Credit: OCHA

Environment and Humanitarian Action in the age of global reform agendas

Background Document to the Nexus Dialogue

Environment and Humanitarian Action Network

The Environment and Humanitarian Action Network

The Environment and Humanitarian Action (EHA) Network is an informal network aiming to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts of humanitarian action and to promote environmentally responsible humanitarian programming through collaboration and cooperation. It holds bi-monthly teleconferences and one annual face-to-face meeting. Its particular strength is its unique composition consisting of 55 members from both environment and humanitarian communities as well as donors.

If you are interested to learn more or to join the network, please contact the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit (ochaunep@un.org).

Environment and humanitarian action in the age of global reform agendas

Background documentation from the Environment and Humanitarian Action Network to the Nexus Dialogue

This summary is based on previous studies and work conducted by the UN Environment / OCHA Joint Unit and its partners related to integrating environment in humanitarian action. It outlines major humanitarian trends that will shape the future integration of environmental considerations in humanitarian action. Changes in the humanitarian landscape range from shifts in the scale and type of humanitarian crises to global policy initiatives and reform agendas. By viewing these changes against evidence from humanitarian response operations in Afghanistan, Haiti and Nepal, the document provides examples of the extent to which environmental considerations have been incorporated into humanitarian action, also outlining areas of possible future work.

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Environment and Humanitarian Action Network

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Key messages

- From sudden onset and acute disasters to protracted emergencies and escalating conflict-related humanitarian crisis, the state of the environment lies at the very heart of a greater scale, impact and complexity of humanitarian crises;
- The global social-ecological change affects availability, access and quality of water, food, land and energy. This poses a double threat by increasing the risk of disasters and conflicts, and making communities more vulnerable to their effects. The situation is exacerbated by "threat multipliers" such as climate change, especially in low- and middle income countries.
- Disasters and conflict often propagate a vicious circle of ecosystem degradation, poverty and food insecurity.
- Gender is not just linked to the environment - humanitarian nexus, but intertwined. Disasters affect women, men, boys and girls differently, and often deepen vulnerability, exclusion and inequality.
- There is little consistency in the approach, commitment or allocation of resources to address the environmental concerns in emergency, humanitarian and security operations.
- The significant, yet often unrecognized environmental impacts of humanitarian action not only lower resilience to shocks in ecological systems, but also jeopardizes long term resilience of the most vulnerable and further erode hard-won sustainable development gains.

> *While we are much better prepared to disasters, the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation are increasing*
>
> *Erik Solheim, Environment and Emergencies Forum 2017*

> *Notwithstanding the evidence and the policy basis, there is only weak evidence that environmental issues are specifically and proactively incorporated into humanitarian action.*
>
> *The UK Department for International Development, 2015*

The deteriorating state of the environment triggers a greater scale of crises and disasters

Today's scale, impact, and complexity of protracted and natural disasters, and its subsequent humanitarian deprivation, is greater than at any time since the United Nations was founded. Increasingly intense disasters and prolonged conflicts are undermining sustainable development advances and eroding people's ability to cope with shocks. At the end of 2016, approximately 130 million people required humanitarian assistance – a figure that is almost 200 per cent higher than it was a decade ago [1].

Not only the humanitarian need is growing, but the drivers of need and the length of time that humanitarian assistance is needed have also changed. The deteriorating state of the environment lies at the heart of the changing humanitarian context[2]. Nature's contributions to people, such as water, food, land and energy are increasingly scarce, which are essential for human livelihoods. This can be both cause and consequence of instability and conflict. "Threat multipliers" such as climate change and biodiversity loss, especially in low- and middle income countries exacerbated the situation. Population growth and unsustainable consumption patterns are likely to deepen these challenges even further on all scales. Acknowledging the strong linkages between global and local links in environmental changes, both development planners and humanitarian practitioners will have to consider that these changes may cross global and local ecological tipping points eroding hard-won development gains and pose systemic risks to lives, health, and well-being.

Changes in the state of the environment are considered as a root cause of the increase in frequency and intensity of disasters[3]. There has been a doubling of weather-related events over the last decade, representing the overwhelming majority (90 percent) of disasters[4]. As climate change contributes to changes in severity, frequency and geo-spatial distribution of climate related natural hazards and stresses such as drought, humanity will have to face a myriad of new challenges concerning evolving risks, vulnerabilities and disasters. Approximately 1.5 billion people depend on degraded land for their livelihoods, with 23 hectares/minute being lost due to drought and desertification[5]. People in low-income countries suffer disproportionately from disasters. For example, the mortality risk is 225 times greater in low-income countries when compared to OECD countries for tropical cyclones of the same severity [6].

An unprecedented number of conflicts and displaced people is driven by environmental pressures, such as drought and desertification, sea-level rise, competition over scarce natural resources and the intensification of natural hazards. As the impacts of climate change become more profound, climate mobility is progressively becoming a key defining humanitarian and development issue. [7]

In 2016 alone, 297 natural disasters globally affected 377 million people with an average of more than 25.4 million people newly displaced each year since 2008. Of these, an annual average of 22.5 million people were displaced by the weather-and climate-related hazards.[8] By 2045, approximately 135 million people may be displaced as a result of desertification only[9]. The number of people displaced by conflict has nearly doubled since 2000, and has increased sharply over the last five years. Often, women and girls are disproportionately affected, and emergencies can deepen vulnerability, exclusion and inequality [10]. Over last 60 years, at least 40 percent of all internal conflicts have also been linked to natural resources[11]. For example, the illegal timber trade has funded rebel groups in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, climate change and global socio-ecological change are an amplifier of humanitarian risk and conflict. Addressing these highly intertwined challenged need the engagement of all communities and work towards long-term solutions. This highlights the need to commit to building resilience in the long term, rather than focusing on short-term response.


Credit: UN Environment

The vicious circle between conflicts and disasters, environmental degradation, gender inequality and poverty

The natural planet is a silent victim of conflict, with 90 percent of the major armed conflicts between 1950 and 2000 taking place in countries containing biodiversity hotspots, and more than 80 percent within biodiversity hotspot areas.[12] This often propagates a vicious circle of ecosystem degradation, poverty and food insecurity, as forest dwelling communities and subsistence farmers depend on what have become degraded ecosystems to sustain their livelihoods and income-generation opportunities. For example, the decades of war in Afghanistan resulted in up to 95 percent deforestation in some areas.

The exploitation of natural resources in countries with weak natural resource management structures represents another source of conflict as well as environmental degradation. Over last 60 years, at least 40% of all internal conflicts have been linked to natural resources, such as timber, minerals, oil and gas[13]. Especially extractive industries challenge both, fragile states and developing nations considering the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, often triggering, escalating or sustaining violent conflicts and continuous degradation. [14]

Regarding gender roles, the responsibilities are often closely linked to dependence on natural resources, the climate and exposure to hazards associated with environmental contamination. Disasters affect women, men, boys and girls differently, and often deepen vulnerability, exclusion and inequality. Men may be for instance primarily exposed to poisoning from cyanide in artisanal gold mining, while women have an important role in many societies as food growers, water and fuel gatherers.

The high environmental footprint of humanitarian action

The failure to take the environment into account during humanitarian response planning has manifested itself in many ways across various crisis situations and countries. For instance, it resulted in deforestation because of brick production for humanitarian operations in Darfur; dried up wells due to over-drilling for water by humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan; lead to fishing stock depletion in post-Tsunami Sri Lanka following an over-provisioning of fishing boats; or triggered environmental contamination in Haiti due to a failure to meet waste treatment standards, causing the largest outbreak of cholera in recent history. These examples provide evidence that the high environmental footprint of humanitarian action exacerbates impacts on livelihoods and ecosystems. It also demonstrates the little consistency in approach, commitment or allocation of resources to address the environmental impact of emergency, humanitarian and security operations.


Credit: OCHA

Translating political commitment into environmentally sound humanitarian solutions

2

Key messages

- At the backdrop of shifts in the scale and complexity of humanitarian crises, the divide between humanitarian, peacebuilding, environmental and development approaches provide few incentives to take into account the alarming rates of ecosystem degradation during a crisis. The UN system aims to close this gap by working across organizations towards collective outcomes.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Secretary General's UN reform agenda, and the multi-stakeholder reform agendas as outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit are a timely response to strengthen the humanitarian - environment nexus.
- There is a gap in understanding with humanitarian actors in the field on the linkages between humanitarian activities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

"We must bring the humanitarian and development spheres closer together from the very beginning of a crisis to support affected communities, address structural and economic impacts and help prevent a new spiral of fragility and instability. This approach relates to the New Way of Working agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit. To achieve this, we need more accountability, on the level of each individual agency carrying out its mandate, but also its contribution to the work of the United Nations system and of the system as a whole. A strong culture of accountability also requires effective and independent evaluation mechanisms." António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, December 2016

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a universal agenda for sustainable development, calling on all nations to mobilize global efforts around a common set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. While the pre-2015 Millennium Development Goals addressed different economic, environmental and social issues separately 'in silo's', the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has brought about a more holistic way of looking at development issues. This presents an opportunity to comprehensively address environmental sustainability as part of humanitarian programming, working to achieve a sustainable and equitable future for all.

There is a gap in understanding on the linkages between humanitarian activities and the Sustainable Development Goals. A survey1 showed that a majority of humanitarian actors in the field do not agree that humanitarian activities are explicitly linked with the SDGs, even though about half of the respondents reported that humanitarian activities are planned over multiple year timeframes.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the most vulnerable people, including those in crisis, must be a particular priority. For humanitarians to contribute to that vision, meeting basic needs in crisis will remain critical, but it is no longer enough. The 2030 Agenda urges all humanitarians to increase their cooperation across scales and to work closer with their respective counterparts in the fields of development, peace operations, environment, climate change, biodiversity and gender equality. Only then the mutual goal of reducing vulnerability and improving risk management can be adequately addressed. [15]

Environment and Humanitarian Actions through the SDGs lens

Reduced exposure
(SDG 1.3, 3.9, 6.3, 12.4, 12.8, 13.3)

Improved resilience of communities
(SDG 1.3, 11.b, 13.1, 17.7)

Ensured sustainability
(SDG 9.1, 9.4, 11.b, 12.8, 13.3, 17.14)

UN member states agreed that the SDGs are indivisible and should be implemented in an integrated manner. Humanitarian action interacts through a complex range of multi-layered mechanisms with all SDGs. Environment - humanitarian interactions operate through reduced exposure (SDG 1.3, 3.9, 6.3, 12.4, 12.8, 13.3), improved resilience of communities (SDG 1.3, 11.b, 13.1, 17.7) and ensured sustainability (SDG 9.1, 9.4, 11.b, 12.8, 13.3, 17.14). A systems perspective on the humanitarian – environment nexus would therefore deliver many co-benefits within and

between multiple SDGs that currently remain too often hidden for relevant actors. It would also revitalize the Global Partnership of Sustainable Development within SDG 17 by enhancing efficiency and the quality of humanitarian action.

The World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and its multi-stakeholder change agendas

The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 was a point of departure toward a multi-stakeholder change agenda. The "Agenda for Humanity" set the tone and ambition for the World Humanitarian Summit, and several other initiatives were launched under its umbrella, such as the "New Way of Working" and the "Grand Bargain". All have the common thread to go beyond meeting humanitarian needs by sharing a moral imperative of preventing crises and sustainably reducing people's levels of humanitarian need. This will broaden the focus from short term stability to long term resilience. These multi-stakeholder change agendas require the active engagement of stakeholders, beyond the usual suspects of humanitarian action: national governments, local authorities, national and international civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners, humanitarian actors, development practitioners and peacebuilders.

The Agenda for Humanity

The Agenda for Humanity highlights five core shared responsibilities to keep humanitarian action fit for the future. Although environment is not explicitly featuring, core responsibility four specifically outlines the necessity to transcend the Humanitarian-Development divide, reinforce national systems, and anticipate crisis. Environment is a cross-cutting issue that has the potential to bridge the divide between humanitarian response, early recovery and human development. Including environmental aspects into the first response following a disaster paves the way for long-term development and resilience. By incorporating national and local environmental actors in the humanitarian response, the structures are locally anchored and will remain after the first responders have left.

The New Way of Working[16]

The UN Secretary-General and nine UN Principals, with endorsement of the World Bank and others, signed a commitment to the New Way of Working around "collective outcomes". Its aim is not only to meet humanitarian needs, but also to reduce needs, risks and vulnerability over time.

Following the guiding principles of the World Humanitarian Summit and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Way of Working goes beyond a multilateral-only agenda, aiming for closer alignment between humanitarian and development processes. By addressing prevention and a more coherent and sustainable response to crises and disasters, it places the short term and long term needs of people at the center of the response.

The Grand Bargain [17]

The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, each making commitments to make aid delivery more efficient, tapping into human and financial resources for the direct benefit of affected populations. Work streams, with a total of concrete 51 commitments, include enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development actors, less earmarking and more transparency how funds are spent, increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity, more support and funding for local and national responders, increased use and coordination of cash-based programming and a participation revolution which includes people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives .[18]

The new Secretary-General reform agenda

The Secretary-General has concurrently introduced three major reform streams: those of the review and strengthening of the UN development system to achieve the SDGs, the peace and security architecture, and the management and administration systems of the UN Secretariat. Although environmental considerations are not directly mentioned, these major reform processes are relevant for the humanitarian-environment nexus through a prioritization on more joined-up approaches between development and humanitarian actors, as well as ensuring more coherent and innovative financing.

Core humanitarian standards

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability[19] identify the need to act on environmental issues systematically. This is well-recognized by the designation of environment as one of the four major cross-cutting humanitarian issues[20]. Environment is also acknowledged in core humanitarian policy documents[21]; it is a component of the *do no harm principle*[22]*;* and, integral to the promotion of human rights in humanitarian action.[23]

Nonetheless, several Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) real-time evaluations acknowledged that the environment is neglected and not sufficiently integrated into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).[24] Environment often falls into the void between disaster management, civil protection, development and environmental institutions. On the disaster management and humanitarian response side, organizations are typically focused on providing life-saving assistance, leaving environmental and recovery considerations for development actors. On the environmental side, many development and environmental organizations receive minimal support to develop capacity on the integration of environment into disaster response.

3 Learning from the field

Bulking-up the evidence base: The Good, the Bad, and the Invisible

The good: Pakistan Flooding 2010

Following the flooding in Pakistan in 2010 flooding, 1.2 million houses were lost, mainly in poorer rural areas. As part of their response, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) worked on a brick-building model that resists flooding, costs 60 percent less, and reduced CO2 emissions by 90 percent [25]. Similarly, a decision to use a more environmentally friendly brick process in Darfur curbed deforestation while also reducing costs by 30 percent.[26]

The bad: Nepal earthquake

Short cycles of humanitarian funding and subsequent short term monitoring of project impact make it difficult to show benefits of investing in mainstreaming the environment into humanitarian action.[27] In response to the Nepal earthquake, one example of this reality was the purchase of less durable items than normally offered, which increased waste and led to higher costs as the items were discarded shortly after purchase.[28]

The invisible: South Sudan

Because nature is invisible in the choices made on humanitarian action in South Sudan, natural resources have steadily been depleted without understanding either what it really costs to replace services provided for free by nature, or that man-made alternative solutions are sometimes far too expensive for these services to be replaced or substituted [29]. Indeed, firewood needs for energy generation as well as increasing numbers of cattle are two major causes for the deforestation, soil degradation and water scarcity around the refugee camps in the Upper Nile State in South Sudan. Furthermore, illegal charcoal production and a lack of solid waste management structures increase the pressure on the environment.[30] By exceeding the natural regeneration capacities of forests, grazing lands and water resources as well as pollution and further resource exploitation, long-term recovery and development are seriously undermined. Overlooking environmental aspects in camps management hence impede recovery efforts and increase the costs for rehabilitation in South Sudan.[31] The EHA network highlights the need for study to assess the cost of inaction, and recognizing the value at risk from the high environmental footprint of humanitarian action. More info - Annex 1: ToR South Sudan Study Proposal.

Based on the findings of the study *Environment and Humanitarian Action - Increasing effectiveness, sustainability and accountability* (JEU, 2014), the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Environment Unit - with the financial support from the Government of Finland – undertook in 2015 three country-level studies in Afghanistan, Haiti and Nepal to explore the extent to which environment was integrated into humanitarian action in selected crisis.

Common findings from Haiti, Afghanistan and Nepal[32]

The country studies for Haiti and Nepal refer to sudden onset disasters while the case study on Afghanistan relates to a complex emergency. While therefore not all results can readily be compared between the three countries, the following analysis tries to identify those that show commonalities and provide material to inform the formulation of recommendations.

Overall, the evidence from the three case studies:

- Provides additional evidence that helps to build the current body of research related to the integration of environmental issues into humanitarian action;
- Reveals areas where environmental considerations have been successfully integrated into humanitarian action, generally at the level of individual Clusters; and,
- Underscores the need for action to ensure that environmental issues are identified and addressed in humanitarian action early on in the process.

a. Impacts of humanitarian action on the environment and human well-being

Strong linkages between environmental issues and humanitarian action are apparent in each country. As one example, procurement of material to construct emergency shelters in Haiti relied on unsustainable local sources of timber, destroyed approximately 5000 hectares or 5% of the country's remaining forest cover, and may have contributed to increased flooding and landslide risks.

b. Rapid Environmental Assessments are underused

Rapid Environmental Assessments are well developed conceptually and operationally, but their application and follow-up was limited in both sudden onset disaster cases. The United Nations and other first responders did not conduct a Rapid Environmental Assessment in either Haiti or Nepal, notwithstanding the presence of many early responders. In Haiti, the United States Agency for International Development conducted a Rapid Environmental Assessment, but there was insufficient monitoring to determine whether the recommendations had an impact. In Nepal, a Rapid Environmental Assessment was undertaken, but the results were not available publicly for almost six months.

c. Lack of awareness, knowledge and experience to address environmental considerations – need for specialized personnel

In all countries a lack of awareness by, or knowledge and experience of, humanitarian actors regarding potential impacts on the environment was apparent and repeatedly voiced. Even though there was a high level of environmental awareness during the response in Nepal, a lack of knowledge or information of who to contact to undertake environmental assessments impeded concrete actions. In Haiti, an Environmental Field Advisor (see Box below) was deployed to support the Emergency Shelter cluster for two weeks; too short of a time to ensure the implementation of the recommendations.

Environmental Field Advisor (EFA)

Various organizations deploy specialized personnel to assist with the environmental dimension of humanitarian action. One example are Environmental Field Advisors (EFA) who have specialized environmental expertise and can be deployed to support Humanitarian Country Teams in response to a new or escalating emergency.

For more information contact the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit:

ochaunep@un.org


Credit: JEU

d. Missing local environmental context: National environmental authorities and national environmental non-governmental organizations.

In each case study national environmental authorities had limited contact with both international humanitarian organizations and national disaster management organizations and processes. This likely limited the extent to which environmental interventions could be contextualized. For example, in Afghanistan, the National Environmental Protection Agency had only limited involvement with key government stakeholders and the humanitarian community despite its high level of awareness and broad knowledge of environmental impacts of the conflict and the associated response. The situation is substantially the same for national environmental non-governmental organizations, irrespective of the extent to which they possessed capacity and expertise to support humanitarian efforts.

e. Humanitarian Country Teams

Humanitarian Country Teams are the centre-piece of the humanitarian coordination architecture in an affected country. In all three case studies no substantial integration of environmental considerations was in evidence in Humanitarian Country Teams and there was no established means by which national environmental organizations were contributing information.

f. Clusters

Integration of environmental issues into Clusters was uneven across *different* Clusters, and across the *same* Clusters in different emergencies, to a greater degree than what is attributable to the demands of the crises. Some Clusters offered examples of good integration of environmental issues, in particular, the Emergency Shelter and WASH Clusters. Others demonstrated an almost complete lack of integration of environmental considerations. For example, in Haiti's Food Security Cluster unrestricted importation of seeds without reference to phytosanitary requirements and unregulated importation and use of pesticides was observed.

The "Cluster" Approach

In 2005, a major reform of humanitarian coordination, known as the Humanitarian Reform Agenda, introduced a number of new elements to enhance predictability, accountability and partnership. The Cluster Approach was one of these new elements.

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination. Environment is recognized as a cross-cutting issue.

Early recovery | *Logistics* | *Camp Coord.* | *WASH* | *Food security* | *Protection*

g. Inter-cluster Coordination

No substantial integration of environmental considerations was in evidence in Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC) mechanisms, with the exception of Nepal where the participation of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal in the ICC was referred to as the first significant step to put environment on the response agenda. In Afghanistan, the lack of clear guidance adapted to the local context was identified as one of the main challenges for the non-consideration of environmental issues at ICC level. The development of a "tool box" on environmental issues to support ICC as well as the stronger involvement of UN Environment in the ICC teams were proposed as practical solutions.

h. Donors

The approach by donors to the integration of environmental issues was uneven across and within case studies. Some do not perceive that the environment is relevant in humanitarian contexts and timeframes, most have no environmental criteria in funding procedures, and many do not perceive adequate value for money in including environmental criteria. The UK Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, however, have principles for mainstreaming environment in humanitarian action as do other donors. The benefits of donors that 'champion' the issue of integrating environment was apparent as part of the country studies. The United States Agency for International Development in particular took a strong role in both Haiti and Nepal. However, in Haiti, for example, monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations was limited so that it is difficult to determine if these had an impact.

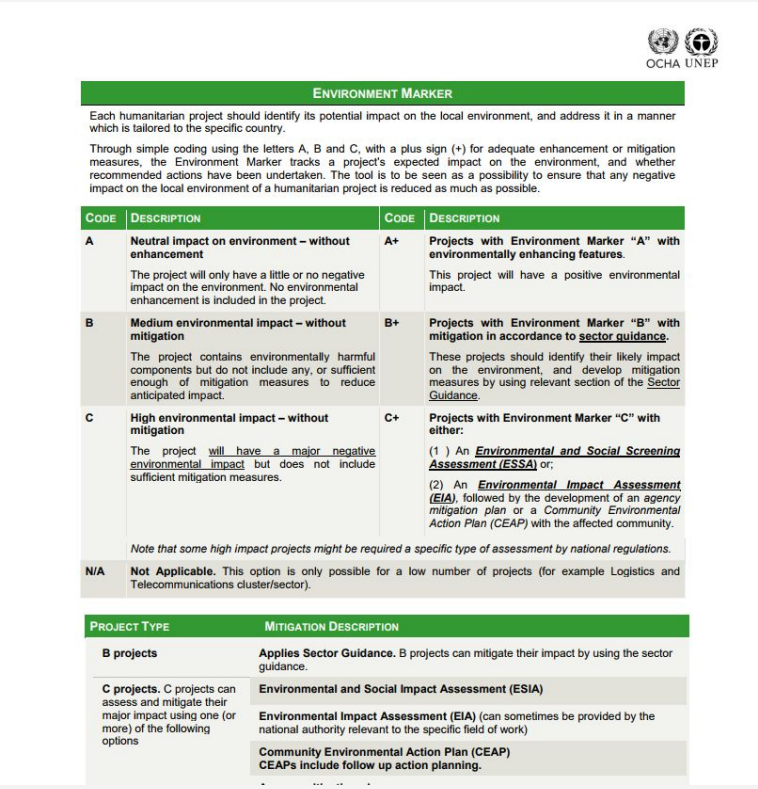
i. Country-based pooled humanitarian funds, Transitional and Flash Appeals

These mechanisms differ in scope and purpose, but all case studies shared the limited integration of environmental considerations resulting in a lack of funding for related activities. Afghanistan was a partial exception in that the Common Humanitarian Fund used an Environment Marker (see box below); however, tracking and monitoring of outcomes was not included in accountability.

Environment Marker

The Environment Marker is a tool to mitigate the impact of humanitarian projects and activities on the environment. The Environment Marker tracks a project's expected impact on the environment, and whether recommended actions have been undertaken or not using a simple coding system.

A guidance note on the Environment Marker is available here: http://www.eecentre.org/environment-marker/



OCHA UNEP

ENVIRONMENT MARKER

Each humanitarian project should identify its potential impact on the local environment, and address it in a manner which is tailored to the specific country.

Through simple coding using the letters A, B and C, with a plus sign (+) for adequate enhancement or mitigation measures, the Environment Marker tracks a project's expected impact on the environment, and whether recommended actions have been undertaken. The tool is to be seen as a possibility to ensure that any negative impact on the local environment of a humanitarian project is reduced as much as possible.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION
A	**Neutral impact on environment – without enhancement** The project will only have a little or no negative impact on the environment. No environmental enhancement is included in the project.	A+	**Projects with Environment Marker "A" with environmentally enhancing features.** This project will have a positive environmental impact.
B	**Medium environmental impact – without mitigation** The project contains environmentally harmful components but do not include any, or sufficient enough of mitigation measures to reduce anticipated impact.	B+	**Projects with Environment Marker "B" with mitigation in accordance to sector guidance.** These projects should identify their likely impact on the environment, and develop mitigation measures by using relevant section of the Sector Guidance.
C	**High environmental impact – without mitigation** The project will have a major negative environmental impact but does not include sufficient mitigation measures.	C+	**Projects with Environment Marker "C" with either:** (1) An ***Environmental and Social Screening Assessment (ESSA)*** or; (2) An ***Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)***, followed by the development of an *agency mitigation plan* or a *Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP)* with the affected community.
	Note that some high impact projects might be required a specific type of assessment by national regulations.		
N/A	**Not Applicable.** This option is only possible for a low number of projects (for example Logistics and Telecommunications cluster/sector).		

PROJECT TYPE	MITIGATION DESCRIPTION
B projects	**Applies Sector Guidance.** B projects can mitigate their impact by using the sector guidance.
C projects. C projects can assess and mitigate their major impact using one (or more) of the following options	**Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)**
	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (can sometimes be provided by the national authority relevant to the specific field of work)
	Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) **CEAPs include follow up action planning.**

Credit: OCHA

j. Energy sector

There were untapped opportunities in Afghanistan to implement the Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy Initiative. In Nepal, the Government's Alternative Energy Promotion Centre was instrumental in coordinating alternative energy solutions following the earthquake. However, shortcomings were encountered in linking the distribution of home and institutional solar power to Cluster priorities and coordinating the large number of international organisations supporting alternative energy solutions. Importantly, energy issues should be handled at a system, not project level, to ensure that the widely available guidance material is contextualized and used.

k. Preparedness

The third Core Humanitarian Standard [33] states that communities and people affected by crisis should be more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action. To varying degrees, each case study showed that environmental issues can be better integrated into preparedness activities. Doing so could lead to better response and minimize impacts in areas such as debris waste management and natural resource protection (e.g. by establishing agreed guidelines as part of contingency plans). Preparedness also provides opportunities to link development, disaster risk reduction, environmental and humanitarian communities and increase the involvement of national organizations.

Beyond Business as Usual: opportunities to scale-up humanitarian-environment nexus win-win's

4

Key messages

- *Reinforcing local leadership and ownership.* Bottom-up solutions to mainstreaming the environment in humanitarian action are available, but strengthened political will and leadership is needed, building upon capacities and resources of countries.
- *More joined-up approaches between humanitarian and development actors.* In a more diverse and connected landscape of actors, a formal coordination mechanism could facilitate commitment to on-the-ground changes in overall humanitarian coordination, information management and policy processes.
- *We cannot manage what we do not know.* Assessing environmental risk more accurately and analyzing the livelihood dependencies on natural resources in humanitarian situations more holistically will increase the overall efficiency and quality of humanitarian action.
- *Ensuring more coherent and innovative financing.* Aligning humanitarian funding with environmental and climate finance flows can leverage positive humanitarian outcomes by tackling environmental root causes that undermine sustainable development progress.

Agreeing on the need to align with global change agendas for reshaping humanitarian action was a success. However,However, further serious efforts are necessary for a comprehensive shift in humanitarian action. These include i) reinforcing local leadership and ownership, ii) more joined-up approaches between humanitarian and development actors, and iii) ensuring more coherent and innovative financing. Strong entry points for the environment-humanitarian nexus have been identified throughout the findings from the field and are integrated in the below areas for possible further work.

> *Despite the existence of tailored and tested tools, policies and guidance, environmental considerations are rarely taken into account during humanitarian planning and response. One vehicle to promote environmental considerations is to monitor and review donor policies and behavior in this field and provide recommendations for donors to better include environmental considerations in humanitarian action."*
>
> *Anna Gebremedhin, Co-chair of 2014 Good Humanitarian Donorship High level meeting*

Reinforcing local leadership and ownership

National and local responders are often the first to respond to crisis, remaining the communities before, during and after the emergencies. Humanitarian action engages with local and national responders in a spirit of partnership, and aiming to reinforce rather than replace local and national capacities. However, the country studies show a limited coordination between national environmental authorities with both international humanitarian organizations and national disaster management organizations and processes.

The country study findings show a lack of awareness, knowledge and experience to address environmental considerations at the local, national, regional and international level, as well as at the donor level. Bottom-up solutions to mainstreaming the environment in humanitarian action are available, but strengthened political will and leadership at the operational level is needed, building upon capacities and resources of countries. Local and traditional knowledge must be integrated from the earliest possible stages, leading to a participation revolution in which people receiving aid are included in making decisions which affect their lives.

Where resources or technical knowledge are insufficient and added capacities would increase effectiveness, the UN system can provide assistance. The benefits of donors that 'champion' the issue was apparent in the country findings. The starting point is to work collaboratively across institutional boundaries based on comparative advantage, building stronger connections between affected people, national and international actors and between humanitarian, environmental and development practitioners.

Credit: OCHA

Joined-up approaches between humanitarian and development actors

Partnership between environmental and humanitarian actors

In order to increase accountability, joint result frameworks as well as shared benchmarks for success will facilitate the cooperation between different actors around collective outcomes. Bringing them closer together will have large impact with regard to implementing strategies for disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response and recovery on the ground.[34]

The country findings showed no substantial integration of environmental considerations in Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC) mechanisms. Integrating environmental considerations throughout the Humanitarian Response Planning cycle will further facilitate joint-up approaches between humanitarian and development actors, as part of the new UN system reform initiated by the UN Secretary General.

Semi-formal networks and partnerships at the environment-humanitarian nexus do exist (Environment and Emergencies Forum 2017, Environment and Shelter Community of Practice, Environment and Humanitarian Action Network), and are engaging a diverse set of actors in supporting collective humanitarian action. Exchange of information has created a mutual understanding between different actors speaking the same language on the need to holistically integrate environment into humanitarian action. This goes beyond transmitting material from providers to audiences, and involves nurturing of self-driven informal networks such as the "Environment and Humanitarian Action" network.[35]

The country studies showed no evidence of substantial integration of environmental considerations in Humanitarian Country teams – the centre piece of the humanitarian coordination architecture. Although a critical mass of "agents of change" is present, the lack of a formal coordination mechanisms makes it difficult to materialize impact and on-the-ground changes in overall humanitarian coordination, information management and policy processes. Stronger institutional support for successful environmental stewardship can progress coalition building, clarify strategies, bring actors together, and realize clear and accountable results for affected people.[36]

Holistic and shared analysis

The country study findings showed that although Rapid Environmental Assessments are well developed conceptually and operationally, their application and follow-up is limited. Showcasing the interdependencies between effective humanitarian action and its environmental footprint is a

critical factor in maximizing policy change and long term resilience building. Risk assessments need to be multi-hazard and include environmental risk factors such as vulnerability and technological hazards. Only such comprehensive risk assessment can give an overview over possible secondary hazards and may provide a sound foundation for further decision-making.

The fast developments of tools and open platforms to capture and analyze environmental meta- and secondary data allow a move from sector analysis towards analyzing drivers of a crisis in a more comprehensive manner. Furthermore, they foster a shared understanding of vulnerability and risks, facilitating the development of more holistic solutions with a focus on vulnerability reduction and livelihood dependencies on natural resources. However, with regard to open data platforms, information is not used at times of humanitarian crisis due to i) an absence of trust in environmental data sources, ii) established partnerships excluding environmental actors, iii) missing standards to validate environmental data, iv) and lack of guidance from humanitarian actors to make the data fit purpose. Numerous actors are working to expand environmental data exchange efforts for its use in inter-sectoral, comprehensive and forward-looking analysis of humanitarian needs and priorities.

Coordination of Assessments for Environment in Humanitarian Action: a Joint Initiative

A working group of partners including USAID, UNHCR, UN Environment, OCHA and WWF are cooperating as part of an initiative that is aimed at facilitating exchange between environmental and humanitarian actors, with focus on better coordination of post-disaster environmental assessments and sharing of available data.

http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/

Coherent and innovative financing

The country evidence shows limited integration of environmental considerations in country-based pooled humanitarian funds, transitional and flash appeals, resulting in a lack of funding for related activities. While shifts in funding from development to humanitarian programmes or from humanitarian to development actors would not be expedient, a collaborative approach to funding across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantage represents a promising solution. Especially for protracted crisis, more predictable, flexible, multi-year financing is raised as a priority to progress towards achieving collective outcomes.

Integrating environment into financial schemes of humanitarian disaster response, preparedness, mitigation and adaptation will contribute to the sustainability of actions. Although resource mobilization efforts to integrate environmental considerations in humanitarian action exist, these are ad hoc, remain project focused and limited in time and budget. They are often small-scale projects of a pilot nature and thus perceived as innovation as opposed to standard best practice. In addition, they are often expected to demonstrate short term relevance or deliver evidence of feasibility.

The environment – humanitarian divide is very prominent at the financing level, as often, both the environmental and the humanitarian actor views the issue as problem of 'the other', which results in inadequate donor support. Aligning humanitarian funding with environmental and climate finance flows have can leverage positive humanitarian outcomes though tackling environmental root causes that undermine sustainable development progress. Investing into environment can be considered as a "no-regret" investment with long-term impact and enhanced sustainability. For example, researchers highlight the potential of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction as a sustainable, low cost investment into the protective services provided by ecosystems leading to multiple benefits such as healthier and more diverse ecosystems as well as enhanced protective capacities that reduce disaster risk.

Credit: UN Environment

Conclusion: getting the story straight about the nexus between environment and humanitarian action

5

Environment and humanitarian goals go hand in hand. The alarming global socio-ecological change and climate changes are both cause and consequence of a greater scale, impact and complexity of protracted crisis and natural hazards. Because nature is often invisible in the choices we make in the humanitarian system, short term stability is realized by steadily drawing down local natural resources. There is no understanding either what it really costs to replace natural resources provided for free, or that man-made alternative solutions are sometimes far too expensive for these natural resources to be replaced or substituted. This shows the need for global and local actors to step up awareness raising efforts on the interdependencies between effective humanitarian action and addressing environmental issues, to broaden the focus from short term stability to long term resilience.

Change is happening, with bottom-up solutions to mainstream the environment in humanitarian action being implemented. At the same time, strong entry points for the environment-humanitarian nexus are identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Secretary General's UN reform agenda, and the multi-stakeholder reform agendas as outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit. Concrete recommendations are identified around three common threads of the above describe policy agenda's: i) reinforcing local leadership and ownership, ii) more joined-up approaches between humanitarian and development actors, and iii) ensuring more coherent and innovative financing. Indeed, by working across organizations at different levels, a holistic response integrating environmental considerations can bridge the divide between first humanitarian response, early recovery and human development.

> *We need to get the story about environmental risks and opportunities in humanitarian action straight. After all, if we're not even starting at the right place, we certainly will not end up at the right destination.*
>
> *Participant Environment and Emergencies Forum 2017*

Annex 1

ToR Study proposal on Environment and Humanitarian Action in South Sudan [37]

Phase I:

The cost of inaction: Recognising the value at risk from the high environmental footprint of humanitarian action

Outline

The Terms of Reference outline the tasks involved in undertaking an evidence-based country analysis on the environmental footprint of humanitarian action in South-Sudan. The study is aimed to inform humanitarian planning processes linking to the Humanitarian Planning Cycle, with the aim to address links between crisis vulnerability, ecosystem degradation, livelihoods and poverty. By identifying and quantifying the environmental impacts of humanitarian assistance, the study would play a role in identifying ways to support climate and disaster resilient humanitarian action in South Sudan.

The study process would be implemented under the leadership of UN Environment South Sudan with support of national and international partners, including the UN Environment / United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Unit (JEU), as well as URD, FAO, IOM, NRC, UN Environment TEEB, UNHCR, UNICEF, USAID, WFP, and other.

Background

Humanitarian experts cite climate change and environmental factors as the most important issues that will increase vulnerability in the future. The future of humanitarian action increasingly depends on how increasing crisis risk, impacted by a convergence of new global trends including climate change and environmental degradation, is managed. Good humanitarian assistance should ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account at the earliest stages of disaster preparedness and response.

There has been little consistency in approach, commitment, or allocation of resources to address environmental issues in humanitarian assistance in South Sudan. Because nature is often invisible in the choices we make in humanitarian action, we have steadily been drawing down natural resources without understanding either what it really costs to replace services provided for free by nature, or that man-made alternative solutions are sometimes far too expensive for these services to be replaced or substituted. While efforts are undertaken to integrate environmental considerations in humanitarian assistance, these have remained project focused and limited in time and budget allocation.

Annex 1

In line with the above, the Environment Management Group (EMG, https://unemg.org/) highlights the need for stronger evidence-based advocacy within the humanitarian system of the crucial benefits of mainstreaming environment into humanitarian action. The EMG has recommended that further analysis is conducted, and based primarily on quantitative evidence of the interdependencies between effective humanitarian action and environmental considerations. Such studies are seen as providing a baseline to guide cost-benefit analysis and future programmes.

Objective

The overall objective of this study process is to reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian action in South Sudan, while building-up community resilience to crisis risk.

This will be achieved through the following two project outputs:

Output 1 (first phase): Demonstrating the benefits of integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian action

An environmental footprint analysis of humanitarian action, conducted in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, would make the case for the incorporation of environmental considerations into humanitarian response plans and projects in a specific sector and/or geographic area

Output 2 (second phase): Capturing environmental benefits by incorporating these into Humanitarian Planning Cycle (HPC) tools and services

Based on the evidence-based country analysis, recommendations and activities will be jointly developed with national and local stakeholders to inform and influence Humanitarian Planning Cycle (HPC) tools and services (e.g. cluster work plans, assessments, strategic response plans, monitoring tools) to ensure environmental impacts from humanitarian action are mitigated. These would both address quick environmental-humanitarian win-win's but also look to how to strengthen long-term preparedness and response planning. Rapid Environmental Assessment processes[1] would be piloted to make humanitarian operations more effective and sustainable.

Changes that may be attributed to the analysis:

- Country humanitarian processes, systems and tools are strengthened and better placed to mainstream environment, minimizing negative impacts to lives and livelihoods;
- Improved partnerships between humanitarian, environment and socio-economic entities (including with government), leading to local leadership and ownership of partnerships on environment in humanitarian action;

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- Improved awareness and possibilities for increased donor funding for environmentally/climate sensitive activities;
- Increased ownership by humanitarian actors of tools to assist in integration and tracking of environmental considerations (i.e. use of/improving use of Rapid Environmental Assessments, Environment Marker);
- Good practices shared and scaled-up, and new approaches and techniques developed on cost-effective humanitarian action that addresses environmental risks to livelihoods;

Footnotes

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Glossary

Cluster

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination.

Complex emergency

A complex emergency can be defined as a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme.

Environmental emergency

An environmental emergency typically occurs in the wake of a natural disaster or conflict, when lives and livelihoods are threatened by the release of hazardous substances, or because of significant damage to the ecosystem. Environmental emergencies include oil spills, the dumping of toxic waste, and the pollution of groundwater.

Disaster impact

Disaster impact is the total effect, including negative effects (e.g., economic losses) and positive effects (e.g., economic gains), of a hazardous event or a disaster. The term includes economic, human and environmental impacts, and may include death, injuries, disease and other negative effects on human physical, mental and social well-being

Disaster risk

The potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets which could occur to a system, society or a community in a specific period of time, determined probabilistically as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity.

Disaster Risk Assessment

A qualitative or quantitative approach to determine the nature and extent of disaster risk by analysing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of exposure and vulnerability that together could harm people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend.

Glossary

Man-made hazard / Anthropogenic hazards / human induced hazards

Hazards induced entirely or predominantly by human[s], including technological and socio-natural hazards / economic activities.

Note: The association of hazards with families and sub-families is solely a suggestion. Some hazards may change their family association based on the actual event and loss trigger.

Natural hazards

The range of man-made hazards includes technological and socio-natural hazards, and those that may arise from the relationships within and between communities. This term does not include the occurrence or risk of armed conflicts and other situations of social instability or tension which are of the scope of IHL and national legislation.

Note: The association of hazards with families and sub-families is solely a suggestion. Some hazards may change their family association based on the actual event and loss trigger.

Preparedness

The capacities and knowledge developed by governments, professional response organizations, communities and individuals to anticipate and respond effectively to the impact of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions.

Credit: OCHA

Credit: OCHA

Credit: UN Environment

Environment and Humanitarian
Action Network