

UNHCR: Environmental Mandate & Activities

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Environmental mandate

UNHCR's mandate is to protect the rights and dignity of refugees, a task it has undertaken for almost half a century. In recent years, it has also taken steps to safeguard the environment around refugee operations and to encourage management of natural resources with a view to long-term sustainability - a task in which UNHCR plays an important co-ordinating role, drawing expertise and assistance from other organisations. To co-ordinate implementation and support of its field-based activities, in 1996 UNHCR prepared Environmental Guidelines which lay out its operational policy and principles. UNHCR's environmental policy deals with refugee-related environmental problems during all phases of refugee assistance:

- the emergency phase,
- the care-and-maintenance phase,
- the durable-solutions phase, including:- environmental rehabilitation of the asylum country's territory after refugees' repatriation,- environmental concerns related to integration of refugees in the host country,- environmental concerns related to re-integration of returnees in their home country.

Environmental activities

- Site planning and settlement establishment
- Water and Sanitation
- Reforestation
- Household energy conservation
- Sustainable agriculture
- Environmental education and awareness raising
- Soil and water conservation
- Environmental friendly shelter construction
- Livestock and animal husbandry
- Environmental assessment, monitoring and evaluation