Waste Management

Network meeting: October 2013

Problematic

What should we do with the waste that we accumulate in the course of carrying out our missions? This is a significant, ongoing problem faced by humanitarian actors everywhere, regardless of what they are doing. The mission countries often have weak waste management policy and infrastructures. As a result, waste from missions accumulates in unsettled areas where there has been no impact assessment or is collected by local, informal networks operating without sanitation and environmental guidelines. Ultimately, however, responsibility for managing waste lies with the people who create that waste. Organizations must take ownership of the problem by finding low-cost solutions to the problem as soon as possible. This will ensure they abide by both international conventions and the humanitarian principle of "do no harm."

Experiences and feedbacks

- **Solidarités International: A shared experience, by Nicolas Brulé**

It's difficult to implement waste management procedures without genuine support and commitment of ground staff (mission leaders, logistics staff). Staffs are aware of the need for waste management but they are limited in what they can do because of **lack of time** to implement a process, a **lack of trained staff** to deal with the problem, and a **lack of resources** to dedicate to the process, not to mention the high cost of waste treatment.

When there are no procedures in place for effective waste disposal in the mission country, current practice is to store it, but this also comes at a cost. In time, the volume of waste can grow significantly, and the storage facilities are not always suitable for potentially hazardous waste. Some wastes are brought back from the field to the HQ but it remains occasionally.

The logistics staffs at headquarters are aware of the problem but the field conditions dictate what can be done and the **costs of treating or removing waste are rarely factored in to project proposals**.

Solidarités produced a **typology of the waste** generated in the course of a mission.

- **International Committee of the Red Cross: Waste and sustainable development in the ICRC, by Alain Oppliger**

Waste management is part of a **global sustainable development program** and is built around environmental, social, and economic factors. A comprehensive document about

the program was published in June 2013 and made available to donors and sponsors (distribution was limited, and the document is available in the shared library).

The waste management program identifies and looks at **two sources of waste**:
- Waste produced by the beneficiary population
- Waste resulting directly from the mission

Local populations need to be **educated** about the toxicity of some waste products. Reusing some waste can present a health hazard.

An intranet was created to educate and raise awareness among ICRC staff.

A **process** was implemented to better integrate waste management in programs:
1. Create work groups made up of staff from various delegations across the world
2. Conduct **baseline studies** on current waste management by type of waste → ICRC knows how much dangerous waste is generated in the field
3. Evaluate the environmental impact of the waste management procedures
4. Carry out life-cycle analysis to improve decision-making and make provision for remedial action on the life cycle of products

Some procedures have already been identified in this way and are being used particularly in Kenya:
- Disposal of tires in Lafarge cement plants
- Disposal of electronics (e-wastes) by Hewlett Packard

- **Action against Hunger: Sharing ideas, by Agathe**

Complete a review of waste disposal procedures that are currently used:

- To collect data, create a list of existing disposal methods for each type of waste and response zone
- Create an interactive map showing the missions, types of waste, and local treatment or removal options
- Set up criteria to check waste disposal methods available on the field
- Contact local authorities to find out about current procedures

Know the rules in the response zones:

- In the field, contact the environment ministry and other relevant bodies to find out about their waste management policy
- Consult the Basel Convention for direction on transporting waste

- **UNEP: Waste management in the aftermath of a disaster, by Sandra Besson and Wendy Cue**

Waste management in the wake of a disaster is complicated by the sheer quantity of waste, its diversity, and the absence of or lack of organization within existing procedures.

It is crucial to establish a management system as soon as possible for general everyday waste to avoid hygiene problems and to make it easier for emergency and humanitarian aid services to reach citizens.

Summary sheet: *waste management*

Some waste can be used as part of the reconstruction process. For example, construction waste (rubble, rocks, wood) can be reused in the reconstruction of houses and roads.

- **Independent consultant, specializing in waste management, Eva Roben**

Effective waste management encompasses a range of factors, from **planning** to minimize the waste to be treated to supplier and product choice and good inventory management. For example: include environmental criteria in bids and specifications.

List various **good practices** for purchasing, stocking, avoiding spoilage, streamlining collections, etc. For example, suppliers with "good business regulations" should be given priority.

❖ **Resources** : www.disasterwaste.org; www.oekotest.de; Guide des achats responsables de la ville de Genève; Joint Environmental Unit website; www.cefrepade.org

Outlook

- **Good practices and recommendations**

These presentations sparked valuable discussions which revealed all the organizations' strong interest in and recognition of the need for practical solutions in the field. Some thoughts:

- The concept of waste varies between developed and developing countries and changes with time. Today's waste is tomorrow's resource material.
- Waste management begins before any waste has been produced:
  - o Procurement bids: do not hesitate to include conditions about packaging, quantities, end-of-life recovery
  - o Good waste management begins during program planning, mission budgeting, answering donors. Wastes must be factored in to anticipate processing costs
  - o Environmental assessments can help in estimating and planning waste management
- Missions' waste management:
  - o Each mission must be aware of the local options available for waste disposal. There could be a variety of small-scale options that also contribute to the local economy
  - o Contact local authorities and universities across the country, or look into what happens to the waste
  - o Confirm the limits of acceptability regarding health and environmental hazards
  - o Missions must monitor and assess their waste production, particularly for hazardous waste
  - o Hazardous waste should be stored securely until an acceptable solution for its removal has been identified
- There was great interest in cooperation between missions and between different organizations working in the same regions: joint collections, streamlining procedures, for example.

Summary sheet: *waste management*

- It is not always possible to work with certain large industrial groups as they may be blacklisted by certain organizations, even though they might be able to offer workable waste management options.

- **Proposed actions**
- Develop a system specifically for the humanitarian aid sector to include waste management at all stages of a program.
- Develop a system to draw up waste management procedures for missions or programs.
- Create a record of all data so that missons, programs, and organizations can make an inventory of waste and treatment procedures.
- Make an inventory of the main treatment procedures by country/type of waste used by organizations in the network (e.g., Lafarge's disposal of tires in Kenya). Use this to create an inventory of waste management capacity in each mission country.
- For Haiti, launch a pilot project among the network members by bringing in as many other qualified, or interested, actors as possible. Create a detailed picture (ideally an interactive map) of all the current options used by the missions. This should include English-speaking organizations.