



# THE EMG NEXUS DIALOGUES

## NEXUS DIALOGUE THREE, 19 OCTOBER 2017



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

# EMG

### The Environment-Humanitarian Nexus

Environment and humanitarian goals go hand in hand. Ecological and climate change are both the causes and consequences of a greater scale, impact and complexity of protracted crises and natural hazards.

As nature is often invisible in the choices we make in the humanitarian system, short-term stability is often achieved by steadily depleting local natural resources.

### Nexus Dialogue Three: strengthening partnerships between the environment and humanitarian sectors in the context of the humanitarian change agenda and the SDGs

#### Technical Segment Overview

The actors and existing partnerships at the nexus of environment and humanitarian action were mapped, looking into the nexus in practice with examples of collaboration and lessons learned. Participants heard the key messages from the online e-discussions which were presented before going into an interactive discussion with the audience and the moderator. Views and perspectives of key UN agencies and other actors were probed relating to the challenges and experiences of integrating the environment into humanitarian action, including thoughts on what more could be done.

There is little understanding of either the real cost of replacing natural resources provided for free or that man-made alternative solutions are sometimes far too expensive for these resources to be replaced or substituted.

This highlights 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.

The third EMG Nexus Dialogue brought together UN and other stakeholders to strengthen the interlinkages, to identify tradeoffs and to set targets for entry points in the environment-humanitarian nexus.

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In humanitarian operations, there is **currently a strong focus on recovery and relief**. The urgency to do this leaves less room for preparation and at times less consideration of the environment as a threat or a consequence.

Several presentations were given during the Technical Segment, highlighting that the humanitarian aid is linked to the environment through the consequences of humanitarian action. Immediate aid does not always consider the long-term environmental impacts, a prime example being the provision of food but no means to cook it – leading to deforestation.

The environment dimensions of the SDGs have been included in humanitarian action, however they have not been operationalized. Recognition of the environment has led to various initiatives and there is forward movement. Now there needs to be a coherent push.

**Ms. Emilia Wahlström, UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit**, noted that among other things, there is a lack of leadership and monitoring on this integration and that neither have been operationalized.

**In the Stockholm Environment Institute's mapping tool**, **Ms. Amanda Kohn and Mr. Albert Salamanca** showed the lack of documentation of "routine" or "unnamed" initiatives or partnerships that operate in the field.

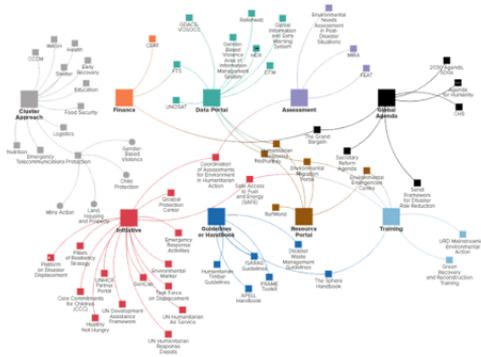
**Mr. Amare Gebre Egziabher from UNHCR** highlighted that the number of displaced people is 63.5 million, which is 50 percent more than in 2012. Often this displacement is occurring in climate change hotspots.

**Mr. Andrew Morton from the Rapid Environment and Climate Technical Assistance team**, emphasized that to fund one blue helmet in the Sahara, it costs \$12,000 – \$15,000 just for energy costs.

**Work by UNDP was then presented**, by **Mr. Tim Scott**, on enhancing environmental and social sustainability in the UN programming and operations including humanitarian action through coherent safeguards.

**Following this, Dr. Basilio Monteiro from St John's University, New York**, provided a summary of the environment-humanitarian nexus e-discussion.

## PRESENTATIONS



An interactive discussion delved into the challenges and experiences of integrating the environment into humanitarian action, including thoughts on what more could be done. It was noted that a change in mindset is needed, for example to view prevention as a humanitarian and conflict peacekeeping strategy and for donors to view themselves as investors.





## High Level Segment Overview

After the moderator introduced the panel, Ms. Clarissa Azkoul highlighted IOM's support for increased efforts to integrate environment, noting that IOM began working in this area in the early 1990s. Following on, Dr. Hugo Slim noted that it is easy for ICRC to see the environment in operations on the ground. At the policy level, he noted, **SDGs and the nexus perspective are relevant and clear to our work**. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) saw this coming decades ago, highlighting environmental attack threats.

Dr. Achim Wennmann pin-pointed some of the connectors mentioned, stating that IHL sets a legal standard in humanitarian and environmental law. Another connector is the practical applications and integrated operations already occurring. Dr. Wenjian Zhang made his point clear, saying that we need to consider the global landscapes as stated in the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report. The environment has a global economic impact.

Mr. Jesper Lund said that we are good at going out and feeding people and we do consider the environment; however, in this case environment begins with a "z". Moreover, as we become urbanized, it is more of a challenge to reach out to urban centres as they are often fragmented communities.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Jagan Chapagain suggested that the first thing in collaboration, is there must be a convergence of mandates. Especially as tensions currently exist between sectors; for example, humanitarians need to work quickly and it is hard to incorporate environmental response at this time.

Left to right: Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief - Emergency Services Branch and the Field Coordination Support Section (United Nations OCHA); Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Under Secretary General - Programmes and Operations (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies); Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary General (UN Environment); Dr. Achim Wennmann [moderator], Senior Researcher at the Graduate Institute and Ex Coordinator of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform; Ms. Clarissa Azkoul, Chief of Staff (International Organization for Migration); Dr. Hugo Slim, Head of Policy (International Committee of the Red Cross); Dr. Wenjian Zhang, Assistant Secretary General (World Meteorological Organization)

Mr. Elliot Harris began by saying if we only think about environment action after the event, we are already too late. Let's examine ways the environment leads to humanitarian operations or how humanitarian operations transmit to environmental degradation. Regardless, the emphasis is on prevention. Mr. Wennmann noted that this links to the Secretary General's views on prevention and sustaining peace.



The audience were engaged in discussions. They were interested to know whether we are able to go beyond the environment being an add-on and whether there are other stakeholders beyond "the usual suspects" that should be engaged. The audience further queried the panel, showing interest in how much organisations rely on governments for delivery on the ground and whether there is actually enough funding and operational support.



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Mr. Harris noted that funding for humanitarian relief comes from a very different place and has different political realms than environment/development funding, this can pose a challenge. Dr. Slim highlighted the challenges for ICRC, that 50% of the organisation's carbon footprint comes from airplanes doing airdrops, in South Sudan alone. On the funding side, ICRC are now receiving multi-term funding, rather than short-term. A significant challenge, noted Dr. Slim, is that many city areas are without environmental laws, which does not make them or anyone operating there accountable.

Building on the discussion, Dr. Wennmann pointed out to the panel that the humanitarian community shouldn't stereotype itself into a short-term timeline. Dr. Zhang highlighted that **WMO tirelessly works to gather more accurate meteorological information to help its member businesses and countries**. He informed the audience, that in China, government agencies must by law take into account disaster risk reduction and use weather predictions in their policy actions.

Discussion continued. In response to Dr. Wennmann's prompt on information exchange, Ms. Azkoul suggested that we need to find new ways of working. How do we find new collaborative platforms to break down the barriers of humanitarian and development models? Mr. Chapagain highlighted that IFRC is great at generating ideas, but often struggles in prioritizing and implementing the best of these ideas.

They see huge benefits from the private sector and development actors, especially when working in large urban environments. Mr. Lund pointed out that at OCHA, they are creative and innovative, but at the same time very risk averse. Often, humanitarian agencies are afraid to fail. That is partially linked to the need to continue to get funding. The audience asked **whether we can rethink policy making to be preventative or even anticipatory?** Others, from a donor perspective, noted that they have never been asked if an agency could share their funding for a partnership. They confirmed OCHA's concerns, sustaining that fear of not getting funding is always the case.

Sections of the audience disagreed with the importance of the private sector, saying business actions can cause harm or human rights violation; in land grab cases.



## Future Dialogues

**Nexus Dialogue 4: Integrating environment and health in urban settings**  
Sunday, 3rd December 2017 in Nairobi

Environmental quality is increasingly linked to global causes of illness and death. In urbanized environments, environmental hazards include exposure to air, water and chemical pollution. The SDGs play an important role in this nexus, highlighting that isolated actions to improve health are unsustainable, and the environment must be an entry point into addressing global health.

## Acknowledgments



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