

Terms of Reference for the Issue Management Group on ENVIRONMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Where actors meet to advance the frontiers of crisis response from short term stability to long-term resilience

A. Introduction

1. Humanitarian assistance has been growing in an unprecedented manner. While recognizing that the root causes of many of the most urgent humanitarian situations today are political, disasters, epidemics and the degradation of renewable natural resource are primary drivers and intensifiers of humanitarian crises. A vicious circle exists between disasters and conflict, climate change, health risks, biodiversity loss, competition for natural resources, ecosystem degradation, human rights harms, gender inequality, poverty and food insecurity. The state of the environment and the health of ecosystems lie at the very heart of scale, impact and complexity of humanitarian crisis, which are exacerbated by climate change.

2. Healthy ecosystems are integral for the effective enjoyment of a broad range of human rights (A/HRC/RES/37/8). They play a critical role in sustaining life and livelihoods, peace and security and health, as well as in reducing disaster and climate risks should be emphasized. The failure to integrate environmental aspects in humanitarian response planning has manifested itself in many ways across various crisis situations and countries and can gravely impact human health and wellbeing. For instance, it resulted in deforestation because of brick production for humanitarian operations in Darfur; dried up wells due to over-drilling for water by humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan; lead to fishing stock depletion in post-Tsunami Sri Lanka following an over-provisioning of fishing boats; triggered environmental contamination in Haiti due to a failure to meet waste treatment standards, causing the largest outbreak of cholera in recent history; and has triggered landslides in the Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camp in 2017. Hence, Nature-Based Solutions including "actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits"¹, should be promoted to address these issues.

3. Policy reform agendas including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Agenda for Humanity represent an entry point for collaborative action between environmental and humanitarian actors. However, a lack of leadership to enable partnerships and to enforce environmental mainstreaming, as well as a system-wide lack of accountability towards resilience and sustainability over the long term, lead to weakened humanitarian response with environment as a cost-ineffective afterthought. Limited scaling-up of existing and innovative practices that integrate environmental considerations in humanitarian action may be the result of a risk-averse and ill-informed humanitarian sector that does not easily adopt effective good practices from environment/development actors and/or trial new and innovative ideas and practices. There is also a lack of understanding of, and fragmented approaches to, people-centered livelihood systems which places renewable natural resources as the foundation of lives and livelihoods.

¹ Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and Maginnis, S. (eds.) (2016). Nature-based Solutions to address global societal challenges. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xiii + 97pp.

4. Several significant steps have already been taken in support of more environmentally sound humanitarian action. Networks such as the Environment and Humanitarian Action Network, Safe Access to Fuel and Energy; tools (eg. the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool, environment marker) and standards (eg. Sphere) have been put in place, while piloted bottom-up solutions have proven the cost-effectiveness of integrating environment in humanitarian response. The Joint Initiative on “The coordination of assessments for environment in humanitarian action” is a best practice example in promoting holistic and shared analysis between environmental, development and humanitarian actors.² At the same time, a change of mindset is needed to move from pilot work to standard practice. Setting up short-term solutions in a narrow humanitarian framework is not sufficient: whereas humanitarian operations respond immediately, their time-span can be long term, exemplified by the average years of displacement of a person being 17 years. For mainstreaming to happen we need engagement and advocacy at the very highest level. EMG can contribute by providing top-down guidance, with corresponding reporting mechanisms back to the top.

B. Background

5. At their 23rd Meeting in September 2017, the EMG Senior Officials welcomed the organisation of a Nexus Dialogue on the integration of the environment into humanitarian action, and encouraged the preparation of Terms of Reference for an Issue Management Group based on the Dialogue outcomes. The EMG was considered well positioned to elevate the issue of environment and humanitarian action to a higher level as efforts to integrate environment continue at a local level and across responses. The IMG would serve as a platform for an established UN-wide collaboration process to engage relevant organisations in the humanitarian and environment sectors, as well as related sectors such as agriculture, water and health, including actors working on conflict/peace, climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) to enhance resilience, in sharing expertise at i.a. the policy and programme level.

6. The EMG Nexus Dialogue on strengthening partnerships between the environmental and humanitarian sectors in the context of the humanitarian change agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals was held on 19 October 2017 in Geneva, bringing together UN and other stakeholders to strengthen the interlinkages, to identify trade-offs and to set targets for entry points in the environment-humanitarian nexus. The Dialogue recognized the link between environmental management and reaching the goals of humanitarian operations in the context of delivering on the integrated SDGs, highlighting the need for a more systematic push for coherent integration and the need for new collaborative platforms to break down the barriers of humanitarian and development models. Suggested actions included (i) a mapping of mechanisms, tools and actors that are currently used for or involved in the integration of environmental considerations into humanitarian action; (ii) the assessment of the environmental impacts of humanitarian work and related costs to guide prevention, impact reduction and mitigation efforts (iii) and the building of high-level support and advocacy for this issue.

C. Objectives and scope

7. Building on the Senior Officials decision [SOM23, Action VIII] and the EMG Nexus Dialogue outcome³, the objective of this IMG is:

- To strengthen and facilitate systematic and coherent integration of environmental considerations into humanitarian action, risk reduction and recovery efforts in the UN system. The IMG aims to address

² <http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/>

³ http://unemg.org/images/emgdocs/Dialogues/ND3/Nexus%20Dialogue%203%20-%20Summary_FINAL.pdf

system level bottlenecks to promote better joined-up approaches and speaking a common language, by providing top-down guidance with corresponding mechanisms back to the top. Ultimately, the IMG contributes to improving humanitarian outcomes by identifying concrete means for a new way of working, in which environmental, humanitarian, human rights, development and security goals go hand in hand.

8. The IMG shall organize its work to undertake the following main activities taking into account relevant interagency and intergovernmental processes:

1. Enhancing access to, and uptake of, guidance, tools, standards and collaboration mechanisms

- **Review and leverage guidance and available environmental capacity related to environmental assessments and good practices in humanitarian action:** In close collaboration with the Joint Initiative⁴, review and endorse a framework for “Environment in Humanitarian Action”, an online resource which will compile tools, systems, good practices and entry points to support humanitarian action at different levels and in different contexts (e.g natural and human induced disasters and risks,, rural and urban settings, etc.) with a focus on data and information sharing and analysis.

Deliverable 1.1⁵

- An endorsed online ‘Framework for Environment in Humanitarian Action’;
- A Guidance note for environmental actors wishing to engage in the humanitarian system.
Lead: TBC Milestone: Q3 2018 draft framework for endorsement by the IMG

- **Promote a common approach to environmental standards and project level environmental assessment tools for humanitarian action:** In close collaboration with the Joint Initiative and the Consultative Process for Environmental and Social Sustainability (ESS) in the UN System, provide input to a common approach to environmental and social standards which is under preparation by the Consultative Process, to ensure that the common approach is applicable in a humanitarian/emergency context. Building upon work already undertaken, and in consultation with donors, explore ways to include environmental considerations into standard operating procedures to ensure that environmental concerns are systematically considered as an integral part of humanitarian operations. Explore opportunities to integrate the work on standards in the project level environmental assessment tool being updated by the Joint Initiative.

Deliverables 1.2

- Input/narrative to the common approach to environmental standards under preparation by the Consultative Process for Environmental and Social Sustainability (ESS) in the UN systems, to ensure that the common approach is applicable in humanitarian action.
Lead: TBC Milestone: Q4 2018 the draft common approach makes reference to and considers the emergency context

⁴ <http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/>

⁵ These deliverables are prepared by the Joint Initiative. The IMG adds value by giving validity to the Joint Initiative’s outputs and outcomes, frame them in a broader policy context at higher levels and contributing to their sustainability, considering that the Joint Initiative is currently funded until September 2018.

- **Explore how environmental analysis can support accountable humanitarian action:** Identify means and incentives for both humanitarian and environmental actors to facilitate moving from sector analysis towards analyzing cross-sectoral environmental accelerators of a crisis, by piloting the Framework and guidance, showcasing available tools in sudden-onset and protracted crises, including through remote analysis.

Deliverable 1.3

Report documenting lessons learned in pilots, providing recommendations for how integration of environmental consideration in humanitarian action can be further strengthened.

Lead: TBC Milestone: Q1 2019 Pilot case(s) identified (depending on crisis occurrence)

2. **Joint programming: Enhance prevention of crisis by improving humanitarian disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, conflict sensitive and climate change adaptation programming**

- **In the context of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the humanitarian change agenda, demonstrate the need for collaboration between humanitarian and disaster risk and climate change actors at field and headquarter levels and emphasize the increased focus on prevention and preparedness as essential elements of resilience,:** Prepare an expert study, focusing on quantifying the cost of inaction of integration environmental considerations in humanitarian interventions and highlighting the complex linkages between the humanitarian, development and environmental agendas and the Sustainable Development Goals. The study could examine different policy scenarios (comparing, for example Business as Usual with alternative options including nature-based solutions) in humanitarian settings, including interventions related to energy, groundwater resource management, climate-sensitive livelihood options, waste management, agriculture, food security, etc. This analysis would differ from a traditional Cost Benefit Analysis, as the latter often fail to fully consider nature's contributions to people's life, health and livelihood, and sustaining peace i.e. benefits that are not bought and sold in markets.

Deliverable 2.1

A study that visualizes hidden costs and externalities of inaction, highlights benefits of integrating environment in humanitarian action and the need to reinforce the role of nature in prevention and resilience. The study will support the UN system in making better informed decisions on humanitarian interventions as they relate to environmental integration.

Lead: TBC; Milestones: Q1-2 2019 (depending on external resource mobilisation)

- **Analyze links and opportunities between climate, environment, peace & security, health, and humanitarian financing mechanisms:** In close collaboration with relevant partners and inter-organizational work streams, analyze the opportunities to align humanitarian funding with environmental, peace & security, health, disaster risk reduction and climate finance flows to leverage joined up humanitarian and development outcomes that respect, promote and protect human rights for all, as also advocated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Deliverable 2.2 A compilation of case studies of first mover best practices that align humanitarian funding with environmental, peace & security, DRR, health, and climate finance flows.
Lead: TBC; Milestone: Q4 2018

3. **Awareness raising: support joint advocacy and messaging**

- **Work on joint advocacy and adapted narratives, linking to change agendas:** Demonstrate how collaborative action between environmental, development and humanitarian actors can respond to the overarching Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, other global policy processes such as CBD and UNCCD for, the New Way of Working, the Agenda for humanity and the Grand Bargain as well as the Secretary General’s reform agenda.

Deliverables .3.1

- Inter-agency statement at the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 24) to the UNFCCC
Lead: TBC; Timeline: 3-14 December 2018 in Poland
- Advocacy material that synthesizes scenarios, projections, and killer facts on climate change and humanitarian outcomes to make the case for disaster and conflict prevention and climate finance alignment.
Lead: TBC, Timeline: Q4 2018
- Advocacy material that synthesizes linkages with global policy agendas. Highlight the link between the growing need for humanitarian assistance, and interconnected risks including conflict, natural hazard, climate extreme, health threats or epidemics, as well as the importance of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaption, and the need to invest in preparedness and nature based solutions.
Lead: TBC Timeline: Q4 2018

- **Success stories and good practices and work to identify champions of change:** Gather and share success stories of integrating environment in humanitarian action. Identify champions of change, including women leaders, to move the agenda forward through dedicated campaigns or awareness-raising efforts. This can include, for example, city leaders who have coped with massive influxes of refugees and IDPs and/or have developed pragmatic and innovative nature-based solutions against climate extremes or city mayors who are providing solutions to urban communities at particularly high risk for environmental emergencies and industrial risks, aligning with other international initiatives such as the Making Cities Resilient Campaign, and the Great Green Wall Initiative in the Sahel.

Deliverable 3.2

- Success stories, good practices and stories of change champions on how environmental risks (including climate, disaster, conflict and health risks) are integrated into the crisis response (eg. in Bangladesh Rohingya crisis) published on Greening the Blue, the Environmental Emergencies Centre (EEC) and Reliefweb.⁶
Lead: TBC; Milestone: TBC

⁶ <http://www.eecentre.org/>

- **Synthesize challenges, opportunities and recommendations for senior management:** Report to, and respond to the Senior Officials Meeting of the EMG on the outcome of its work. Provide concrete recommendations for taking the work forward.

Deliverable 3.3

IMG-EHA recommendations paper

Lead: TBC; Milestone: TBC

9. The IMG will work to promote uptake of the deliverables produced. Taking into consideration its time-bound nature, upon completion of its tasks outlined in this ToR, the IMG will consider ways in which the work to mainstream environment into humanitarian action can be sustained in the long-term.

D. Membership, format and mechanisms

10. The IMG on *Environment & Humanitarian Action* is composed of UN entity focal points nominated by EMG members. The IMG is open to observers from non-UN entities, including academia and NGOs, whose knowledge, activities, expertise will be relevant to IMG workstreams. Non-UN entities may be invited to participate in technical peer and partner reviews of outputs prepared by the IMG.
11. The IMG shall organize its work based on the feedback and priorities voiced by the members in the Environment Management Group. Activities will take into account relevant interagency and intergovernmental processes, building on existing process and working to close gaps, rather than duplicating existing work within the EMG or the wider system.
12. The meetings of the IMG will be organized by the EMG Secretariat and for each meeting a chair or co-chairs will be selected among the IMG members.
13. The implementation of the above mentioned tasks is dependent on IMG members' in-kind support. The EMG Secretariat will consult with IMG members as needed, when an activity requires financial contributions and/or to explore activities to which members would be willing to contribute financially. Support may also be sought from donors.
14. The IMG will convene on a periodic basis through web-based calls and face-to-face meetings in the margins of major events (e.g. Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week⁷).
15. The IMG will provide updates on the progress of its activities to the EMG Senior Officials and to Member States through the UN Environment Assembly and the Strategic Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (SAGEE). The IMG will engage with Humanitarian Country Teams throughout the implementation of planned deliverables to ensure effective action and encourage uptake in the long term.

E. Links to initiatives

16. The IMG contributes to enhancing the overall resilience and sustainability in the long run of the different listed initiatives by creating an enabling environment for mainstreaming environmental considerations into humanitarian action.

⁷ <http://leading-edge-programme.org>

a) The Secretary General’s reform agenda and the report entitled ‘*Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All*’⁸, which outlines the operationalization of the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration and the renewing of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

b) The OCHA / UN Environment Joint Unit, established in 1992 after UN Member states concluded that an international mechanism was needed to deal with the environmental aspects of disaster.⁹

c) The Strategic Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (SAGEE), which serves as a principal advisory group to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UN Environment on policies and activities related to the interface between environment and emergencies¹⁰.

d) The EMG Nexus Dialogue Three ‘Strengthening the partnership between the environmental and humanitarian sectors in the context of the humanitarian change agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals’¹¹

e) The EMG workstream on the development of a common approach to environmental and social standards for programmes/projects¹²

f) The UNHCR Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)¹³

g) The Joint Initiative on ‘Coordination of assessments for environment in humanitarian action’¹⁴

h) The Sustainable UN Program (SUN) and the IMG on Environmental Sustainability Management¹⁵

i) The Environmental and Emergencies Centre (EEC)¹⁶ and the Environmental Experts Hub¹⁷, serving as a knowledge hub where response partners meet and strengthen their readiness for environmental emergencies¹⁸

j) The Environment and Humanitarian Action Network (EHA Network), a semi-formal network aiming to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts of humanitarian action and to promote environmentally responsible humanitarian programming through collaboration and cooperation.

k) The outcomes of the 2017 Environment and Emergencies Forum, with over 60 commitments between individuals and organizations, primarily aimed at joint research, advocacy and training; sharing data and information; and strengthening collaboration across sectors and communities, and between the local, regional and global levels.¹⁹

l) The partnership for Ecosystem Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR)²⁰

⁸ <http://undocs.org/A/72/124>

⁹ <https://www.unocha.org/themes/environmental-emergencies>

¹⁰ <http://www.eecentre.org/SAGEE/>

¹¹ <https://unemg.org/emg-nexus-dialogues/dialogue-3>

¹² <http://unemg.org/images/emgdocs/SOMMeetings/2017/INF3.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.eecentre.org/assessments/>

¹⁵ <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/>

¹⁶ <http://www.eecentre.org/>

¹⁷ <http://eecentre.org/eehub/>

¹⁸ <http://www.eecentre.org>

¹⁹ <http://eecentre.org/eef/>

²⁰ <http://pedrr.org/>