the website has received as another means of assessing the exposure of the REA.

REA II Presentations and Refinements: All of the respondents feel that the REA presentations are effective. Many respondents also acknowledged that the most important refinement for *REA II* was adding the community assessment component, which they felt brought community perspectives and reflection to the forefront of environmental analysis in the context of an emergency.

Localization of the REA: One of the strengths of the *REA II* is that it is flexible enough to be able to adapt to local conditions and different settings; the tool lends itself well to natural disasters. The iterative process of evolution has allowed practitioners to integrate new tools and techniques into the REA. In essence, the REA encourages localization. Although not all practitioners have been able to localize or adapt the guidelines to the local context, others have successfully adapted and creatively used the guidelines in the local setting. An example was CARE Ethiopia's ability to forge the community assessment tool, which subsequently became an integral part of the assessment process. In smaller scale disasters, people are not necessarily considering environmental issues; therefore the REA is essential because it allows practitioners to examine environmental issues specifically in the context of the local disaster. On the other hand, in the larger scale disaster, the REA provides an effective means for identifying and organizing a wealth of information on a range of environmental issues as well as providing useful tools for ranking environmental problems and perhaps using the

results to identify the potential need for the more thorough Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

2.4 Project Management Structure

Respondents who addressed this issue were asked to take into account the decentralized team approach used to manage the project, relationships with OFDA, and links between the project and cooperating parties, including organizations with which training was conducted and collaborating partners such as the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit.

Collaboration between CARE, BHRC and InterWorks has been generally positive. This relationship has largely been fostered through the work of BHRC and InterWorks, without whose efforts many acknowledge the *REA II* would not have been successful. The strength of this collaboration; however, is based more on particular individuals and not the institutions. This issue is most evident in reference to CARE. The turnover in staff at CARE has contributed to inefficiency in their participation in the project. A few prominent individuals within CARE are promoting *REA II*; the turnover of staff however, has been challenging on several levels and has, as one example, necessitated BHRC independence.

Some of the respondents were frustrated with CARE's apparent lack of commitment to the training process. Because leadership within CARE management has failed to champion the project, the REA has not been internalized by the organization. A further setback occurred because CARE International Emergency Group, now based in Geneva, has not prioritized the REA and environmental impetus. This development is obviously an issue for sustainability. At the same time, successes at the CARE country office level should be noted. In essence, interest is largely dependent on country office personnel and the presence or absence of REA enthusiasts in those offices. Tajikistan is a case in point; REA proponents promoted its introduction and strong Staff collaboration there in terms of training, and later, in conducting a REA directly following an earthquake.

BHRC and InterWorks, with CARE's assistance, have maintained a strong collaboration in organizing and conducting trainings. The workshop facilitation strategy has managed to corral each of the strengths of BHRC and InterWorks to promote successful training events, by harnessing InterWorks' training strengths and BHRC's technical knowledge of environmental assessment techniques in disaster emergency scenarios. The project has also managed to develop positive collaboration with UNEP/OCHA and has successfully brought in several RedRs, the Centre for Leadership (C4L), and IUCN as training partners. The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has been involved in some of the REAs, particularly in Sri Lanka. The REA project has also collaborated on the FEAST (Fast Environmental Assessment Tool), which incorporates the REA. The UNEP Post-Conflict Environment Unit funded InterWorks to train Iraqi officials on the REA in Jordan. This Unit also provided backstopping and funding to follow-up in Darfur. Other environmental NGOs have also attended trainings including WWF.

The REA project has developed an indirect partnership with UNHCR, which has proven to be very important to the project. The FRAME tools, which draw in part from efforts that have

gone into the REA, were developed for UNHCR. The *REA II* project team has had discussions with UNHCR to address terrain issues in reference to whether REA competes directly with UNHCR activities. Contacts have also been undertaken in Malawi with Action by Churches Together (ACT) which is planning a training event there.

One of the most significant collaborations that has developed over the course of *REA II* is with IUCN, which sponsored training workshops in Pakistan. CARE and IUCN have entered into a partnership through the secondment of an IUCN person to CARE in Sri Lanka. The IUCN has a program called Ecosystems and Development which examines ecosystems and the environment. CARE Sri Lanka developed a MOU and the IUCN person was assigned to CARE Sri Lanka, which after one year is attempting to retain his services for a further six months to one year. As a result, CARE Asia is working to expand this collaboration as a regional partnership. The IUCN sponsored a conference in Sri Lanka which promoted the need for personnel in environmental management.

2.5 Improvements to Integration of REA into Disaster Relief Process

The REA was developed and has evolved to meet the challenges that need to be addressed in using the disaster-focused environmental impact assessment tools to avoid or mitigate negative environmental disaster and post-disaster assistance impacts. One of the most important and significant ongoing challenges revolves around deciding which tool(s) should be used in a specific disaster as well as how and when to use those tools. This question has been raised by some of the evaluation participants in reference to the use of the REA tool specifically.

A second, related ongoing challenge concerns the integration of disaster-focused environmental impact assessment tools into other assessments. Many of the participants expressed confusion about how the REA can most effectively fit into the relief process, given the myriad of other priorities being simultaneously addressed by emergency response teams who have to try to prioritize the needs and gaps, including food security, nutrition, shelter, water, and security. While most recognized that the REA is designed to be initiated within days of the occurrence of the disaster, some of the respondents were confused regarding how the results are to influence the relief and recovery process given the many other priorities.

Others were confused about when the REA process should most effectively occur. Some perceive the REA as addressing medium- to long-term issues and should therefore be conducted one to two months after a disaster and following emergency assessments. Other respondents feel that because environmental concerns may be paramount, depending on the nature of the disaster, in an effort to have the results be addressed in relief efforts, the REA should be integrated into other emergency assessment tools and carried out when these assessments are conducted. As one example, CARE Bolivia conducted an REA, which has contributed to improved planning, but they had to frame their response, thinking about longer term situations. They feel that more precise distinctions need to be made between emergency response and development response and where the environment fits best into the planning and implementation phases of response.

On a related point, other respondents raised the question of the need for a stand alone REA tool and raised the issue of whether it would be more appropriate to amalgamate environmental questions and issues into some of the assessment tools commonly used by other sectors, including food and nutritional security, shelter, WATSAN (Rural Water Supply and Sanitation), and physical security.

A third challenge acknowledged by many of the evaluation participants centers on the use of the REA results. While most of the respondents acknowledged the value added of the *REA II* tool and materials, one of the most often mentioned concerns about its use was the fact that although the REA Report may have been interesting and raised some salient issues regarding the environment and disaster response, but in fact was gathering dust in an office and was not being used, or there were significant delays in its use. In essence, respondents feel that the information provided by the REA and the recommendations proposed are mostly not being integrated into the disaster relief process in a timely manner.

This point is not a reflection on the REA instrument or structure itself, but is very much a reflection of the institutional readiness or ability of organizations to effectively and efficiently integrate REA environmental findings and recommendations into the relief and rehabilitation phases of emergency response. It has been pointed out that the allocation of resources to address environmental issues in the context of a disaster is an indicator of an organization's commitment to truly implementing a rights-based approach or subscribing to the Sphere standards, which now include environmental indicators.

3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The REA has allowed organizations to think about incorporating appropriate environmentally friendly response mechanisms when designing emergency relief and rehabilitation activities. The REA is a good tool that provides an assessment strategy that is practical and useful. It is accessible, easy to use, easy to understand, and it does not require experts. In these ways, it is an appealing tool.

The *REA II* highlights the nexus between humanitarian concerns and environment during disasters – and provides a simple and rapid methodology for assessing the consequences of this nexus. The methodology is not agency specific, is designed for a generalist, and can be modified to suit many different agency needs.

While the REA provides shorter-term value, it does not yet have sustained impact, largely due to the lack of sustained effort on the part of organizations to thoroughly use it. In conjunction with this issue is the question of the longevity of the REA in the context of other priorities that push aside environmental issues in order to concentrate resources and energy on addressing the other high priority needs by implementing discrete sets of activities that need to be completed at the time of a disaster. In this regard, the REA workshop training is crucial, to allow people to think about or fine-tune their thinking about environment and disaster response.

While this evaluation recognizes a number of important accomplishments and strengths around the iterative process of refining the tools and materials, and integrating lessons learned from field tests, a number of important issues still need to be addressed to further strengthen the impacts of the use of the REA tool.

The following recommendations are derived from issues and problems identified over the course of this evaluation process:

Recommendation 1: Work to strengthen the trainings by publicizing workshops more systematically and broadly and well in advance of the event.

On several occasions over the course of the *REA II* project, workshops or other training activities had to be postponed as a result of lack of participation, when in reality, participants were not in attendance as a result of miscommunications about when the training sessions were to be offered. As well, some of the participating organizations, including CARE, failed to provide adequate information about training events, including the purpose and importance of the training as well as the logistics. Local organizations at times lacked the capacity and wherewithal to adequately prepare for or publicize training events. On the other hand, CARE sometimes appeared to suffer from organizational miscommunication in publicizing events.

There is a definite need for a better communication strategy for training sessions. Some respondents wanted their staff to be trained in the REA tools, but they had not received information about the REA project or the trainings. Many of the organizations have systems in place for advertising trainings and disseminating information about new tools and methods in general. The issue here may more likely be buy-in to the project and having staff in place to ensure adequate information dissemination.

Recommendation 2: Secure funding to conduct more trainings and to offer trainings in other languages.

The REA should grow in importance and use as environmental issues become “more popularized” and cross-cutting. Many organizations have evinced substantial interest but funding constraints may prove difficult to overcome, given the expense of conducting a workshop to train staff.

Additionally, because the structure of the REA workshop does not allow for translation of materials during the course of the training session, there is a need to provide trainings in Spanish and French (and other languages such as Hindi or Urdu when possible) when it is appropriate to do so. Language has been acknowledged by most of the respondents as a significant barrier to effective training on the REA tool. Exploring means for securing funding to support trainings in Spanish in Latin America, and in French in Francophone Africa, should be a priority.

OFDA has funded *Phase II* of this project but is not in a position to sustain funding. It is their hope that other organizations who have a stake in protecting the environment, for example, ECHO, would consider becoming a donor for the next phase of the project, which

would include additional trainings. A strategy should be defined for systematically approaching potential donors to be able to sustain the training efforts and to expand them to include trainings in Spanish and French at a minimum, and other languages when possible.

Recommendation 3: Develop strategies for follow up on related activities of those who have been trained in the REA.

Given that a number of trainings have now been conducted and a cadre of over 200 individuals have been trained in the use of the *REA II* tool, it is a good time to bring together those who have conducted the REA workshops (about six to eight people) and some key participants (another six to eight) to discuss improvements and modifications. The workshop methodology has been modified and improved piecemeal by each trainer, but these changes have not necessarily been incorporated or standardized into the training program, as there has been no budget for managing and developing this systematically.

The evaluation team has identified the issue of REA follow-up as an extremely important but deficient aspect of the REA implementation process, based on interviews with practitioners and field staff. The project has yet to systematically document the variety of experiences faced by trainees when conducting an initial REA. A system of assembling and sharing Lessons Learned from these experiences is critical to the process of performing more thorough and effective REAs over time. Extending the use of the REA website to this purpose is a logical first step.

Recommendation 4: Promote a better understanding of *when* and *how* the REA tool should be used relative to the specific disaster and range of tools available.

While all of the respondents feel strongly that *REA II* is valuable, some appear to be confused about its role and how it can most effectively be used relative to other assessment tools. Some, who perceive poor follow-up and ineffective use of a valuable tool, have recommended that the REA should be incorporated into larger scale assessment efforts. Within the context of disaster response, organizations continue to implement according to concern with the immediate needs of food security, nutrition, WATSAN, and shelter; the environment is traditionally considered a longer-term issue. Some of the respondents were confused about the length of time required to undertake the REA and felt a quick rapid assessment, incorporated as part of another assessment tool, would be more valuable. The point is that REA and evaluation participants expressed a variety of opinions about when and how the REA tool should be used relative to specific disasters.

As discussed in Section 2.5, a range of disaster-related environmental impact assessment tools are now available. (In part, this can be attributed to the pioneering efforts of the REA team.) The REA is one tool and given its flexibility, can be used in local, regional and national contexts in response to small- and large-scale disasters, but whether it should be used relative to some of the other available tools is still confusing some of the respondents.

What is ultimately needed is a more comprehensive and prioritized approach in coordinating post disaster assessments and more explicit information about where the REA can fit relative

to other tools. The emergency response needs to be considered as a sequence of assessment activities. Some tools cannot do some things; for example FRAME could not respond to shelter issues. IUCN developed a technique to look at livelihoods and emergencies. One can currently choose from a range of tools; how they can be used and put into practice is essential information. OFDA is considering a one-page tool, but some feel that this may not be enough. Maybe that tool will only be good for one week; more detail is needed to promote adequate response over time and as circumstances change. The REA tool is organized such that one can identify localization of its use – e.g., the drought in Ethiopia. One can localize the tool to adapt one page to quickly respond to the context. Environmental issues are more complicated in an earthquake or tsunami.

In summary, given the range of tools available, as well as limited time and resources, it is important to understand when the REA tool should be conducted relative to other related tools. The process of selecting the most appropriate tool should be based on the following considerations:

- **Scale:** The larger the disaster, the more likely a full set of environmental assessment tools would be needed.
- **Nature and scope of the disaster:** In “technological” disasters, assessments would most likely focus on specific aspects of the events while a large earthquake or hurricane would receive attention for a full range of tools.
- **Capacity of the affected country or region:** A country with developed and competent disaster response and environmental assessment capacities would need to apply fewer tools.
- **Policy focus of assisting organization:** Assessment approaches can vary by institution where an NGO may focus on a participatory approach working with survivors while a specialized international organization may focus on a more technological approach.

A discussion of the variables listed above should be highlighted as part of the REA training activities to ensure better understanding of how and when the REA tool should be used in any disaster setting. The REA is designed to be initiated within days following a disaster. It requires two to ten days to complete and involves a combined approach assessing both relief staff and survivor perceptions of impacts (the input from survivors is considered a critical element), both of which are consolidated in the analysis. The intended output is an identification of perceived salient environmental issues related to immediate relief and recovery operations. Ensuring that trainees understand these basic components relative to alternative tools is an important first step to both efficient and effective use of the tool.

Finally, the process of prioritizing or selecting assessment approaches would greatly benefit from a facilitated conference/workshop attended by users, practitioners, and environmental assessment leaders who can together objectively assess the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches and as an outcome of such a workshop, could recommend strategies of usage after considering the variables outlined above. It would frankly be presumptuous of an evaluation team relying on desk reviews and phone interviews to recommend one approach over another.

Recommendation 5: Identify strategies for ensuring that the results of REA assessments are used, and used properly.

Rarely in post-disaster recovery is there a stand-alone environment assistance component. Environmental issues are integrated into other relief and recovery efforts but often not in a comprehensive manner. While the last several years have seen a significant increase in post-disaster environmental impact assessments and reports, these reports have had little impact on actual relief and recovery operations. There is some evidence to suggest that some of these assessments and reports have had at least some localized positive impacts. But it is also clear that many recommendations have not been acted on or have been actively ignored.

Participants in this evaluation have acknowledged this issue as well. They feel that part of the problem in this area lies in the fact that planners see the REA and the information it provides as a low priority. They recognize the value of collecting the information but then do not necessarily know what to do with the information, implicit next steps or outright recommendations once that information is produced. As a result, REA reports frequently sit on shelves and do not get used by the agencies who commissioned them.

Few organizations have actually adopted the recommendations flowing from the REA assessment document. One frequent comment was that the consultant appears at the emergency scene to conduct the REA and make recommendations, but after this individual leaves, no one in the organization has the time, or perhaps inclination, to follow up on the findings or recommendations to carry the process forward. Evaluation participants expressed admiration and gratefulness toward individuals who energetically carried out emergency environmental assessments but then expressed frustration or confusion about how to use their work. A typical pattern is that of initial enthusiasm, then neglect. (Dependence on outside experts, who undertake the assessment and initially drive the process, can be initially appealing to organization management, who avoid committing resources and staff who could be deployed elsewhere, but in the long-term, such a strategy can actually be inefficient, because the process dies once the expert leaves the scene and nobody remains to carry forth the assessment findings and recommendations, which are grounded in the assessment process.)

Thus, the linkages between assessment and action need to be strengthened. CARE as an institution (and other organizations) needs to reflect on how to effectively connect the assessment process with action. This effort may mean several different strategies. It may mean conducting fewer assessments with more specific recommendations linked to specific sectoral requirements. Or it may mean that existing assessment methods need to be more finely tuned, to a particular type of disaster or assistance organization. An important next step here is to explore, more systematically, possible strategies for improving the connection between the REA recommendations and inclusion in relief and recovery actions.

Recommendation 6: Work to institutionalize the Environment in disaster response planning and implementation of relief activities.

While the past decade has seen a significant increase in awareness of the relationship between disaster impact and environmental conditions, NGOs and others agencies have applied a wildly diverse range of disaster response in actually integrating environmental concerns, ranging from relatively effectiveness to benign neglect to outright neglect. It is important to note that the current leading edge thinking about disaster-environment linkages understands the complexity of these linkages and recognizes disaster-environment issues as a critical element for effective disaster management. The issue here is that these understandings are not yet mainstreamed but need to be. Efforts have been made to include environmental concerns within rights based approaches and specifically in the latest Sphere iteration, but many organizations operating in the field have yet to institutionalize these efforts.

For example, several respondents commented that CARE’s perception about the environment continues to be “shallow.” The environment and environmental issues has received limited commitment and oversight within the organization.

In many cases, when the REA is conducted, use of the results is often individual-dependent as the institution has not committed to the cause. Many of the respondents discussed the high staff turnover within CARE’s Emergency Unit as well as the lack of commitment to replace the CARE US Environmental Advisor several years ago. Another important ingredient for the *REA II* effort to be sustained is continuous presence and commitment. Agencies and organizations must hire appropriate personnel to focus on this initiative and others that can reinforce it.

Recommendation 7: Continue to work to establish key collaborations and partnerships that are geared toward supporting trainings and use of the REA tool.

During the *REA II* project period, a number of collaborations have been initiated between agencies, NGOs and governments as detailed in previous sections above. Given that these partnerships are a key ingredient for sustaining the project effort, it is critical to continue these activities, by working to strengthen existing collaborations and by working to initiate new partnerships. This objective is achieved by continuing the process that has already been initiated in *REA I* and *REA II* – establishing networks through the training process and initiating and/or strengthening collaborations through the process of conducting the REAs. A facilitated workshop/conference that brings together selected champions of the emergency environmental assessment process (partly described under Recommendation 4) would help to maintain and perhaps enhance this process.