



Environmental Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Interventions

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Department of
**International
Development**



**JOINT
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TOGETHER
FOR A BETTER
RESPONSE

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Cover photos

© OCHA/Vincent Tremeau: Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh (2018)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EHA	Environment and Humanitarian Action
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
GHG	Greenhouse gas
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOs	International Organizations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JEU	UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit
LSE	The London School of Economics and Political Science
MoSTE	The Nepalese Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTNC	The National Trust for Nature Conservation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment

REA	Rapid Environmental Assessment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	The United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
URD	Urgence Réhabilitation Développement/The Humanitarian Environment Network
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Executive Summary

Be it the construction of a refugee camp in a protected area for elephants that entails risks for both the recipients of humanitarian aid and the local wildlife in Bangladesh or dried up wells as a result of over-drilling for water by humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan – the failure to take environmental issues into consideration during humanitarian action can undermine the core objective of saving lives and livelihoods. In contrast, accounting for the environment can save lives and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian interventions. While environmental issues are receiving more attention in the humanitarian sector today, there is little coherent analysis of the extent to which these are systematically taken into account through policy frameworks.

This study was commissioned by the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit together with the Environment Community of Practice of the Global Shelter Cluster. Through a survey and stakeholder interviews, it analyzes the extent to which humanitarian organizations have adopted policies that relate to the environment, and the extent to which environmental organizations have adopted policies that relate to humanitarian interventions. Moreover, it extracts good practices, lessons learned, and challenges that

come with mainstreaming the environment in humanitarian action.

A key finding is that while the majority of the humanitarian organizations surveyed have or are currently developing environmental policies, these are often not consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated. Thus, their impact in practice remains unclear.

At the same time, none of the environmental organizations consulted for this study have humanitarian-related policies in place. Nonetheless, environmental organizations in particular recognize the salience of environmental-humanitarian interlinkages and call for more effective coordination between environmental and humanitarian organizations. While coordination efforts yield shared benefits, they are often impeded by siloed thinking, fundamentally different priorities and competition for funding.

In both environmental and humanitarian organizations, the initiative to mainstream the environment in humanitarian action often stems from bottom-up processes – that is, from motivated individuals or field-based experiences –, rather than from the

organizational leadership in top-down processes. This leads to a lack of awareness and broader staff engagement within many organizations.

Many humanitarian organizations highlight the crucial role that donors play in facilitating environmental mainstreaming by placing the environment on the agenda and providing additional funds to mitigate negative environmental impacts. However, a paradox commonly referred to is that while donors often impose requirements related to environmental issues, they rarely follow up on implementation and do not always provide the necessary additional funding.

The donors consulted for this study all have environmental policies – albeit not always specifically applicable to humanitarian interventions – they require organizations to adhere to. But they acknowledge having difficulties to effectively follow up on compliance. They are more likely to grant additional funding if potential adverse environmental impacts are identified during project planning – and not after impacts have already occurred. In addition, they require a well-justified link between environmental issues and the core humanitarian objective.

As environmental organizations lack humanitarian policies and most humanitarian organizations' environmental policies are new and not systematically implemented, good practices are limited. Examples of good practice highlight the synergies between environmental issues and humanitarian objectives: In a refugee camp in Kenya, waste disposal has improved environmental protection and secured livelihoods for refugees. In a refugee camp in Bangladesh built in a protected area for elephants, wildlife protection measures have increased both human and animal security. In further examples of good practice, an environmental organization integrated the environment in DRR, response and recovery, and a humanitarian organization successfully developed an environmental policy and made sure staff was trained appropriately.

While limited, the available lessons learned are valuable. Consulted organizations emphasize that the systematic assessment of environmental risks and benefits in programming, leadership engagement as well as cooperation between humanitarian and environmental organizations enhance the environmental sustainability of humanitarian action.

However, most consulted organizations point to numerous challenges that come with environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian action. Apart from the aforementioned donor issues and coordination difficulties, these include a lack of prioritization of the environment from humanitarian organizations, numerous technical and financial difficulties – including a lack of capacity and expertise – as well as a lack of practically applicable tools that guide environmental mainstreaming.

In conclusion, this study finds that while considerable challenges impede large-scale, effective implementation of environmental mainstreaming, efforts to include environmental issues in humanitarian action are increasing.

Key conclusions and recommendations from this study:

Humanitarian organizations should:

- 1) Enhance the environmental expertise of their organizations through training, engagement of technical support services, and collaboration with environmental organizations.
- 2) Strengthen commitment to environmental mainstreaming at managerial levels.
- 3) Improve and formalize the use of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and

develop additional ones to more systematically capture and act on environmental issues.

- 4) Engage more in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and preparedness when relevant to integrate the environment in humanitarian action in a more effective and less costly way.
- 5) Institutionalize and operationalize existing environmental standards and benchmarks into programming.

Humanitarian and environmental organizations should:

- 6) Build working relationships within existing forums and discussions (e.g. the Environment and Humanitarian Action (EHA) Network) to improve cooperation and coordination.
- 7) Expand the consistent application of available tools for environmental mainstreaming.
- 8) Establish and guide cooperation from a leadership level in support of existing and new field-level activities.

Coordinating bodies should:

- 9) Promote the use of one coherent set of guidelines and tools that can readily be accessed and used by humanitarian organizations for mainstreaming purposes.

Donors should:

- 10) Increase and systematize follow-up mechanisms to monitor their own environmental requirements and how these are applied by implementing partners in humanitarian contexts.
- 11) Follow through on environmental requirements specific to humanitarian

programming and provide adequate funding to ensure these can be met.

- 12) Prolong funding cycles to facilitate the integration of environmental issues in programming as well as in monitoring and evaluation.

Academia should:

- 13) Increase research on linkages between environment and humanitarian action, develop evidence-based policy briefs and facilitate translation of research into practice to raise awareness and evaluate previous initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION

The core objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives and alleviate human suffering (Sphere Association, 2018). Yet failing to take environmental considerations into account during humanitarian interventions can undermine these objectives (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014).

Scholars and practitioners point to multiple linkages between the environment and humanitarian action (Crowley, 2019; Marin & Naess, 2017; Shepherd, 1995). On the one hand, environmental issues often contribute to humanitarian disasters (Crowley, 2019). On the other hand, humanitarian action can have both positive and negative, direct and indirect, short- and long-term effects on the environment. Integrating environmental considerations in humanitarian actions can thus reduce the cost of operations and the possibility of protracted negative outcomes of disasters (Barrett et al., 2007). Therefore, mitigating potential adverse effects of humanitarian action on the environment creates significant advantages for the effectiveness of humanitarian action. This, in turn, benefits recipients of humanitarian aid (DFID, 2003; Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013).

Box 1: Definition of environment (Sphere Project, 2011)

“The physical, chemical and biological surroundings in which disaster-affected and local communities live and develop their livelihoods. It provides the natural resources that sustain individuals and determines the quality of the surroundings in which they live. It needs protection if these essential functions are to be maintained.”

Due to increasing awareness of environmental issues, the humanitarian sector is increasingly mainstreaming the environment in humanitarian action (Kelly, 2013). Environmental mainstreaming can be defined as “the informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national, local and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action” (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2009).

As a result, many International Organizations (IOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and donors have begun to incorporate environmental issues into their policies, operational works and programs. However, little is known about the extent to which environmental considerations are systematically taken into account through policy frameworks.

1.1. Scope of the study and research question

This study was commissioned jointly by the Joint Environment Unit (JEU) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in partnership with the Environment Community of Practice of the Global Shelter Cluster. It aims to analyze the extent to which policies relating to the environmental-humanitarian nexus have been established and implemented by sectoral organizations.

To fulfil this objective, this study maps environment-related policies at humanitarian NGOs and IOs, as well as humanitarian-related policies at environmental NGOs and IOs. Based on this analysis of existing policies, the report identifies successful examples of policies (i.e. good practices), lessons learned and challenges. Overall, it aims to answer the following research question: *To what extent do humanitarian and environmental International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations have and have implemented (i.e. mainstreamed) policies which, for humanitarian organizations, address the environment in the humanitarian sector and, for environmental organizations, address humanitarian response? What are the good practices and lessons learned?*

1.2. Methodology

The methodology on which this report is based consists of desk research, an online survey¹ of humanitarian organizations and donors, as well as stakeholder interviews² with humanitarian, environmental and donor organizations.

- 1) The desk research was conducted to create a Literature Review of academic and grey literature to provide background information on the topic.
- 2) The survey was sent to the focal points of 63 humanitarian NGOs, IOs and donors. The list of potential respondents was compiled in cooperation with the JEU and the Environment Community of Practice. The survey was open for responses from 26 November to 13 December 2019³ and had 34 respondents. The survey served two purposes. First, it provided an overview

¹ The survey questions can be found in Annex 1.

² The interview questions for humanitarian, environmental and donor organizations, respectively, can be found in Annexes 2, 3 and 4.

³ While the survey was officially launched from 26 November to 13 December 2019, it remained open after that. The latest responses were received in early February 2020.

of the current level of environmental mainstreaming among humanitarian organizations. Second, the survey results were used to identify potential interviewees.

- 3) The stakeholder interviews were conducted with representatives of eleven humanitarian organizations, four environmental organizations and three donors – 18 organizations in total. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the motivations to mainstream the environment and to identify good practices and lessons learned.

As a second research team from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) undertook research on a similar research question and conducted interviews with UK-based NGOs at the time of this report, interview results were shared. This increased the number of interviews with humanitarian organizations from 12 to 23, and thus the total number of interviews to 30.

Interview partners from humanitarian organizations were identified through the survey. Since a partial objective of this report is to derive good practices and lessons learned, most of those selected for interviews either already have or are currently developing environmental policies according to the survey results.

Interviewees from environmental organizations were suggested by the JEU and the Environment Community of Practice based on existing knowledge of organizations with ties to the humanitarian sector. As only few environmental organizations directly engage in humanitarian action, far fewer were consulted for this study than were humanitarian organizations.

Interviewees from donors were likewise suggested by the JEU and the Environment Community of Practice.

The use of semi-structured interviews ensured a balance between comparability of results and allowing interviewees to emphasize different aspects. The interviews were conducted via Skype and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

1.3. Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews previous academic and grey literature on the integration of environmental considerations into humanitarian action. Chapter 3 analyzes the current state of environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian action. Chapter 4 provides a conclusion and key recommendations for both policymakers, practitioners and academia on the way forward.

2. BACKGROUND: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Benefits of addressing the environment in humanitarian action

There are two types of linkages between humanitarian action and the environment: First, environmental issues are often the contributors to humanitarian crises. Second, humanitarian action can have both direct and indirect, short- and long-term effects on the environment.

For example, humanitarian actors can contribute to the degradation of the environment in which they are situated through choice of construction materials, the dumping of waste or the usage of natural resources (Crowley, 2019; Marin & Naess, 2017; Shepherd, 1995).



Credit: © UNEP

Academics and practitioners agree that integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian action is crucial (Barrett et al., 2007; Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013). Importantly, this can save lives by reducing risks for affected populations (Jowett, 2010).

Furthermore, the integration of environmental considerations is seen as a pragmatic way to make humanitarian interventions more efficient and effective. It can reduce the costs of humanitarian operations, for example by utilizing energy efficient resources. Moreover, it decreases vulnerabilities of recipients of humanitarian aid in the aftermath of disaster by mitigating negative environmental impacts.

The destruction of the surrounding environment can aggravate existing vulnerabilities: For example, deforestation or the contamination of water and soil can undermine the sources of livelihood of recipients of humanitarian aid (Marin & Naess, 2017; Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008). The core humanitarian principle of ‘Do No Harm’ provides a moral imperative to deliver relief in a way that does not inflict further harm upon its recipients (Kelly, 2013).

Overall, scholars and practitioners alike agree that any humanitarian intervention that increases the vulnerability of a beneficiary is ultimately bad practice and decreases the effectiveness of

humanitarian intervention. Thus, there exists an imperative for why humanitarian action needs to integrate environmental issues (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013).

Many IOs and NGOs have begun to mainstream environmental considerations into their programming. This has led to the integration of sustainability-related objectives into organizational policies, and the creation of a number of tools, strategies and guidelines that aim to facilitate the integration of environmental concerns and advance the sustainability of humanitarian intervention (Runhaar, 2016).

Tools and guidelines

Various authors (Crowley, 2019; Runhaar, 2016; Srinivas and Nakagawa, 2008; Tul, 2019; Jowett, 2010) and reports (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013; Sphere, 2015; Sphere Association, 2018) list existing tools, standards and guidelines within the humanitarian sector. Guidelines and tools on environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian interventions take the form of international frameworks, agreements, protocols, goals, organization-specific instruments. Furthermore, humanitarian standards and donor requirements often address environmental concerns. A list of existing guidelines and tools as outlined in previous literature can be found in Annex 5.

However, existing literature highlights related challenges: First, the abundance of tools and guidelines raises the question of which tool to use, in what context and for what purpose (Runhaar, 2016). Second, there is a need for research that analyzes the various tools used during humanitarian responses to evaluate their efficiency and effectiveness (Tull, 2019).

Challenges outlined in previous literature

While humanitarian actors increasingly integrate environmental concerns into their interventions, various challenges prevent meaningful mainstreaming. First, there is still little awareness in the humanitarian sector about the impact its operations can have on the environment (Barrett et al., 2007; CHS Alliance, Group URD and the Sphere Project, 2014; DFID, 2003; Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Jowett, 2010; Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008). As a result, the environment is often treated as a secondary priority after other cross-cutting issues such as health, employment and education.

A further challenge is systematically incorporating environmental considerations in monitoring and evaluation. On the one hand, there is a lack of environmental performance indicators to systematically evaluate policy outcomes (Barrett et al., 2007; Crowley, 2019; DFID, 2003). On the other

hand, existing indicators are scarcely used (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014). Furthermore, environmental impacts cannot always be measured within a humanitarian project's life span (Berkes, 2017).

Moreover, humanitarian organizations do not have sufficient expertise, skills and capacity to cover environmental issues (Nunan et al., 2012). In addition, they lack clear environmental guidelines from donors (Crowley, 2019). Furthermore, integrating distinct administrative branches is challenging, since disaster management and environmental management are often separate administrative sections (Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008).

Lastly, many humanitarian practitioners fear that giving attention to cross-cutting issues such as the environment could lead to an overstretching or weakening of the core humanitarian imperative of saving lives (Crowley, 2019). Thus, the environment often becomes a second priority instead of meaningfully mainstreamed (Jowett, 2010).

Recommendations outlined in previous literature

- Awareness regarding humanitarian-environmental linkages needs to be raised (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008).
- Humanitarian organizations should be held more accountable for the environmental impacts of their interventions. The lack of leadership, political and financial commitment needs to be addressed (Barrett et al., 2007; Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013; UNEP, 2008).
- Existing tools, guidelines and mechanisms of environmental mainstreaming must be better monitored and evaluated (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Tull, 2019).
- Donors should commit more funds and develop environmental policies linked to humanitarian aid to ensure environmental considerations are included in project proposals and effectively monitored and evaluated (Groupe URD and ProAct Network, 2014; Kelly, 2013).
- Partnerships between organizations need to be strengthened to address cross-cutting themes (Barrett et al., 2007; Shepherd, 1995).

3. ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MAINSTREAMING IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

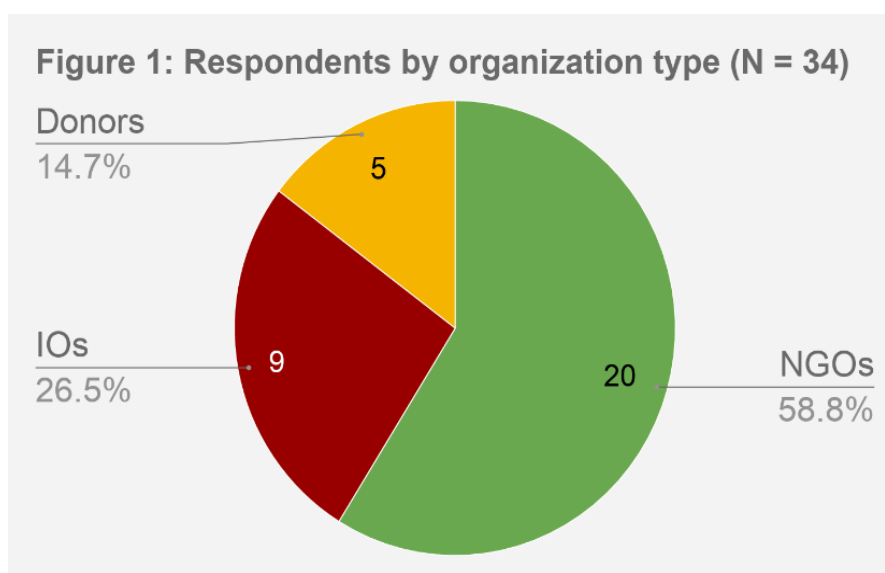
The following section analyzes the extent to which humanitarian organizations have adopted and implemented environment-related policies, and the extent to which environmental organizations have adopted and implemented humanitarian-related policies. For the purpose of this study, 'policies' are defined as any form of written down directive within an organization that gives guidance in relation to, respectively, environmental or humanitarian issues.

As outlined in the methodology section, this study conducted 1) a survey among 34 humanitarian organizations and donors as well as 2) stakeholder interviews with eleven humanitarian organizations, four environmental organizations and three donors to gather primary data. In addition, interview data was used from 12 interviews with UK-based member organizations of the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), which were conducted by a different research group.

3.1 Extent of mainstreaming the environment in humanitarian action

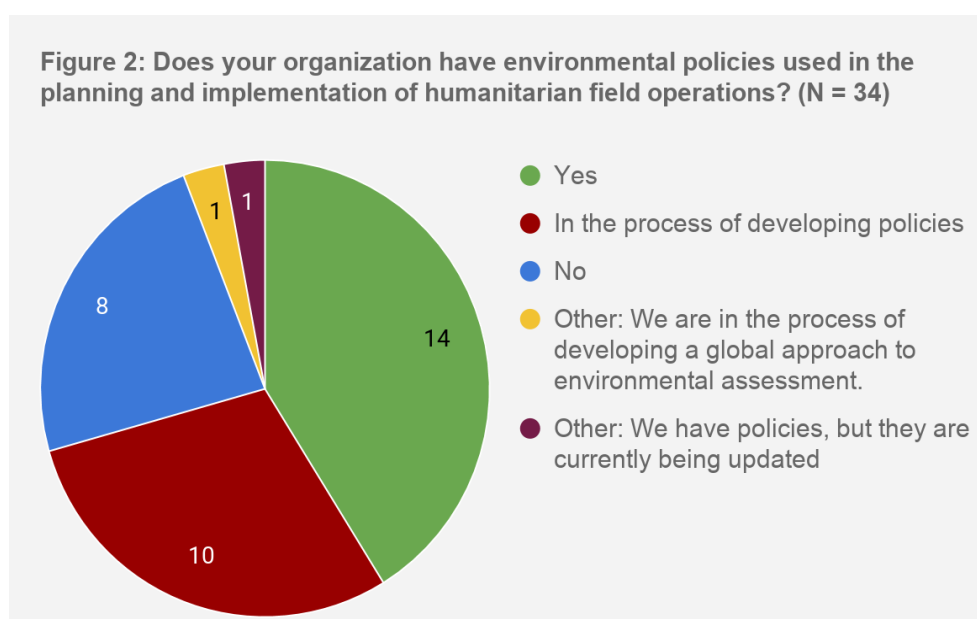
3.1.1 Survey results

More than half of the 34 survey respondents were NGOs, a quarter of them IOs. Donors were the smallest group of respondents. Figure 1 provides an overview of the types of organizations that responded.



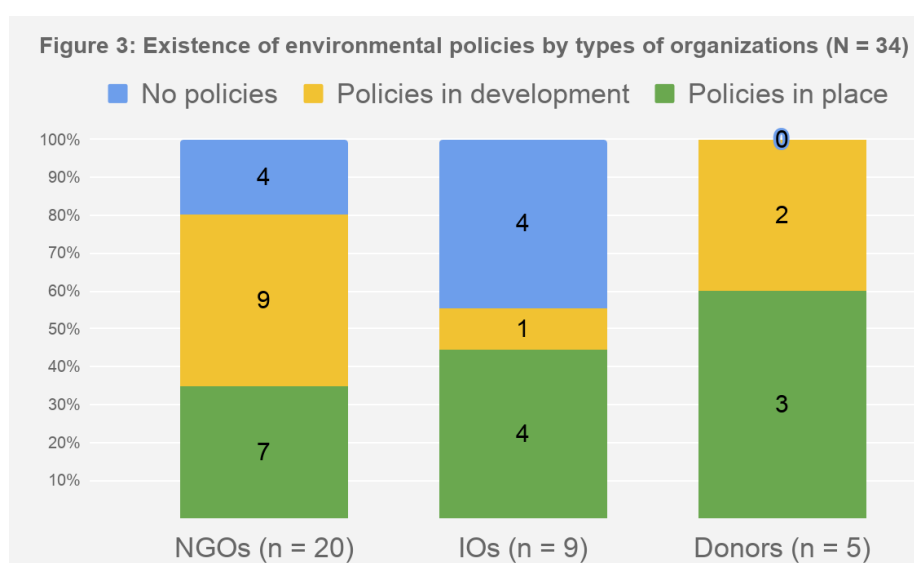
Environmental policies in humanitarian organizations: A brief overview

As shown in Figure 2, 14 (41 percent) of the surveyed humanitarian organizations and donors have environmental policies, while ten (30 percent) are in the process of developing them.



Furthermore, one organization is in the process of updating existing policies. In total, approximately 70 percent of all survey respondents either have or will have environmental policies in the near future.

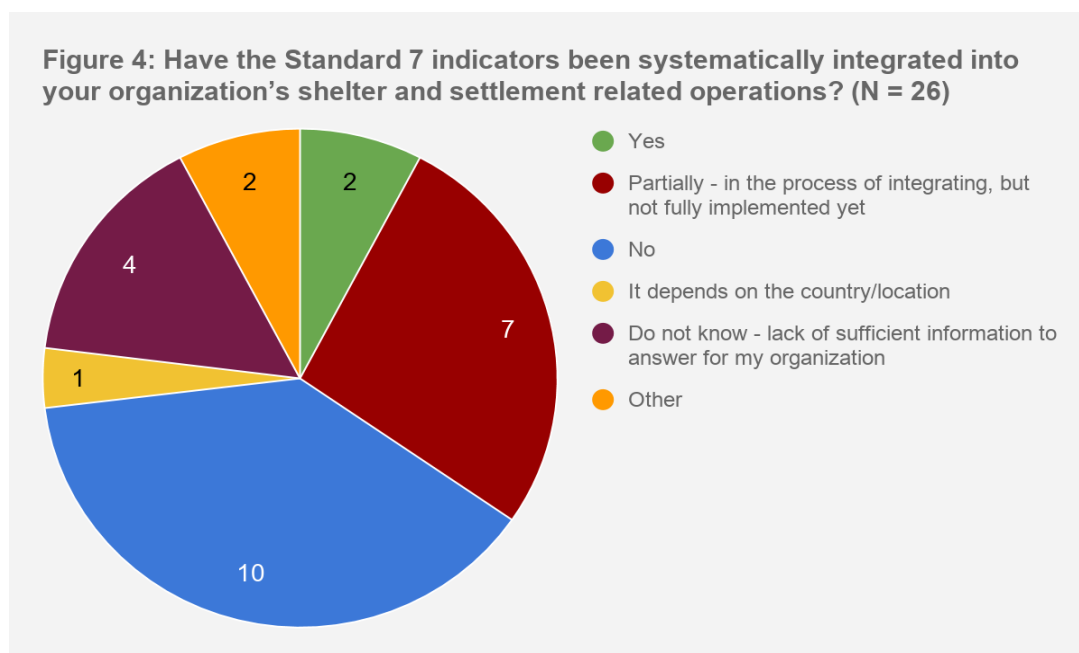
At the same time, eight organizations (23 percent) do not have any environmental policies. Four of these do not consider it necessary to have environmental policies, three do not see them as relevant to their work and one stated that the environment is not a focus of the organization. Figure 3 shows that



while all of the surveyed donor organizations either have environmental policies in place or are in the process of developing them, there are eight organizations among both NGOs and IOs that do not have any such policies.

Integration of Sphere Shelter and Settlements Standard 7

The survey asked all humanitarian organizations that are involved in post-disaster shelter and settlement activities whether their organization has integrated the Sphere Shelter and Settlements Standard 7 (Sphere Association, 2018). The standard calls for the promotion of environmental sustainability by minimizing any negative impact on the environment in the shelter and settlement programming phase. Standard 7 provides five key indicators to facilitate this process.⁴ Figure 4 shows the responses.



Accordingly, only two of the 26 humanitarian organizations involved in post-disaster shelter or settlement activities (eight percent) have systematically integrated Standard 7. While eight organizations (30 percent) have at least partially integrated the standard (including one organization that applies the standard depending on country or location), a total of ten organizations (38 percent)

⁴ The five key indicators of Sphere Shelter and Settlements Standard 7 are (Sphere Association, 2018):

- 1) Percentage of shelter and settlement activities that are preceded by an environmental review;
- 2) Number of recommendations from the environment management and monitoring plan that have been implemented;
- 3) Percentage of shelter constructions using low carbon emission construction materials and procurement methods;
- 4) Percentage of solid waste on the site that is reused, re-purposed or recycled (Target > 70 per cent by volume);
- 5) Percentage of temporary settlement sites that are restored to better environmental conditions than before.

have not yet undertaken efforts to integrate it. Amongst these ten, six have not yet completed the integration of the new Sphere Standards into operations, three do not see Standard 7 as relevant to the work done by their organization and one was not aware of Standard 7. Six organizations (23 percent) lacked sufficient information to answer this question.

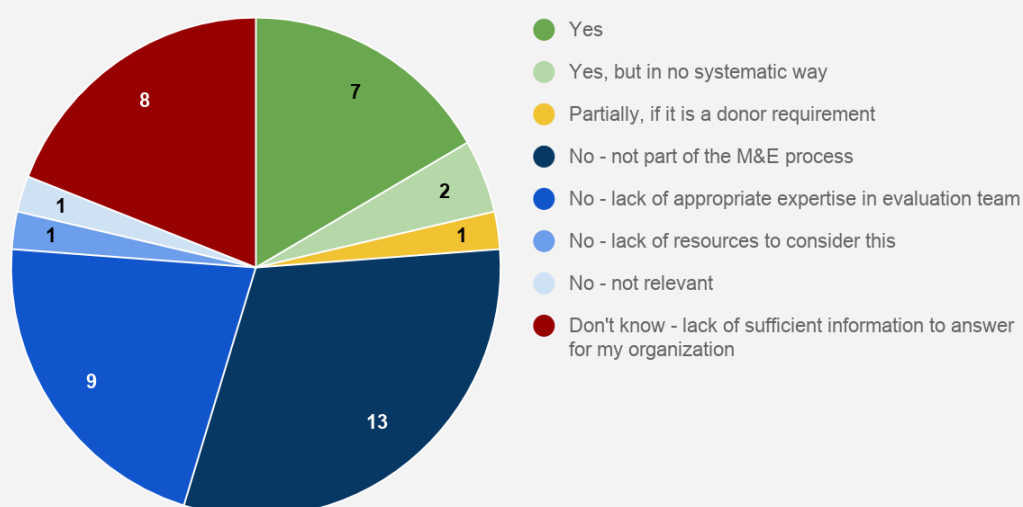
Box 2: Survey quote by a humanitarian organization

“I am not aware of any organization that has a clear idea of how to systematize all aspects of the Sphere Standards into programming. The current Standard [7] is also new and it takes time to roll these out and raise awareness of how things have changed, and given its key focus is not often followed up by donors [it] is hard to ensure it is considered a priority issue to focus upon.”

Monitoring and evaluation

Furthermore, the survey asked organizations if they routinely include environmental impacts as part of real-time or post operations evaluations and lessons learned reports. Among the 34 respondents to the question, nine (26 percent) include environmental impacts in their monitoring and evaluation process (two, however, in no systematic way). At the same time, 15 organizations (44 percent) do not include them for various reasons.

Figure 5: Does your organization routinely include environmental impacts as part of real-time or post operations evaluations and lessons learned reports? (N = 34, multiple answers possible)



As multiple answers were possible, several organizations gave more than one reason for not monitoring and evaluating environmental impacts (Figure 5). 13 answers stated that environmental impacts are not part of the monitoring and evaluation process in general. Further nine indicated that the organizations' evaluation teams lack the expertise needed, and one answer suggests that they simply lack the resources. Another organization indicated that it only monitors and evaluates environmental impacts if it is a donor requirement.

Coordination efforts

According to the survey results, 18 (53 percent) of the surveyed humanitarian organizations coordinate with other humanitarian or environmental organizations when assessing and addressing environmental impacts in the course of humanitarian interventions (Figure 6). On the other hand, 16 (47 percent) do not engage in coordination efforts.



In sum, the survey results establish that the majority of the 34 humanitarian organizations and donors either have or are in the process of developing environmental policies. Very similar results were found when asking for environmental guidelines. It was noted that many organizations use the terms policies and guidelines interchangeably, which became further evident in the interviews⁵. However, when it comes to following up on the implementation of these policies and guidelines, the survey reveals shortcomings. Only one fifth of the 34 organizations routinely include environmental impacts as part of real-time or post operations evaluations and lessons learned reports. Furthermore, when it comes to the environmental sustainability of post-disaster shelter or settlement, only two out of 26 organizations

⁵ See section 3.1.2 for more detail.

involved in related activities have systematically integrated the indicators of Sphere and Settlements Standard 7. The results further show that more than half of the surveyed humanitarian organizations systematically coordinate with other humanitarian or environmental organizations on environmental issues.

Survey limitations

The survey results must be treated with caution for three reasons. First, most of the humanitarian organizations contacted have previously been involved in environment and disaster discussions, mostly within the framework of the EHA Network, which provided a starting point to contact potential survey respondents. However, there are many more humanitarian organizations, in particular hundreds of small NGOs. Due to logistical constraints and the limited overall scope of this study, these could not all be contacted. This biases the results towards larger organizations that are per se more likely to have been involved in environmental mainstreaming.

Second, social desirability bias might have led some organizations to state that they are developing environmental policies, while in reality, they might simply be considering them at this point. This could slightly skew results.

Third, the somewhat limited response rate does not allow assessing the statistical significance of the results. In combination with the lack of broad representation among the survey respondents and a bias towards larger organizations that have been previously engaged in environment and disaster discussions, this implies that the survey results should not, at this point, be seen as representative of the entire sector.

3.1.2 Environmental policies in humanitarian organizations

The survey demonstrates that a majority of humanitarian organizations either have environmental policies in place or are in the process of developing them. The interview results shed more light on these processes.

Types of environmental policies

Fifteen humanitarian organizations interviewed stated they have organization-wide environmental policies. Two have environmental experts to assist them on environmental issues when necessary. Four organizations said they are developing policies, two that they are further developing

existing environmental policies. Four of the interviewed organizations have no environmental policies, but two of these expressed that they have internal discussions to start developing them.

The types and content of environmental policies in humanitarian organizations interviewed vary considerably. In addition, there appears to be a lack of conceptual clarity with regards to the term 'policies': While some organizations have policies, others refer to 'guidelines', 'tools' or 'frameworks.' The names of respective initiatives range from "Environmental Safeguarding" or "Environmental Management System" to "Framework for Sustainable Development". This may suggest that there are differences in levels of integration, and that the implementation of environmental management is still in its early stages.

Among those who have policies, a common type of environmental policies are office-focused policies. These typically aim to reduce the carbon emissions of staff activities and facilities, for example by decreasing the amount of single-use plastic utilized in the office, reducing air travel or increasing the use of energy efficient resources (e.g. by installing solar panels at the organization's office). Moreover, more than half of the organizations with policies have requirements related to procurement, waste and sustainable supply chains in field operations.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The vast majority of interviewed humanitarian organizations with environmental policies expressed that there is an overall lack of systematic enforcement, monitoring and evaluation. Most do not implement existing policies in an institutionalized or formalized way. In many cases, policies are adhered to on a voluntary basis, often driven by motivated individuals within the humanitarian organization. Or, they are implemented if necessitated by specific environmental concerns that arise in the field.

There are at least two reasons for the lack of systematic enforcement, monitoring and evaluation: 1) Some interviewees related this to the fact that their environmental policies only recently came into being. 2) Moreover, in practice, policies often seem to take the form of initiatives focused mostly on staff awareness.

Although most humanitarian organizations stated that they lack systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks, two organizations with ties to the United Nations (UN) noted that they have different ways of monitoring and reporting to the UN when relevant.

Five of the interviewed humanitarian organizations indicated that they provide training on their respective environmental policies, guidelines or frameworks. Mostly, however, this is incorporated into more general training employed by the respective organization. Larger organizations, especially some IOs, facilitate discussion about environmental issues. Yet, so far, staff training and discussion forums mainly aim to raise general knowledge and awareness, rather than explicitly enhance implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Motivations to engage in environmental mainstreaming

A key finding from the interviews is that at this stage, the motivation to mainstream the environment comes largely from staff within humanitarian organizations. This indicates that individual motivation is key for environmental initiatives, perhaps in the absence of organizational leadership on the issue. Beyond this common finding, three overarching motivations (in no particular order) to mainstream environmental issues in humanitarian action emerged from the interviews: 1) financial incentives, 2) pragmatic reasons and 3) ethical considerations.

Financial incentives

Donor requirements are one of the most frequently named reasons for having or developing environmental policies. Similarly, humanitarian organizations with close ties to governments state that governmental requirements play a key role in placing the environment on the humanitarian agenda.

Box 3: Interview quote by humanitarian organization

“The checkbook tells us what to do. Ultimately, the easiest way I think change will happen will be for donors to start putting in quite stringent demands.”

Box 4: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

“If we do not integrate the environment now, future generations will think we are outdated.”

A further motivation is the current global momentum of environmental protection in the context of climate change. One interviewee stated that even though the organization currently has no environmental policy, the notion exists that to secure future funding, integrating environmental concerns into humanitarian action will become increasingly important.

Pragmatic reasons

Considering the environment in humanitarian action is also the result of pragmatic thinking – this was repeated frequently in interviews. Accordingly, integrating environmental considerations often entails efficiency- and finance-

related benefits. For instance, one interviewee emphasized that mainstreaming environmental issues in the construction and maintenance of humanitarian housing makes these buildings safer and less expensive. Another stated that it “just makes financial sense” to integrate environmental issues.

Box 5: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

“Taking environmental issues into consideration is seen as a good PR opportunity by many humanitarian agencies.”

Ethical considerations

Moreover, humanitarian organizations frequently named ethical standards as a motivation to develop environmental policies. Among those organizations, most mentioned the Core Humanitarian Standards, referencing the ‘Do No Harm’ principle in particular. Others cited the general ethics of the

Box 6: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

“Ethics of humanitarian action played a huge role.”

humanitarian sector or religious requirements of environmental protection (for faith-based organizations) as reasons to integrate environmental concerns into their activities. Especially for organizations tied to the UN, UN frameworks and

initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or ‘Greening the Blue’ played a role.

Reasons for lack of environmental policies

Most of the humanitarian organizations that have no environmental policies in place acknowledge the basic importance of environmental issues, but do not see it as a priority in their work. Three stated that their first priority is the humanitarian imperative of saving lives. Accordingly, their mandate leaves little space for accounting for environmental issues. Other interviewees

Box 7: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

“The main challenge for establishing an environmental policy is the lack of appreciation of the importance of environmental issues, especially among managers within our organization, but also other colleagues.”

expressed frustration that the leadership of their organization does not sufficiently acknowledge the importance of environmental issues, in some cases despite staff engagement.

One organization voiced the concern that in the political climate in which it operates and seeks funding, environmental protection and, more broadly, climate change are contested and polarized topics. Therefore, the development of environmental policies has remained a controversial issue. Thus, while efforts exist within this organization to start developing an environmental policy, this will likely be framed in a way that emphasizes how this could save lives, rather than just protect the environment.

Infobox: The donor perspective

Donors' environmental policies

The three donors consulted for this study all have environmental policies or guidelines in place that they expect NGOs to adhere to. However, these take on different forms and only two of the interviewed donors have environmental policies that specifically relate to the humanitarian sector. Additionally, two out of three stated that their policies do not go beyond the 'Do No Harm' principle.

Expectations regarding recipients

All donors stated that it is crucial for humanitarian organizations to integrate environmental considerations into their programming and subsequent interventions, with one emphasizing that this makes them much more effective partners. One pointed to fundamental interlinkages with saving lives and emphasized the need to stop seeing the environment "as an optional extra". Furthermore, all agreed that it is essential for NGOs to have their own environmental policies. One donor mentioned that progress in environmental mainstreaming is mostly made when NGOs have their own policies, rather than merely adhere to donor requirements.

Additional funding for mitigating environmental impacts

Although all donors pose requirements relating to environmental issues, none provides additional funds for mitigating negative environmental impacts in a systematic way. In one case, additional grants are approved on a case-by-case basis. In another case, additional funds are only granted in the program design phase and not in the course or aftermath of an intervention, since negative impacts on the environment "should not occur in the first place". Another only provides additional funds if there is a well-justified and explicitly stated link between environmental issues and the humanitarian objective.

Challenges as viewed by donors

The main challenge from a donor perspective is that of monitoring and evaluation. All three donors outline shortcomings in their approach to following-up on whether environmental requirements are adhered to by NGOs. Furthermore, two donors in particular expressed frustration that NGOs do not understand and prioritize environmental issues enough.

3.1.3 Humanitarian policies in environmental organizations

Humanitarian engagement in environmental organizations

None of the four environmental organizations included in this study have specific policies relating to humanitarian issues. All stated that their engagement in humanitarian crises occurs mostly within the scope of DRR and longer-term recovery, rather than immediate disaster response.

All of the environmental organizations interviewed pointed to a lack of systematically addressing humanitarian action in their own operations. Furthermore, they do not engage with the humanitarian sector in a systematic way. Rather, their involvement is decided on a case-by-case basis, dependent on whether or not a crisis 1) links to the communities they work with or 2) happens in a country where the organization has offices and their expertise can add value to the response.

One environmental organization has hired a humanitarian officer and found this to be a positive experience. It enabled the organization to look at the humanitarian cycle and programming of preparedness, response and recovery in a new light.

Coordination with humanitarian organizations: Benefits and challenges

Each environmental organization interviewed recognizes the value of working with the humanitarian sector. All agree that cooperation across both sectors is important and necessary to improve effectiveness. Many stated that information sharing between the two sectors could be beneficial.

However, the environmental organizations interviewed listed several obstacles to such cooperation. One challenge is funding. Oftentimes, organizations from the two sectors compete for the same resources. One interviewee expressed that humanitarian finances ought to flow into preparedness and recovery, rather than just response. The largest challenge with funding, however, is a lack of resources in general to sufficiently cover environmental-humanitarian cooperation.

Moreover, most named the challenge of speaking different professional languages a barrier to cooperation. A key problem is that environmental organizations do not sufficiently understand humanitarian processes. To underpin this point, one interviewee rhetorically asked: “what is a cluster?”.

Box 8: Interview quote by an environmental organization

“The main challenge to coordination is talking the same language.”

Lastly, most of the interviewees stated that coordination, when it does occur, happens locally, mostly in a bottom-up process. Two interviewees expressed that coordination could benefit from top-down mechanisms that formalize and institutionalize cooperation structures

3.2 Good practices

The above sections show that in humanitarian organizations with environmental policies, these often start as individual and project-specific initiatives which are not systematically implemented, monitored or evaluated. In addition, many have just started addressing environmental issues in humanitarian interventions and are developing policies. Environmental organizations included in this study do not have humanitarian policies at this stage.

Therefore, there are not many good practices regarding the mainstreaming of environmental issues in humanitarian action. Nonetheless, some of the organizations interviewed for this study are taking a lead in addressing both environmental and humanitarian concerns. This section presents selected good practices.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): Creating synergies between environmental protection and livelihoods

The ICRC has a Framework of Sustainable Development that guides the integration of sustainability principles into all its activities, including office management. In addition, the organization has a Framework for Environmental Management in Assistance Programme, which consists of a collection of good practices. However, monitoring and assessment are done more on a case-by-case basis, and not systematically. Alongside this, the ICRC also has a Medical Waste Management Manual



Credit: © ICRC Photo

and a procurement policy. Moreover, the ICRC works to further the protection of the environment in times of armed conflict, as part of its activities on the promotion and respect of International Humanitarian Law. The ICRC has specific people

focused on driving the strategic process of integrating the environment and a small team helping with the implementation of the environmental policy.

The Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya (ICRC, 2018) is an example of how the environment was successfully integrated into a humanitarian response led partly by the ICRC. There, the organization launched an initiative to turn plastic waste management into an opportunity to address social, environmental and economic needs. Due to the accumulation of garbage, pollution was one of the main problems of the camp. The ICRC thus engaged refugees and the host community to participate in waste collection and to raise awareness throughout the camp. Since the project started, more than eight tons of plastic have been sold and recycled. It has ensured better living conditions and generated income for refugees.

Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED): Successfully developing and implementing environmental policies

ACTED recently designed a new programmatic strategy focused on zero exclusion, zero carbon and zero poverty. Additionally, in 2018, the organization developed a General Environmental Safeguarding Policy (ACTED, 2018). It is one of ACTED's eight organizational policies that all employees are provided training on and are made to learn by heart. Since the Safeguarding Policy was only recently adopted, it is too early to look at its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In 2019, ACTED further developed a Technical and Guidance note on Environmental Impact Assessment in Emergencies. So far, the organization has applied Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mainly in the recovery and longer-term development context. Moreover, ACTED conducted a baseline carbon footprint in 2018. Following that, all countries made voluntary commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2020, the organization aims to make its commitment to reduce GHG emissions more prescriptive, with its headquarters taking a lead.

WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF) US: Integrating environmental concerns in a post-disaster setting⁶

The WWF has had an office in Nepal since 1993. One of its largest projects in Nepal is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Hariyo Ban (Nepali for *Green Forests*) Program (<https://www.wwfnepal.org/hariyobanprogram/>). Led by WWF, Hariyo Ban is implemented by a consortium of local and international NGO partners - Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN) and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). The first phase of the Hariyo Ban program was well underway when the 2015 earthquakes occurred. Fourteen districts in Nepal experienced widespread damage from the earthquake, and Hariyo Ban partners initiated an extensive relief and development effort to support earthquake-affected communities in four districts. Hariyo Ban supported the Government of Nepal (GON) to complete the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and played an integral role as



Credit: © WWF Nepal/ Hariyo Ban Program/ Judy Oglethorpe

a member of the PDNA environmental team, consisting of government officials, other NGO staff, academics, and United Nations personnel. At the request of Nepal's Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE), Hariyo Ban further supported a detailed Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA). The PDNA and REA teams together developed a set of environmental principles to promote environmental safeguards during post-disaster recovery and reconstruction activities. The MoSTE-led REA report provided analysis that enabled other ministries to address post-disaster environmental issues.

The REA was supported primarily by USAID with limited support from other donors. Building on this experience, Hariyo Ban I assisted local communities in earthquake-affected areas to rebuild critical community infrastructure, resume economic activities, and strengthen local disaster response

⁶ This case study is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this case study are the sole responsibility of the World Wildlife Fund and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

planning. In the span of 20 months, USAID assistance repaired 70 drinking water supply systems, 55 irrigation systems, 186 km of foot trails, and six micro-hydropower plants. The program supported landslide stabilization in vulnerable sites in close collaboration with local government authorities and community forestry user groups. Overall, Hariyo Ban I's post-earthquake response and recovery efforts benefited more than 100,000 people. USAID introduced a new green recovery and community resilience program in earthquake-affected areas through Hariyo Ban II.

USAID's Hariyo Ban program employed an expert on green infrastructure to support multiple Government of Nepal ministries and humanitarian clusters to promote sound environmental practices during recovery and reconstruction. Hariyo Ban organized training on environmental issues related to housing, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, and humanitarian assistance, in coordination with local NGOs and central- and district-level government, training over 1,000 people. Given the high degree of environmental risk associated with reconstruction of houses and other buildings, Hariyo Ban worked with government partners to integrate environmental considerations into building guidelines and mason training materials, and developed a Building Materials Environmental Guide for use by the construction sector in Nepal. Another more general guide was produced for multiple sectors on incorporating environmental aspects into post-disaster recovery and reconstruction in Nepal to avoid over-exploitation of natural resources and environmental damage, take climate change into account, and build resilience to future hazards.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN): Protecting refugees and biodiversity jointly through coordination

The Human-Elephant Conflict Project (Wahed et al., 2016) in Bangladesh by UNHCR and the IUCN is another example of successful collaboration between an environmental and a humanitarian organization. The project's aim is to mitigate conflict risks between humans and elephants that emerged after a large-scale refugee camp for Rohingyas was established in an important habitat corridor and migration route of Asian elephants.

To address this human-nature conflict, both organizations are implementing mitigation measures such as biosensing and a watchtower jointly with the refugee and host communities, thus advocating for a long-term environmental improvement of the camp area and beyond. First positive results for both animals and refugees have been reported since the launch of the project.



Credit: © UNHCR Photo/ Roger Arnold

3.3 Lessons learned

Several lessons learned can be derived from this research. To begin, even when humanitarian organizations have environmental policies, these are often not implemented consistently. This becomes particularly evident when comparing the survey results, in which about 40 percent of the humanitarian organizations and donors stated they have policies, while interviews consistently revealed challenges relating to their implementation.

Moreover, in cases where policies are more institutionalized, there are few or poor mechanisms to monitor and evaluate how the policies are or have been integrated into humanitarian action. In some cases, motivated individuals are key drivers for their implementation in the absence of leadership from the top. Better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will yield more solid evidence on good practices of environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian action.

A majority of the humanitarian interviewees highlighted the need for better mainstreaming environmental concerns – i.e. systematically assessing and managing environmental risks and benefits – in their programming. Yet some humanitarian organizations noted that a lack of capacity impedes environmental impact assessments. Strengthening and promoting the use of external expertise to fill this resource gap might be helpful.

Seven humanitarian organizations expressed that environmental mainstreaming should be embraced at a headquarter and/or leadership level to set a standard and expectation. There is a need for top-down mechanisms to support field-based initiatives.

Cooperation between environmental organizations and humanitarian organizations is likely to yield benefits for both sides. Although only found in one interview, the experience of having external humanitarian expertise in an environmental organization was a positive one.

3.4 Challenges

Throughout the interviews, humanitarian and environmental NGOs and IOs raised various challenges in terms of developing, implementing and monitoring environmental or humanitarian policies.

Challenges as viewed by humanitarian organizations

Often, humanitarian organizations see a tension between the imperative of saving lives and integrating environmental concerns. A dozen organizations referred to a lack of evidence on the links between humanitarian action and the environment, which leads to a lack of awareness and – ultimately – to a lack of interest.

Box 9: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

«There will always be an element of people coming first over the environment.»

Ten organizations highlighted technical challenges that come with either developing or implementing environmental policies. There is often a lack of expertise and capacity, meaning that organizations might have to bring in expertise from outside, resulting in additional costs. They often do not have enough staff or specialized staff in charge of addressing the issue. Furthermore, many organizations referred to the challenge of converting voluntary, field-based and informal approaches into institutionalized and top-down policies.

Thirteen organizations emphasized financial difficulties. In this regard, a lack of funding is a major challenge to environmental mainstreaming and coordination across sectors. It is often not clear to humanitarian organizations if integrating environmental concerns will cause additional costs and whether donors are willing to cover these costs by providing additional funding. This is seen as a paradox, since donor requirements to address environmental issues seem to be increasingly common.

Further challenges relate to donor policies more generally. Different donors have different environmental policies and requirements. This means that various requirements need to be met at the same time if organizations receive funding from multiple sources. Furthermore, the duration of the

funding cycle is felt to be too short to address environmental issues in the humanitarian response. Finally, the environment is often not integrated in donor reporting templates.

Oftentimes, the humanitarian organizations included in this study view collaboration and coordination efforts between the humanitarian and environmental sector as desirable but challenging. Based on the interviews, the main obstacle is that humanitarian and environmental organizations tend to work in silos and have different fundamental priorities. Moreover, they tend to compete for funding from the same donors. In addition, there is a general lack of resources. Collaboration between humanitarian and environmental organizations is rarely promoted.

Regarding existing tools and standards, three organizations underlined the need to have more practical tools to address environmental concerns in the field. One organization stated that it has collected enough good practices internally – what it needs now is a consistent set of tools to assess potential environmental issues.

One humanitarian organization said there is a lack of pragmatic solution-finding on the side of

Box 10: Interview quote by a humanitarian organization

“When I've come across environmental experts deployed into humanitarian crises and they are asked to give their advice, it invariably is things that are not workable in the situation. So, we need to get a pragmatic combination of environmental and developmental outcomes to work.”

environmental organizations (see Box 10). A representative from an environmental organization noted that humanitarian colleagues often say that “we would love to do it, but tell us practical things”, as it is often felt that advice given by the environmental sector is inapplicable

in the midst of an emergency.

Finally, one organization pointed out that the environment is not integrated enough in humanitarian standards, such as the Sphere Standards.

Challenges as viewed by environmental organizations

All environmental organizations interviewed pointed to a lack of capacity, skills and knowledge needed to engage in humanitarian action. Moreover, there is little awareness among humanitarian organizations of linkages between environmental issues and humanitarian action. Accordingly, increased awareness will advance coordination efforts between the humanitarian and environmental sector.

Three organizations pointed out that environmental concerns are not a priority from a humanitarian point of view. However, they believe their expertise could aid the humanitarian sector in addressing the environment and thus improve the effectiveness of their operations.

4. CONCLUSION

While academia and practitioners widely recognize the importance of environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian action, there has been little research about the extent to which the humanitarian sector mainstreams the environment into their work through the adoption and implementation of policy frameworks. This study takes a first step to fill this void. For this purpose, it analyzed the extent to which humanitarian organizations have developed and implemented environment-related policies, to which extent environmental organizations have and have implemented humanitarian-related policies, as well as what the good practices and lessons learned from these processes are.

The findings reveal that a majority of humanitarian organizations included in this study engage in efforts to mainstream the environment. Approximately 40 percent of the 34 surveyed humanitarian organizations have environmental policies⁷, and an additional 30 percent⁸ are in the process of developing them. Only one fifth of consulted humanitarian organizations do not.

With regards to motivations driving the development and adoption of environmental policies in humanitarian organizations, two key drivers emerge from this study in particular: Most organizations highlight the importance of financial incentives. In this regard, donors play a crucial role in facilitating environmental mainstreaming through agenda-setting, posing requirements and – most importantly – providing (additional) funding. But humanitarian organizations also increasingly recognize the pragmatic and ethical benefits of incorporating environmental issues, as this increases the efficiency, effectiveness and validity of humanitarian response.

However, when it comes to implementing, monitoring and evaluating environmental policies, this study documents shortcomings across almost all humanitarian organizations. Even though a majority of organizations have or have started to develop environmental policies, the study results show little effect in practice due to a lack of consistent implementation and follow-up. Most humanitarian organizations describe the process of creating policies as bottom-up rather than top-down, i.e. policies are initiated more from motivated individual staff members or field-based experiences than from organizational leadership. In consequence, some organizations even state that many are not aware of their own de facto environmental policies, which hinders consistent implementation.

⁷ Including 3 donors.

⁸ Including 2 donors.

In the context of monitoring and evaluation, humanitarian organizations emphasize the role of donors, suggesting that little will change if donors do not consistently follow up on whether environment-related requirements are adhered to in the field.

Therefore, while many humanitarian organizations have or will soon have environmental policies, there is a significant lack of institutionalization, monitoring and evaluation – in short: a lack of consistent implementation.

At the same time, none of the environmental organizations included in this study have adopted or implemented humanitarian-related policies. Their engagement in the humanitarian sector is mostly focused on DRR and occurs in a non-systematic way, often as a result of being in the right place at the right time. Nevertheless, all environmental organizations recognize the importance of being involved in the humanitarian sector and raising awareness for environmental issues among humanitarian organizations.

Due to the scarcity and recency of (implemented) environmental policies in humanitarian organizations and the total lack of humanitarian policies in environmental organizations included in this study, the number of good practices and lessons learned are short but useful. Four examples of good practices were highlighted:

- In one humanitarian organization, integrating environmental considerations in a field intervention yielded both environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- Another humanitarian organization successfully developed an environmental policy while broadly integrating staff.
- An environmental organization received additional funds that facilitated the hiring of humanitarian experts who helped realize environmental-humanitarian synergies in the aftermath of a disaster. It also successfully integrated the environment in DRR and recovery work.
- Cooperation between an environmental and a humanitarian organization in a refugee camp protected animals and enhanced human security at the same time.

This study further identified several lessons learned:

- Systematically assessing environmental risks and benefits in the programming phase enhances environmental mainstreaming overall.

- Delegating this assessment to an outside institution, for example a UN body or environmental organization, could solve the problem of lack of expertise.
- Organizational headquarter and leadership engagement facilitates environmental mainstreaming.
- Cooperation between humanitarian and environmental organizations yields benefits that are shared by both sides.

At the same time, humanitarian, environmental and donor organizations pointed to barriers to environmental mainstreaming. The most frequently named challenges were:

- Humanitarian organizations view the imperative of saving lives as a priority, which often entails a lack of interest in environmental issues.
- Environmental mainstreaming is hindered by technical difficulties, in particular a lack of capacity and expertise.
- Financial difficulties are common. An often-cited challenge is that donors do not provide (sufficient) additional funding for environmental issues, despite having requirements to integrate environmental concerns.
- Especially from an environmental organization perspective, coordination is viewed as a challenge: Frequently named problems are siloed thinking and working among humanitarian and environmental organizations, competition for funding and a lack of pragmatism when it comes to finding common solutions.
- Lastly, some organizations point to a lack of practical and applicable tools to guide environmental mainstreaming.

Tying the results of this study back to previous findings outlined in the literature review illustrates that many challenges identified in previous research persist: The environment is still often treated like a secondary issue in humanitarian action, there remains a lack of skills and capacity among humanitarian organizations in particular, and while the incorporation of environmental mainstreaming in the institutional structure is advancing in terms of policy-making, it is not sufficiently doing so in terms of implementation and assessment.

Nevertheless, this report's analysis of environment- and humanitarian-related policies in NGOs and IOs and their good practices and lessons learned shows a tendency towards an increase of

environmental mainstreaming in humanitarian action. This finding is corroborated by what one humanitarian organization referred to as the 'current momentum' of the issue of environmental protection at a global scale that holds significant potential for further advancing environmental mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector in the near future. A next step for future research is to evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of existing policies.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outlined findings, this study makes the following recommendations for policymakers, practitioners and academia:

Humanitarian organizations should:

- 1) Enhance the environmental expertise of their organizations through training, engagement of technical support services, and collaboration with environmental organizations.
- 2) Strengthen commitment to environmental mainstreaming at managerial levels.
- 3) Improve and formalize the use of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and develop additional ones to more systematically capture and act on environmental issues.
- 4) Engage more in DRR and preparedness when relevant to integrate the environment in humanitarian action in a more effective and less costly way.
- 5) Institutionalize and operationalize existing environmental standards and benchmarks into programming.

Humanitarian and environmental organizations should:

- 6) Build working relationships within existing forums and discussions (e.g. the EHA Network) to improve cooperation and coordination.
- 7) Expand the consistent application of available tools for environmental mainstreaming.
- 8) Establish and guide cooperation from a leadership level in support of existing and new field-level activities.

Coordinating bodies should:

- 9) Promote the use of one coherent set of guidelines and tools that can readily be accessed and used by humanitarian organizations for mainstreaming purposes.

Donors should:

- 10) Increase and systematize follow-up mechanisms to monitor their own environmental requirements and how these are applied by implementing partners in humanitarian contexts.

- 11) Follow through on environmental requirements specific to humanitarian programming and provide adequate funding to ensure these can be met.
- 12) Prolong funding cycles to facilitate the integration of environmental issues in programming as well as in monitoring and evaluation.

Academia should:

- 13) Increase research on linkages between environment and humanitarian action, develop evidence-based policy briefs and facilitate translation of research into practice to raise awareness and evaluate previous initiatives.

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7. ANNEX

Annex 1: Survey questions

Q1: We would first like to know: what type of organization do you work for?

—> *check box:*

- Donor
- International Organization
- Non-Government Organization
- Other (please specify)

Q3. Does your organization have **environmental policies** to be used in the planning and implementation of humanitarian field operations?

—> *List of scrolled down options (can only select one)*

- Yes
- No - not relevant to our work
- No - not yet considered as necessary
- No - not a focus of our organization
- We are in the process of developing these policies
- Other (please specify)

Q4. Does your organization have **environmental guidelines** to be used in the planning and implementation of humanitarian field operations?

—> *List of scrolled down options (can only select one)*

- Yes
- No - not relevant to our work
- No - not yet considered as necessary
- No - not a focus of our organization
- We are in the process of developing these guidelines
- Other (please specify)

Q5. If yes to Q3 and/or Q4, please provide more information. If possible, please provide links to any relevant policy/guideline.

—> *text box to answer*

Q6. If yes to Q3 and/or Q4, what measures have been put in place within your organization to ensure that environmental policies and guidelines are followed and complied with?

—> *text box to answer*

Q7: Does your organization coordinate with other humanitarian or environmental organizations on assessing and addressing environmental impacts during humanitarian operations? If yes, please indicate the organizations.

—> *text box to answer*

Q8: Does your organization routinely include environmental impacts as part of real time or post operations evaluations and lessons learnt reports?

—> *List of scrolled down options (can only select one)*

- Yes
- Don't know - lack of sufficient information to answer for my organization
- No - not relevant
- No - not part of M&E process
- No - lack of appropriate expertise in evaluation team
- Other (please specify)

Q9: If yes to Q8, please indicate where these reports are located

—> *text box to answer*

Q10: Does your organization have shelter activities?

- Yes
- No

Q11: If yes to Q10, Sphere Shelter and Settlements Standard 7 calls for environmental sustainability and identified five indicators relative to this standard:

- a. Percentage of shelter and settlement activities preceded by an environmental review
- b. Number of recommendations from the environment management and monitoring plan that have been implemented
- c. Percentage of shelter constructions using low carbon emission construction materials and procurement methods
- d. Percentage of solid waste on the site reused, re-purposed or recycled
- e. Percentage of temporary settlement sites restored to better environmental conditions than before use.

Have these indicators been systematically integrated into your organization's shelter and settlement related operations, including water, sanitation, food security, and health components of assistance provided to settlements?

—> list of scrolled down options (*can only select one*)

- Yes
- Don't know - lack of sufficient information to answer for my organization
- Partially - in the process of integrating but not fully implemented yet
- No - not relevant to the work done by my organization
- No - have not yet completed the integration of the new Sphere Standards into operations
- No - were not aware of this standard
- Other (please specify)

Q12: If yes to Q11, please provide examples here

—> *text box to answer*

Q13: Is your organization a member of the Environment and Humanitarian Action Network EHA Connect? (<https://www.eecentre.org/partners/the-eha-network/>)

—> *check box to answer (can select several options)*

- Yes
- No - not relevant
- No - did not know it existed
- Other (please specify)

Q14: Which of the following sources of information to support environmental management during humanitarian operations have you or your organization used?

—> *check box to answer (can select several options)*

- Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit
- EHA Connect Website
- Environment and Emergencies website
- Environment and Disaster Management website
- Global Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice
- Other (please specify)

Q15: Would you be willing to participate in a personal interview on environmental policies? The interview would take about 30 minutes. Interview questions would be provided in advance and quotations would only be used with permission.

- Yes
- No

Q16: If yes to Q15, please provide contact details. Names will not be used in the analysis.

—> *text box to answer*

Annex 2: Interview questions for humanitarian organizations

Q1: Please tell us a bit about your professional background - what position do you hold? What involvement in environmental issues do you have? Insight into your own experience?

Q2: Would you kindly share some information on your organization?

- a. Sector/topical focus
- b. Geographic area of operation
- c. Number of countries where present with humanitarian operations
- d. Types of humanitarian assistance provided.
- e. What specific environmental links do you see in your organization's core work/mandate?

Q3: Does your organization have an overarching environmental or climate policy?

IF NO:

Q4: Why? Not relevant? No interest?

IF YES:

Q5: Does this policy also cover humanitarian activities/relate to humanitarian assistance?

Q6: If no, why?

- Not relevant?
- No interest?

Q7: Does your organization have other specific policies which address the environment?

Q8: If yes, ask for copies and whether they are specific to humanitarian assistance.

Q9: Are environmental policies tied to any other cross-sector policies, for instance on gender, inclusiveness, accountability or protection?

Q10: What did it take to develop these environmental policies, and specifically those policies that relate to humanitarian assistance?

Q11: In your opinion, what was your organization's motivations to start developing environmental policies?

- Donor requirement
- Audit or evaluation finding
- looking into what other IOs and NGOs have done
- Literature
- Specific standard or principle, such as Sphere, Humanitarian Principles, UN standards
- climate change

Q12: Has your organization worked with any other organizations or groups on environmental issues or policies in humanitarian operations or related work?

- Any environmental organizations?

Q13: If yes, which ones and under what circumstances?

- What triggered the collaboration?

Q14: Do you feel that working with other organizations is useful and should be promoted?

Q15: How are the policies implemented, monitored and enforced?

- Explore for specifics
- Is there a specific FP or team in organization for the policy and for supporting its implementation?

Q16: What tools are used to implement and monitor them?

Q17: Has any internal or external training or awareness-raising activities been provided or will be provided on the policies and their implementation? Kindly provide some examples.

Q18: How are these policies applied to the field?

- Policy guidance issued/procedures changed.
- Training (see above)
- Additional reporting requirements (if yes, what type, how perceived)
- Included in monitoring and evaluation

- Which measures have been most effective in ensuring environmental policies are adhered to in the field?

Q19: What have been challenges and successes so far? (“Is a case study possible?”)

Q20: How would you recommend the process of establishing an environmental policy could be done more easily? (lessons learned)

Q21: What can be done to make the environment/humanitarian response more effectively addressed by your organization and sector? (lessons learned)

- What could make the policy more effective in actually mitigating environmental risk and advancing environmental opportunities in operations?

Q22: Do you have any questions?

Annex 3: Interview questions for environmental organizations

Q1: Would you kindly share some information on your background - which position do you hold? What areas are your organizations involved in? What is the environmental focus?

Q2: Does your work link to the humanitarian sector?

If yes, how so?

Q3: Does your organization have policies or guidelines that relate to humanitarian work or emergency response? Coastal planning etc. help to prevent and mitigate disasters

If yes, can you provide examples?

- Emergency relief
- Refugee camps
- Natural disaster/conflict

Q4: Does your organization coordinate your activities with other environmental organizations and/or humanitarian organizations? (If no, go to Q7)

Q5: If yes, which ones?

Q6: What are the challenges related to such coordination efforts?

Q7: In your understanding, what was your organization’s motivation to engage in humanitarian relief efforts?

Q8: What sources of information do you use to guide this engagement? I.e., sources of helpful information? (NGOs, IOs, UN, academic literature?)

Q9: Does your organization have specific tools or guiding principles for contributing to humanitarian relief programming?

Q10: If yes, what tools do you use?

Q11: What have been challenges and successes so far? ("Is a case study possible?")

Q12: How do you think steps can be made to improve your organization's engagement in the humanitarian response/emergency response setting? (What are the lessons learned?)

Q13: Do you have any questions for us? Or points you would like to add?

Annex 4: Interview questions for donors

Q1: Please tell us a bit about your professional background - what position do you hold? What involvement in environmental issues do you have? Insight into your own experience?

Q2: Would you kindly share some information on your organization?

Q3: What are your policies on environment and humanitarian assistance?

Q4: Should NGOs have environmental policies relative to humanitarian assistance or are a Donor's own policies sufficient to guide an NGO?

Q5: How do you see your role as influencers of policies and practices among humanitarian organisations? Is this something they think actively about?

Q6: What do you (the Donor) expect NGOs to do with regards to environmental issues and humanitarian assistance?

Q7: Should NGOs call attention to environmental issues, particularly possible negative impact and mitigation measures, in project proposals?

Q8: Do you follow up whether environmental considerations that are included in programming are adhered to by NGOs?

Q9: Is the Donor willing to provide additional funds to address the negative environmental impacts of the humanitarian assistance funded by the Donor, or due to other assistance not funded by the Donor, e.g., to address problems caused by other assistance?

Q10: Do you collaborate with your donor organization's respective environmental/humanitarian focal points? If they work with their sustainable development or environment counterparts and whether they encourage the receivers of humanitarian aid to do the same?

Annex 5: Background (Literature Review)

Guidelines

- 2005 WCDR's Program of Action
- UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals
- The Paris Agreement Implementation Guidelines
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Disaster Waste Management Guidelines by UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit
- OCHA's Guiding Principles
- HelpAge: Humanitarian inclusion standards
- WFP: Green Logistics checklist tool and policy

Tools for mainstreaming the environment

- Rapid Environmental Assessment (RAE)
- Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT)
- Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)
- The Sourcebook on Integration of Natural Hazards into the Environmental Impact Assessment Process
- The Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environmental in Refugee-Related Operations (FRAME)
- Tearfund: CEDRA tool
- UNEP-TNT: Toolkit for Clean Fleet Strategy Development
- WWF and American Red Cross: The Green Recovery and Reconstruction Toolkit
- NEAT+
- Environment and Humanitarian Action Connect (EHA Connect)

Humanitarian standards

- [The SPHERE Project](#)
- [Core Humanitarian Standard](#)
- [Red Cross and Red Crescent and NGO Code of Conduct](#)
- [Humanitarian Charter](#)

Initiatives

- [Environmental Marker \(UNEP\)](#)
- [Environmental Field Advisors \(OCHA\)](#)
- [SAFE Task Force \(IASC\)](#)
- [Environment and Humanitarian Action Network and associated Reference Groups \(JEU\)](#)
- [Joint Initiative for Coordination of Assessments for Environment in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [Francophone Humanitarian Environment Network \(URD\)](#)
- [ProAct Network](#)
- [The Global Shelter Cluster, with the Environment Community of Practice](#)