

Integration of environmental issues in humanitarian programming- the Environment Marker

Environment is one of the cross-cutting issues in the humanitarian cluster approach.

Environmental issues – along with poor governance of natural resources – are part of the underlying causes of many, if not most crises and disasters requiring humanitarian aid. This is also acknowledged in many of the recent CAPs. Underlying environmental factors, such as water scarcity, disputes over land, deforestation or impact from climate change, contribute to many crises and may even hamper the humanitarian mission itself.

Safeguarding environmental resources in humanitarian programming is therefore imperative, particularly in the context of countries or regions where livelihoods are vulnerable to shocks such as floods, drought, or conflict over natural resources. Insufficient attention to environmental considerations can trigger significant negative secondary impacts for refugees and local populations as well as counter resilience-building efforts. There are well documented examples of crisis leading to the adoption of coping strategies that undermine a community's resource base, thereby exacerbating the challenge of recovery after the crisis is over. When assessing negative or positive environmental impacts of a project, understanding the specific context is critical. The context is also important in designing the response – where there are key needs for progress in environment in the project area these may be able to be built into the project. An example here is that in order to reduce deforestation, humanitarian projects may need to switch away from fired bricks to alternative construction methods such as stabilised soil blocks or concrete blocks.

A straightforward approach to environment has the following four steps:

1. *Contextualize* projects given the environmental vulnerabilities of areas they are located in.
2. *Assess* projects for potential negative environmental impacts.
3. *Mitigate* those impacts by modifying the project design, or compensating for negative impacts.
4. *Enhance* environmental benefits in the project

Good environmental practises have been developed at country level in Sudan and South Sudan. One such example is the Environment marker developed and rolled out by UNEP. Sector guidance specifically for the South Sudanese context has also been developed as some sectors need to be more mindful of the environment than others, even though issues such as climate change should be considered across the board. Agencies (and their responsible project officers) indicate the impact of the project on the environment according to the summary table below. There are *four categories of projects*:

Guidance: Environment Marker Codes

Environment Marker	Description
Each humanitarian project should identify its potential impact on the environment following guidance providence in the “key environmental messages for integration into the CHAP by cluster”, and address it in a manner which is tailored to Afghanistan.	
Environment marker A Positive environmental impact of project	Environmental conditions will be <u>actively improved</u> by the project. The project will <u>fully or significantly address and improve the environment</u> in Afghanistan. No negative impacts on the environment are expected from the project.
Environment marker B No or low environmental impact of project	The environment will <u>experience little or no impact</u> from the project. Neither a positive, nor a negative environmental impact is expected from the project.
Environment marker C Medium negative environmental impact is expected from the project Cross Cutting messages for all clusters has been used for assessment and mitigation	The project contains environmentally detrimental components and will require <u>further assessment, mitigation and enhancement measures</u> . These projects should carry out a short assessment to determine their likely impact on the environment, and develop mitigation measures by using the cross cutting messages for all clusters Guidance which has been provided by UNEP.
Environment marker D Major negative environmental impact is expected from the project An Environmental and Social Screening Assessment has been completed or a Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) has been undertaken based on the completion of a Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA).	The project will have a major negative environmental impact. For these projects either: (1) An Environmental and Social Screening Assessment will be completed, or; (2) A Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) will be undertaken, followed by the development of a Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) with the affected community. Guidance on these tools may be found in the references below.
Mitigation Measure	Description
N / A	This is for A and B projects. Assessment and mitigation of impact is not needed for these projects.
Applies Sector Guidance	This is for C projects. C projects can mitigate their impact by using the sector guidance.
Environmental and Social Screening Assessment	This is for D projects. D projects can assess and mitigate their major impact using one (or more) of the three options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental and Social Screening Assessment • Rapid Environmental Assessment • Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) CEAPs include follow up action planning.
Environmental and Social Screening Assessment	
Community Environmental Action Plan (CEAP)	
None	This is possible for C and D projects. These are projects with negative impacts that should be mitigate their environmental impacts, but for which no action is taken.

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