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**Decision to Act**

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**A Human Rights based approach to Disaster Management and Response**

**Jonathan Lim**

*Jus Ad Astra, lim\_jono@hotmail.com*

***Keywords:*** *Human Rights, Disaster Management, Decision Making, Policy, Law*

##### ABSTRACT

The application of a human-rights based approach to natural disaster responses provides novel avenues in the development, enhancement, and enactment of disaster management and response strategies under an international program of planetary defense. This is premised upon the need to empower people to claim their rights, to strengthen the accountability of duty bearers to meet their legal human rights obligations, and in respecting individual dignity amidst times of crisis. The duty of the state to respect, protect and fulfill human rights applies at all times, including during times of armed conflicts and natural disasters.

The scope of planetary protection seeks to address the risks associated with near-earth objects (NEOs), which pose potential impact hazards - disrupting the near-earth environment and carrying the potential to cause significant large-scale environmental damage and human casualties upon collision with the earth.

The significant threats posed by NEOs as a natural disaster event will place unparalleled strain upon existing frameworks and institutions - in warning and informing decision makers and the general public, implementing disaster response strategies, and in leveraging and coordinating public resources. The implementation of public measures to address the threat of NEOs is underlined by the development of a wider humanitarian crisis.

Humanitarian crises almost invariably result in immense human suffering, threats and violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.2 Pre-existing protection concerns may trigger a crisis or exacerbate the situation and its impact on affected populations. Consequently, international law provides a robust framework for protecting the human rights of populations adversely affected by natural and man-made disasters – underscoring the primary responsibility of states to guarantee protection, facilitate humanitarian assistance, and promote durable solutions.

Where humanitarian crises often result in or exacerbate human rights concerns, the implementation of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to in the creation of a disaster management and response strategy, under an international program of planetary defense, must be considered. This mandates that:

1. All programs concerning development cooperation and technical assistance should prioritize the realization of human rights;
2. That human rights instruments should guide development cooperation and programming; and
3. That development cooperation should contribute to duty bearer's capacity to meet obligations of rights-holders.

The specific benefits attributed to HRBA include its ability to drive participation, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment and legality.3 In the creation of a disaster management and response strategy it is thus recognized that the integration of HRBA helps secure the participation of the affected population in preparedness, response, and recovery efforts; ensures access for all to assistance and protection; and acts as a bridging function across phases of a crisis.

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