



Disasters and Conflicts Programme

United Nations Environment Programme

About us

UNEP seeks to minimize environmental threats to human well-being from the environmental causes and consequences of conflicts and disasters.

Since the start of the new millennium, the world has witnessed over 35 major conflicts and some 2,500 disasters. Over two billion people have been affected, and millions have lost their lives. Not only do these tragic events destroy infrastructure, cause population displacement and fundamentally undermine human security, they also compound poverty and tear apart the fabric of sustainable development.

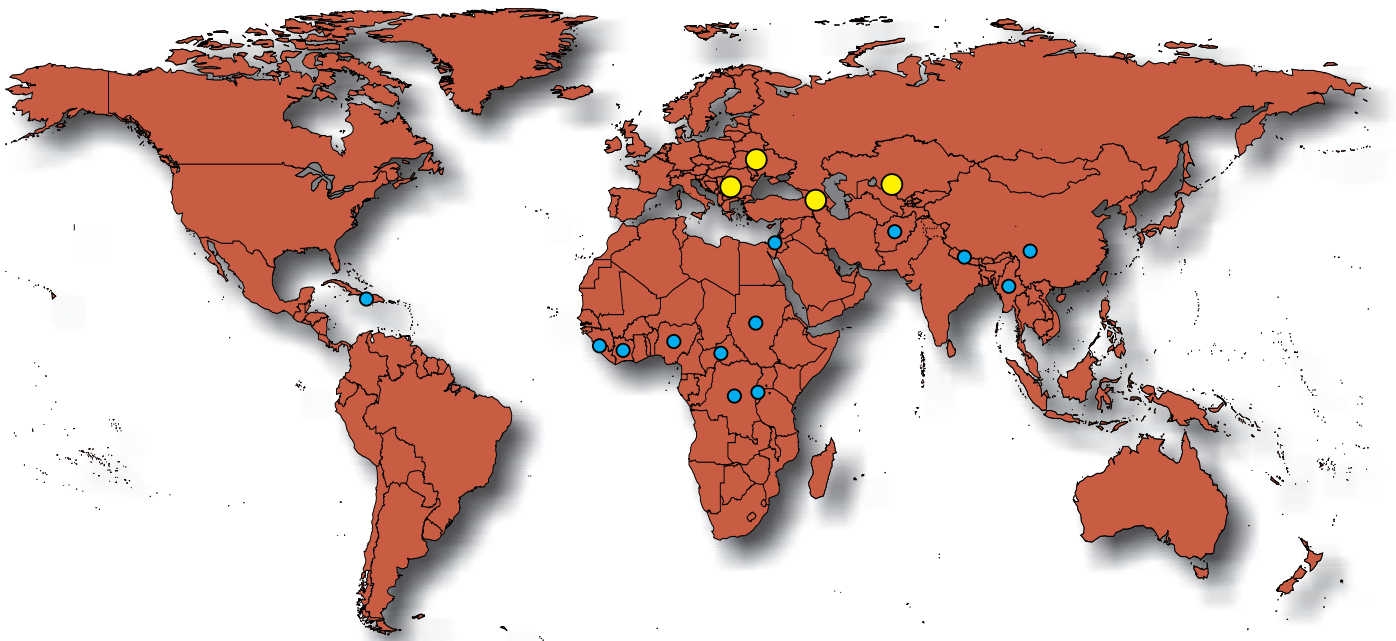
In addition, at least 18 violent conflicts have been fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources since 1990. As the global population continues to rise, and demand for resources continues to grow, there is significant potential for conflicts over natural resources to intensify in the coming decades. The consequences of climate change for water availability, food security, prevalence of disease, coastal boundaries, and population distribution may further aggravate existing tensions and generate new conflicts.

In response to increased global awareness of the environmental dimensions of crises, and to growing demand for services that address them, UNEP has identified “disasters and conflicts” as one of six priority areas of work. Through the Disasters and Conflicts programme, UNEP provides four core services to Member States:

- Post-crisis environmental assessments
- Post-crisis environmental recovery
- Environmental cooperation for peacebuilding
- Disaster risk reduction

The Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch is tasked with coordinating the theme across UNEP.

UNEP disaster and conflict operations and ENVSEC regions in 2009



● UNEP disaster and conflict operations

Afghanistan
Central African Republic
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of Congo
Haiti
Myanmar
Nepal
Nigeria
People's Republic of China
Rwanda
Sierra Leone
Sudan
The Gaza Strip

● ENVSEC regions

Central Asia
Eastern Europe
South Eastern Europe
Southern Caucasus

Core services of the UNEP Disasters and Conflicts Programme

Post-crisis environmental assessments

Field-based assessments of the environmental impacts of crises on human health, livelihoods and security form the core of UNEP's conflict and disaster management operations. Through its Joint Unit with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP mobilizes and coordinates the international emergency response and identification of acute environmental risks caused by conflicts, disasters and industrial accidents. With the aim of integrating environmental needs into relief and recovery programmes, UNEP is also available to conduct detailed post-crisis environmental assessments based on fieldwork, laboratory analysis and state-of-the-art technology. Each assessment is conducted on an equally neutral, impartial and scientific basis and adopts a tailor-made approach to the situation's particular geographical, political and security conditions. Since 1999, UNEP has conducted post-crisis environmental assessments in the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Sudan, Ukraine and Rwanda, as well as the countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. In 2009, environmental assessments will be undertaken in such countries as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.



In 2006, UNEP mobilized within days of the end of the conflict between Lebanon and Israel to undertake a field-based scientific assessment of the conflict's environmental impacts, entailing the collection of some 200 samples from over 100 sites. The post-conflict environmental assessment report was completed within four months of the ceasefire.



Initiated at the request of the Government of Afghanistan following a post-conflict environmental assessment conducted in 2002, UNEP's Programme in Afghanistan has created a lasting foundation for environmental management and sustainable development in Afghanistan, centered on supporting the establishment of a self-sufficient National Environmental Protection Authority. The programme is implemented from UNEP's project office in Kabul.

Environmental recovery

Following an assessment, UNEP is available to help national governments address identified environmental needs and priorities. Post-crisis environmental recovery programmes, which can last for several years, aim to strengthen the capacity of national and local environmental authorities, rehabilitate ecosystems, mitigate risks and ensure that resources are used sustainably within recovery and development processes. Where it is necessary and requested, UNEP can establish project offices in country to ensure a continuous presence on the ground, as is currently the case in Afghanistan and Sudan. UNEP is also implementing environmental recovery programmes in China, Myanmar, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire.

Core services of the UNEP Disasters and Conflicts Programme



The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative aims to strengthen regional collaboration through the identification of priorities and opportunities for cooperation to address environmental problems threatening human security. In this context, UNEP is currently working with national experts towards the establishment of three protected mountain areas across the borders of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

Environmental cooperation for peacebuilding

Capitalizing on the shared need to manage natural resources for livelihoods, UNEP aims to use environmental cooperation to transform the risks of conflict over resources into opportunities for peace in war-torn societies, and to integrate environment and natural resources issues within the peacebuilding policies and strategies of the UN. To help address the environmental dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding effectively, UNEP has developed a unique relationship with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and broadened its expertise and capacity by establishing an Expert Advisory Group composed of senior experts from academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and think tanks with demonstrated leadership in environment and conflict issues. On the ground, UNEP has pioneered innovative approaches in Sudan, between Iran and Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, and between the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. In 2009, the UNEP will principally focus on countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda, including the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone.

Disaster risk reduction

Healthy ecosystems are the front line of defense against a changing climate. The services they provide not only protect lives and livelihoods from natural hazards, they also support livelihoods and other crucial aspects of human well-being. Guided by the Hyogo Framework for Action, UNEP provides decision-makers with sound information about disaster risk and works to catalyse a broad range of environmental actors to further reduce risks. UNEP's risk reduction work also extends to Climate Change and Environmentally Induced Migration. UNEP works closely with the humanitarian community, focusing on regions vulnerable to disasters, out-migration and social instability.



Following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and resulting tsunami, concern over the projected increase in coastal hazards associated with global climate change in the Maldives prompted the national government to request UNEP's assistance to better understand the distribution of risk and vulnerability among the different islands. UNEP conducted a detailed assessment that identified the environmental factors affecting the risk profile of selected islands.

Key actors and partners

Key actors

The Disasters and Conflicts programme is delivered through several key actors within UNEP.

From Kosovo to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sudan and China, the **Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch** has responded to crisis situations in more than 25 countries since 1999, delivering high-quality environmental expertise to national governments and partners in the UN family. As the international community has shifted its focus from post-crisis intervention to crisis prevention, the branch has expanded its operational range, adding disaster risk reduction and environmental cooperation for peacebuilding to its core services of post-crisis environmental assessment and recovery. The branch is based in Geneva, Switzerland, with project offices in Afghanistan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.

The **Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit** mobilizes and coordinates the international emergency response to acute environmental risks caused by conflicts, natural disasters and industrial accidents. The Unit is housed with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in Geneva, Switzerland, and works in close cooperation with the Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch.

The **Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative**, a partnership whose members include UNEP, UNDP, OSCE, UNECE and REC, builds on the combined strengths and field presence of the lead organizations to perform three key functions: assessment of environment and security risks, capacity-building and institutional development to strengthen regional cooperation, and the integration of environmental and security concerns and priorities into international and national policy-making. ENVSEC projects are implemented in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The ENVSEC Secretariat is hosted by UNEP in Geneva, Switzerland.

The **APELL (Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies on a Local Level) Programme** works with communities in natural and hazard-prone areas, helping them prepare for and mitigate the environmental risks of industrial accidents. The programme is housed with UNEP in Paris, France.

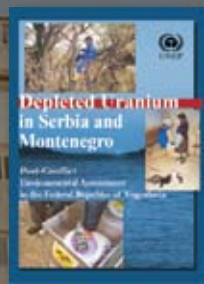
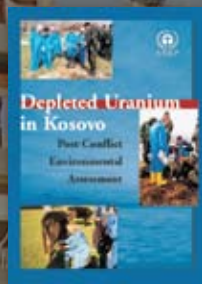
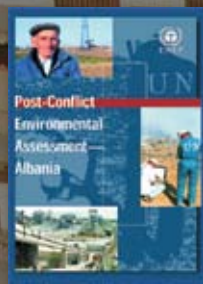
Partners

UNEP's Disasters and Conflicts programme has received strong support from several national governments, and established partnerships with a wide range of international and national actors, including:

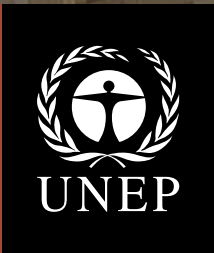
- UN agencies and bodies such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the European Commission, the World Bank and the OSCE.
- Academic and research institutions such as the Earth Institute at Columbia University, the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Environmental Law Institute, Adelphi Research, ICRAF, PRIO and a number of national universities.
- Major NGOs such as IUCN, WWF, and IISD.
- Spiez laboratory (Switzerland).



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