DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS
Policy and field updates
JULY - DECEMBER 2014
Minimizing threats to human well-being from the environmental causes and consequences of disasters and conflicts is a priority area for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Its Disasters and Conflicts sub-programme is comprised of four operational pillars: post-crisis environmental assessment, post-crisis environmental recovery, environmental cooperation for peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction. While the Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) coordinates the theme across UNEP, the regional offices, other divisions and several inter-agency partnerships are instrumental in its implementation.
Post-Crisis Environmental Assessment

Under the Post-Crisis Environmental Assessment pillar of the Disasters and Conflicts sub-programme, UNEP offers technical assistance to countries where critical ecosystems or natural resources have been directly or indirectly degraded, damaged or destroyed by conflicts and disasters. Field-based assessments using sound science and state-of-the-art technology identify environmental risks to human health, livelihoods and security with the aim of integrating environmental needs into relief and recovery programmes.
ADDRESSING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE CONFLICT IN EASTERN UKRAINE

The Government of Ukraine requested the UN system, the World Bank and the European Commission to undertake a Recovery and Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (RPA) covering the conflict-affected areas of the eastern part of the country under government control.

Ukraine’s Regional Ministry of Regional Development coordinated the overall assessment, while UNEP, in collaboration with the World Bank, led the Environmental Sector of the RPA. The Environmental Sector assesses the environmental impacts of the conflict, and identifies priority environmental rehabilitation interventions to support the stabilization of Eastern Ukraine over the next 24 months.

On 22 November 2014, the World Bank and UNEP organized a one-day consultation workshop to discuss the priority environmental issues at the World Bank Conference Centre in Kiev. The meeting gathered 35 participants mainly from government agencies (environment, forestry, water resources) including participants from central and regional administration, academic and research institutes as well as environmental and humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies. The discussion mainly focused on the conflict-affected area of the Donbas region where the government has regained control, and which has been able to supply information regarding the evaluation and cost estimates of the environmental damage for the RPA.

Ukraine’s State Forest Resources Agency reports a marked increase in illegal logging and looting of existing timber stocks by armed groups.
The workshop discussed the methodology for assessing post-conflict environmental impacts and featured presentations from key stakeholders on the environmental situation in the Donbas region. UNEP in consultation with the World Bank developed a tailored methodology for assessing post-conflict environmental damages in Eastern Ukraine. The methodology provides a generic typology for basic characterisation and quantification of environmental damages in Eastern Ukraine.

Six main environmental issues were identified during the meeting, including contaminated sites from targeting of industrial installations, flooding of mines due to dysfunctional pumping systems; failure of solid waste collection services and sewage treatment facilities creating environmental pollution; fire outbreaks in forest reserves and protected areas; erosion of environmental governance including partial dysfunction of environmental monitoring systems; and environment related crime including illegal logging and unregulated trade in hazardous substances.

The final RPA report aims to inform the development of the Donbas Recovery Programme, and is has been finalized in mid-December. The RPA will be presented at a major Donor Conference aimed to obtain economic support for the reconstruction of Eastern Ukraine, scheduled for early 2015.

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SYRIA’S DECLARED CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME ELIMINATED

During late 2013 and early 2014, following a request from the UN Secretary General, UNEP sent environmental experts to Syria to support the safe disposal of Syria’s declared chemical weapons. Working closely with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN Joint Mission in Syria, UNEP experts prepared an Environmental Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan and developed a detailed strategy for the Government of Syria and the UN Joint Mission to ensure safe packing, transport of the chemical weapons, loading to ships, and final destruction.

Through January to June 2014, the chemicals were taken to specialised treatment facilities in UK, Germany and Europe. Some of the more potent chemical agents were taken to the US ship Cape Ray, which was retrofitted with hydrolyses units to deal with the same. With guidance provided by UNEP on safe packing and transport, the process was carried out without any environmental contingencies. On 30 September 2014, efforts to eliminate the declared chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic were completed.

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PROGRESS TOWARDS OGNILAND CLEAN UP FOLLOWING GENEVA TALKS

On 24-25 November, Ogoni representatives, Nigerian governmental and oil industry officials, and the UN system met for two day-long sessions in Geneva to chart a clear path forward on the large-scale clean-up of Ogoniland, Nigeria.

Ogoniland, a region covering some 1,000 km² in the south-east of the Niger Delta basin, has witnessed recurrent social unrest over the past several decades over concerns related to oil industry operations and widespread pollution. According to UNEP’s 2011 Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland, environmental restoration of the area could prove to be the world’s most wide-ranging and long term oil clean-up exercise ever undertaken if contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and important ecosystems such as mangroves are to be brought back to full, productive health.

Stakeholder consultations with those who have been affected by the oil pollution in Ogoniland is vital to ensure a clean up process response to the local needs.
The report called for emergency measures to combat immediate harm to communities from the pollution of drinking water and gave an initial estimate of USD 1 billion to implement the recommended environmental measures.

In 2012, the Federal Government of Nigeria established a new entity, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP) with a mandate to clean up Ogoniland, yet limited progress on a large-scale clean-up of the region has been realized. However, the latest Geneva meetings, called for by Mrs. Dieyani Alison-Madueke, Nigeria’s Minister of Petroleum Resources, have brought new momentum to the process. It was also an important step for ensuring that the voices of the Ogoni people are taken into account in any large-scale restoration efforts.

Working groups tackled issues related to livelihoods, fund management, procurement, community engagement, as well as technical aspects of the environmental remediation. A 16-member Ogoni delegation, including Mr. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, representatives of the Nigerian government, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), as well as representatives of oil companies participated in the meetings. The UN system, represented during the meetings by UNEP Special Envoy Erik Solheim, offered technical advice and reassurance that the UN system is ready to support the clean-up process.

Following the two-day meetings, participants expressed a real sense of urgency to kickstart the clean-up process. However, future progress hinges on defining a clear timeline and work plan, and determining technical, procurement, and logistical steps.

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A multidisciplinary team of international and Nigerian experts conducted field work for the UNEP assessment over a 14-month period. Over 4,500 samples were collected for the analysis.
UNEP-OCHA SUPPORTS OIL SPILL REMOVAL IN BANGLADESH’S SUNDARBANS MANGROVE FOREST

On 9 December 2014, following an oil tanker accident in Bangladesh, an estimated 350,000 litres of furnace oil were released into the river and mangrove ecosystem of the Sundarbans. This Ramsar and UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the largest reserves for a number of rare and endangered species. Through initial clean-up efforts, led by Bangladesh’s Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), approximately 68,000 litres of oil were collected by the community.

Concern about the potential impacts of the oil to the ecosystem and the communities that depend on it for their livelihoods, led the Government of Bangladesh to request the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for technical assistance. A joint response mission, including 25 experts from Government agencies, universities, the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) mechanism, UNDP, USAID, European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, France and the Wildlife Conservation Society, was formed under the leadership of UNEP staff member Emilia Wahlström.

The team spent six days in the affected area, using site observations, interview, aerial photography, sampling and other assessment techniques to evaluate the impacts on the aquatic environment, the mangroves and the wildlife, as well as on human health and livelihoods. According to the initial findings of this rapid assessment, a number of factors, including tidal variations and the clean-up efforts minimized the penetration of oil into the ecosystem.

However, the accident shows a need for integrated management and protection of the Sundarbans, with a number of recommendations already implemented by the Government of Bangladesh – including the continued management of oiled debris and vegetation, and the improvement of oil contingency plans and vessel management regimes. While the immediate environmental impacts appear limited, further monitoring should be undertaken to conclusively determine the effect of the residual oil in the aquatic environment and its impacts on fisheries and livelihoods.
UNEP-OCHA SUPPORTS REMOVAL OF HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN MADAGASCAR

In October 2014 in Madagascar, officials removed toxic ammonia containers posing an acute risk to local communities following a series of technical assistance missions supported by the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU), the European Union Civil Protection (EUCP) Mechanism, the OCHA Regional Office for Southern Africa, as well as the national authorities and other stakeholders.

The pressurized ammonia, held in heavily corroded and fragile containers on an abandoned industrial site in Toamasina, was in close proximity to a residential area. If a chemical release occurred, the impact on the local population could have been devastating.

As part of the removal process, a specialized company was contracted to empty two ammonia cylinders. As a result, the risk of a chemical accident for the nearby communities has now been eliminated. Since the completion of the operation, UN agencies and the government have continued their work to strengthen Madagascar’s preparedness and response to industrial accidents. The JEU and UNEP recently supported a technical workshop in the country on community awareness and preparedness for emergencies at local level (APELL) and chemical accident prevention and preparedness (CAPP).
On 15-16 October in Stockholm, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU) participated in a workshop organized by the Swedish Defense Research Agency. The workshop fostered information exchange on environmental concerns and on methodologies for industrial hazard identification in disaster-prone humanitarian/conflict countries.

Organized by the facilitators, a computer-based simulation enabled participants to review IDP camps, assess the use of natural resources and reduce the risks of waterborne diseases during operations. Participants included representatives from NATO, Swedish Armed Forces, ProAct Network and MSB/Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. The JEU has been supporting humanitarian, environmental, military and government actors in their efforts to improve environmental performance and to mainstream it into their operations.

Recommended by experts in the field, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has revised the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) – a tool that helps authorities identify existing or potential acute environmental risks following sudden-onset natural disasters.

Originally intended to support rapid response and recovery, FEAT now includes a separate “FEAT-Preparedness” and “FEAT Response” module. The new modular approach guides users through a methodology to identify and assess secondary environmental and industrial risks and thus supports the development of industrial hazard maps for emergency and preparedness activities. Mapping these risks before a disaster strikes can provide lifesaving information to responders to protect human and environmental health, which ultimately supports the recovery of livelihoods and ecosystems. The revised FEAT also includes the latest international standards in the field and will be available mid-2015.

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Based on the outcomes of environmental assessments, UNEP works to develop recovery programmes that encompass environmental governance, clean-up and rehabilitation, and ecosystem management projects. These programmes, which are largely implemented by UNEP project offices, provide an initial anchor for UNEP in crisis-affected countries and can be used as a basis for wider programming involving other priority areas. UNEP also acts as the focal point for environmental issues within the UN country team and works to integrate environmental needs into UN recovery programmes.
HAITI

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON $4.6M SOLAR-DIESEL MINI-GRID SYSTEM TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY TO 1,600 RURAL HAITIAN HOUSEHOLDS

The construction of a pioneering solar-diesel hybrid mini-grid system in Haiti’s rural south-west that will provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity to 1,600 households is underway.

The $4.6 million project - funded primarily by the Government of Norway in addition to USAID and the Inter-American Development Bank - aims to improve access to modern energy services and allow for economic development in the towns of Roche-à-Bateaux, les Côteaux and Port-à-Piment in the South Department, about 250km from the capital Port-au-Prince.

The mini-grid, being installed by the US not-for-profit the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the Solar Electric Light Fund (for the solar component) - includes 23km of line and pre-paid metering systems. With the guidance of UNEP and NRECA, the communities have also set up a member-owned cooperative, the Cooperative Électrique de l’Arrondissement des Côteaux (CEAC) - the first cooperative in the history of Haiti’s electricity sector.

To date it has almost 700 members and will operate and manage the electricity system (generation, transmission and distribution) in the long term, based on the US model of electricity cooperatives.

While CEAC faces many challenges in the road ahead, it represents a huge opportunity for the three towns, which like most of rural Haiti, are not connected to the national grid.

“We cannot wait for electricity to come,” said Roche-à-Bateau mayor Ermité Alfred Louis Jean. “We are isolated, children cannot study after dark, and there is no refrigeration. This project will bring much-needed economic development and opportunity.” The mayor herself is completing a computer course in the neighbouring town of Les Cayes, with the aim of setting up a school to teach computer literacy once the grid comes online.

A December meeting in Roche-à-Bateau in rural southern Haiti where members of the community come to learn about and discuss progress with the construction of the mini-grid, that is estimated to be operational by Q2 2015. The grid will be operated and managed by a cooperative, the first rural electricity cooperative in Haiti.
Furthermore, there will be no limiters on the power provided by 120kW of solar and two diesel generators (120kW and 250kW), allowing the communities to set up small businesses, such as bakeries, small convenience stores and ice-makers. NRECA - who will also be installing 230 street lights on the grid system - aims to complete the installation of the grid by April 2015. The project and the cooperative model is attracting national attention even before it is operational and there is a strong potential for replication elsewhere in Haiti. To support such a scale up, in 2015 NRECA will be providing technical support for the creation of a regulatory framework for minigrids.

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PROTECTED AREAS ARE SHAPING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHERN HAITI

One year ago, the Government of Haiti, with UNEP support, declared the first 9 marine protected areas (MPAs) of the country. By doing so, Haiti recognized the unique seascape and biodiversity in the south of the country and committed to manage its marine resources, improve coastal livelihoods and contribute to marine biodiversity in the Caribbean region in a more effective manner.

To achieve these aims, UNEP has helped to establish and train the first MPA team in the south of the country and is now leading the development of Haiti’s first protected area (PA) management for the Macaya Natural National Park. The Macaya Park, located in the south of the country, overlooks the declared MPAs from one of the highest peaks in the country. This set-up will allow the development of a ridge-to-reef approach.

UNEP also facilitated a training course in Cuba for Haiti PA managers and government officials. This field level course culminated in the formal south-south technical cooperation agreement between the two Governments on PA establishment. UNEP also supported the Ministry of Environment’s active participation to the 2014 World Park Congress that took place in November in Sydney, Australia, where the Government of Haiti highlighted that healthy ecosystems through PA establishment are key for disaster risk reduction, livelihoods improvements and diversification in the country.

Finally, UNEP secured USD 15 million from various donors (Norway and the Global Environment Facility) for the next 3 years. The funding will be allocated to support the holistic development of Haiti’s protected areas through the promotion of the green economy (sustainable agriculture, fisheries, tourism) as well as the integration of the protected area network and other environmental considerations into the Government-led Grand Sud regional development planning. Through this work, UNEP is helping the Government of Haiti and partners put the country on track towards sustainable development and resilient economic growth.
CÔTE SUD INITIATIVE RECOGNIZED AS AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE OF UN DELIVERING AS ONE

The Government of Haiti, with the support of UNEP, has marked new achievements for sustainable development in the Southern region of the country.

In 2011, UNEP initiated a UN Coalition called the Côte Sud Initiative (CSI) to promote sustainable development and reduce vulnerabilities in the Southern region of Haiti. The Côte Sud Initiative now includes several UN agencies (UNEP, UNOPS, UNDP, FAO, UNHABITAT), and is composed of 6 thematic programmes: Mer Sud, Terre Sud, Energie Sud, Route Sud, Ville Sud, Gouvernance Sud. Within this Coalition, UNEP has supported the Government to achieve the following “big firsts” for the environment in Haiti: the first decentralized donor coordination mechanism (Gouvernance Sud programme), the first electric cooperative of the country (Energie Sud programme), and the first MPAs of the country (Mer Sud programme).

In October 2014, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti declared: “By promoting sustainable development in the Southern Department, CSI constitutes a “Delivering as one” experience at the local level which could usefully inspire other initiatives of the UN system at a wider scale”. In 2013, ECOSOC also encouraged UN entities to systematize this CSI approach as much as possible. In December 2014, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (DSRSG) visited the south of Haiti and had the opportunity to observe some of the CSI achievements along the coast. The DSRSG noted the opportunity for the UN to strengthen and further formalize this initiative, which has thus far been voluntarily managed by UNEP to ensure better UN coordination for environmental sustainability.

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The Côte Sud Initiative has supported the rehabilitation of fishing boats and reinforces sustainable fishing practices in coastal communities in the Departement du Sud to improve both livelihoods and the health of coastal ecosystems.
SUDAN

UNEP LEADS PUSH FOR INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NORTH DARFUR

To close out 2014, UNEP hosted the Executive Director of the Water Research Commission in South Africa to share lessons learned from more than twenty years of IWRM experience in South Africa with stakeholders in North Darfur. This visit supports the implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), in practice, in UNEP’s Wadi El Ku project.

Over two weeks, multiple events brought together various stakeholders responsible for natural resource and water infrastructure management in North Darfur to discuss IWRM, how to apply it in practice, and to learn from the South African experience.

Integrated Water Resource Management promotes the coordinated development and management of water and all natural resources to benefit communities equitably, with the sustainability of vital ecosystems at heart. The IWRM component of the Wadi El Ku project seeks to do exactly this and, between the 15th and 30th of December, facilitated discussions around water and its uses with women’s groups, traditional leaders, and other community-based organizations. Technical training sessions on the science, policy and institutional foundations for comprehensive catchment management also took place for a government and civil society audience.

To provide insight on South Africa’s IWRM experience, UNEP brought in the expertise of the Executive Director of the Water Research Commission in South Africa – Ms. Eiman Karar – who has helped develop policies and institutions related to Water Management in South Africa, as well as learning around this.

The UNEP team embarked on various meetings and visits within and outside of El Fasher—the capital of North Darfur—to meet, orient and exchange ideas with policy makers, numerous ministry officials, and local communities. For example, the “Knowledge Café”, a two-day facilitated workshop – consisting of at

At ‘Knowledge Café’ participants deliberate over a hand-drawn map of the Wadi El Ku during group work session.
As a result of acceptance of the RPP, Sudan has become a member of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Policy Board and is now eligible to receive US$ 3.8 million of funding to implement RPP-identified proposed projects over the next 2-3 years. UNEP is a member of the Sudan REDD+ National committee and has continuously supported Sudan’s engagement in REDD+ both technically and financially.

Supported by the European Union, the overall aim of the Wadi El Ku project is to create a model, based on UNEP’s experience in Sudan, of how improved natural resource management can enhance livelihoods, and contribute to peace and stability by strengthening resilience in agriculture and agriculture-related activities. This project seeks to support communities to better manage their soil, water and forest resources, and to address environmental degradation in the area.

SUDAN JOINS THE FOREST CARBON PARTNERSHIP FACILITY OF THE WORLD BANK

Sudan has successfully submitted its Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP), during the Policy Board of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank, which took place from 7-9 July 2014 in Lima, Peru.

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REDUCING DISASTER RISKS IN EID ELBEIDA, NORTH DARFUR

For more than a decade, Darfur has experienced severe environmental degradation resulting from unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation and overgrazing.

The changing climatic conditions and the Darfur conflict are exacerbating the already deteriorating environmental conditions in the region. Rainfall has been erratic and unpredictable, leaving communities depending on natural resources vulnerable to droughts and floods. To meet household needs for food and livelihoods, farming has been expanded to the poor sandy goz lands, which in the past served as forest reserves and rangelands.

UNEP, as part of a global project on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR), is working to reduce vulnerabilities to natural disasters through improving ecosystem resilience and local livelihoods in Sudan.

The pilot project in Darfur has focused on water infrastructure rehabilitation and management; vegetative rehabilitation of erosion prone areas; supporting community livelihoods; community conflict resolution; capacity building for improved community extension services.
The pilot project, being implemented in the Kilimondo Locality in North Darfur state, is engaging local communities within a stretch of the Wadi El Ku catchment, the major river course in the region, through the application of integrated water resource management.

To date targeted interventions have been carried out primarily in the following areas: water infrastructure rehabilitation and management; vegetative rehabilitation of erosion prone areas; supporting community livelihoods; community conflict resolution; capacity building for improved community extension services, community mobilization, wadi management; and capacity building at the national level.

One of the major project activities implemented is the rehabilitation of the Eware dam, a community water reservoir, built in 2000. The dam, which was damaged in 2003, supplies five villages with an estimated population of 30,000 people, with irrigation water. The project supported the communities to rehabilitate the Eware dam with the provision of technical engineering expertise, procurement and a supply of materials including cement, stones, soil, earth moving machinery and trucks for transport.

With the water retention capacity of the rehabilitated dam greatly enhanced, more than 7,000 acres of wadi land has been irrigated, thus allowing 150 vulnerable households to cultivate crops. The longer term impact is expected to improve food security, ecosystem resilience and to reduce community conflicts between different livelihood groups.

In addition to dam rehabilitation, a number of other activities contributing to Eco-DRR were also implemented through the support of the project. A community nursery initiated and managed by women, has been established in the village of Wad Kota with a capacity of 17,000 tree seedlings and 1000 fruit tree seedlings. Five community forests have been established, one in each of the five project villages. A total of 60 acres are planted with tree seedlings supplied from the community nursery and are expected to contribute to the rehabilitation of the goz lands, and provide long-term economic benefits. A dam management committee of 10 people, four of which are women, has been established. The committee oversees the maintenance and operation of the rehabilitated Eware dam, water management and distribution, annual work planning in relation to dam operation and maintenance and early warning of floods and droughts through linkages with upstream and downstream communities along the wadi catchment.

In July 2014, 3000 acres of rangeland were reseeded with pasture seeds to improve the quality of range lands for pastoral livelihoods. Communities were asked to refrain from cattle grazing in the reseeded areas for a period of three months to allow seeds to germinate, grow, and mature. The project also supported the establishment of a community revolving fund that provides local communities with access to veterinary drugs and agricultural seeds.

Together these efforts are helping to bolster food security, improve environmental resilience, and ease tensions between agriculturalists and pastoralists that depend on the water and fertile land. The project, from the start, has adopted an integrated approach to natural resource management and is now yielding real benefits for local communities and different livelihood groups.

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UNEP TO SUPPORT SOUTH SUDAN IN PREPARATION FOR COUNTRY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

South Sudan is home to diverse natural forests and woodlands covering about 30% of the country’s total land area. However, cycles of violence have degraded South Sudan’s forest assets.

Studies conducted by the International Centre for Research in Agro-forestry (ICRAF) concluded that annual forest loss in South Sudan was on average 2% a year, a rate which if sustained, would lead to complete forest loss within 50 years. To address this issue, the government of South Sudan and UN REDD have agreed to conduct a Country Needs Assessment (CNA) designed to provide guidance on forest management and policy.

At the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Cooperative and Rural Development (MAFCRD), the CNA will focus on identifying the country’s needs, capacity, and opportunities to complete the REDD+ readiness, a national strategy aimed at preparing the country for a post-2012 REDD payment mechanism. UNEP, together with FAO and UNDP, will provide the technical support needed for the execution of the assessment. The CNA will also review previous and ongoing activities implemented by UNDP, FAO and UNEP on Forest Governance and REDD+ in South Sudan.

The CNA is expected to help South Sudan produce the required information and guidance to implement its forest policy, which aims to ensure sufficient and sustained forest resources are available to support livelihoods and socio-economic development.

QUICK INFO

30% of South Sudan’s land is covered by forests.

Annual forest loss in South Sudan is 2%. In 50 years, this could lead to complete forest loss.

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Charcoal making from trees in Juba, South Sudan.
UNEP TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR SOUTH SUDAN’S ENVIRONMENTAL BILL

At the request of the Ministry of Environment, UNEP will provide inputs to the finalization of the draft national Environmental Bill 2014.

The draft Environment Bill will constitute a foundation for sustainable environmental management of the country including environmental aspects such as, forestry, biodiversity, tourism, agriculture, livestock, oil, industry, energy, wetlands, fisheries, mining, transportation, roads, human settlements, health, water and sanitation.

UNEP will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of South Sudan through the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC) and Post-conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) office in South Sudan. A four-day series of technical review sessions already took place in Juba in November, where senior government officials under the leadership of the Minister of Environment participated. UNEP will continue to support the finalization of the Bill through technical support to the ministry.

UNEP SUPPORTS THE UN DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN SOUTH SUDAN

UNEP participated in the preparation and review of the 2014-2016 UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for South Sudan, which includes environmental considerations such as sustainable land management, natural resources and environment, reduced risks from natural disasters, and sustainable energy sources.

These environmental aspects have been substantially incorporated in various activities and projects in South Sudan for the first time through the UNDAF.

UNEP aims to mainstream environmental considerations that are aligned with the South Sudan Development Plan in their UN country team activities through their participation in the UNDAF. Previously, UNEP also led the sub-committee tasked with strengthening the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

The total cost for implementation of the 2014-2016 UNDAF in South Sudan has been estimated to almost USD 1.3 billion. The 2014-2016 UNDAF was approved in November 2014.
AFGHANISTAN

UNEP AND GOVERNMENT JOINTLY TACKLE CLIMATE RISKS IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is considered to be one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, not only because of the potential effects linked to climate change, but also because of the country’s limited ability to respond to them. To address these challenges, UNEP is working closely with Afghanistan’s National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) to better plan for and address climate risks both within national institutions and local communities.

In 2014, UNEP and NEPA led a series of field demonstrations on ecological approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The field demonstrations were carried out in four provinces: Bamyan and Daikundi in the mountainous central highlands, Badakhshan in the mountainous northeast, and Balkh in the dryland north. These community-based pilot projects aim to demonstrate the diverse ways that communities can build resilience to environmental shocks caused by climate change and natural disasters. The results from the pilot projects are expected to help inform the development of national climate policies.

In the second half of 2014, UNEP and NEPA conducted detailed institutional mapping and capacity assessments of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the field of climate change monitoring, prediction and interpretation. The assessed organizations include the ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Energy and Water (MEW), Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), and the Afghanistan Meteorological Authority (AMA). Based on the results, UNEP and NEPA designed and delivered trainings for key governmental institutions at national and provincial levels.

Along side this work, UNEP and NEPA are also supporting government institutions to implement multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). In recent years, the Afghan government has joined a series of global pacts to tackle environmental issues such as climate change, declining biodiversity and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). However, more support is needed to help Afghanistan translate these policy commitments into practical action.

With funding from the Global Environment Facility, three new projects will target specific regulatory gaps and help national and local institutions fulfill environmental commitments through the delivery of hands-on training, support for monitoring environmental degradation, and data collection. To date trainings have tackled topics such as the impacts of climate change on the water and agriculture sectors, ecological approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, GIS and data visualization for climate change, knowledge management, and project monitoring and evaluation.
In celebration of World Peace Day, UNEP and NEPA organized the sixth annual Peace Trek in the mountains of Afghanistan’s central highlands on 21 September 2014.

The Peace Trek provided an opportunity for local community leaders, government and NGO representatives to gather and appreciate the Shah Fola-di Mountains, home to a diverse range of species and habitats.

At this year’s event, school children, local community leaders, government and NGO representatives participated in both the Peace Trek and an Eco-Soccer Competition aimed at raising awareness about linkages between environmental stewardship and peace. The Eco-Soccer competition used sports and fun to discuss environmental issues such as climate change risks, resilience and adaptation opportunities with local youth. Media outreach through provincial and national radio and print ensured that the environmental messages reached a wider segment of Afghanistan’s population. The thematic environmental campaign was designed by the young Afghan UNEP-NEPA joint outreach team, who are spearheading efforts to raise public awareness.
UNEP LEADS REGIONAL STUDY TOURS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN NEPAL AND KYRGYZSTAN

In November 2014, national experts and academic authorities from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan gathered in Kyrgyzstan for a five-day study tour led by UNEP. The study tour provided participants with a unique opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) across countries with similar ecosystems and landscapes.

Jointly organized with the UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, the study tour included experts from UNEP, NEPA, Afghanistan Meteorological Authority (AMA) and Kabul University. The tour facilitated site visits where Eco-DRR approaches were being applied and allowed technical experts from the region to further develop transboundary links in Central Asia planned for 2015. It also sought to encourage the development of the Eco-DRR concept in the region by improving understanding, acquiring lessons learned, and connecting experts to existing networks in the region.

A second UNEP and NEPA team attended an international conference in Nepal, organized by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), on “Mountain People Adapting to Climate Change.” The UNEP and NEPA team promoted their work on climate change adaptation initiatives in Afghanistan, while other mountainous countries with similar ecosystems in the region shared experiences, including scoping and development of early warning systems.

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

SHEDDING LIGHT INTO THE KIVUS

Approximately 9% of the DR Congo’s population has access to an electrical grid, while the estimates for North Kivu and South Kivu are 3% and 7% respectively. Off-grid access to electricity is limited to private diesel generators, which typically serve individual businesses and wealthy households. The main lighting solution for most of the population is kerosene lanterns and candles, with very small but increasing numbers of solar lanterns and solar home systems. And yet the Kivus have large scale and barely exploited renewable resources - hydropower, solar and geothermal - which has the potential to satisfy the region’s pervasive energy poverty and drive its economic recovery.

Based on a reconnaissance mission to the Kivus in mid-2014 and follow-up consultations with the DRC Government, UNEP in collaboration with UNOPS developed a proposal for a ‘North and South Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Programme’. The two main aims of this medium scale initiative are: i) deliver a visible peace dividend to recently stabilized regions in North and South Kivu; and ii) increase access to modern lighting and electrical power to support economic recovery within recently stabilized and other targeted regions in North and South Kivu.

The technical focus of the proposed programme is on electrical lighting and power, with the majority of effort directed at off-grid and mini-grid solutions. The programme strategy is to rapidly introduce and support the growth of a range of technically well proven electrical power and lighting solutions, in high priority post-conflict areas within the Kivus. Proposed technical and investment categories range from solar public lighting, solar lanterns and solar charged battery rental systems to various scales of pilot hydropower development and deep geothermal technical studies.

In collaboration with the DRC Government and UNOPS, UNEP is planning to initiate a series of consultation meetings with development partners to help mobilize resources for the proposed programme in early 2015.
PROMOTING LEGAL SALES OF ‘CONFLICT-FREE’ AND ‘GREEN’ ARTISANAL GOLD IN EASTERN DRC

Illicit profiteering from natural resource extraction, particularly of minerals, to finance armed groups is a key obstacle to building stability in Eastern DRC and the Great Lakes Region. Recognizing its importance as a driver of recurring conflict, the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for DRC and the Great Lakes Region identifies regulated and formalised exploitation of natural resources as one of its seven primary regional commitments.

In collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (Mr. Said Djinnit) and MONUSCO - the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC - UNEP and Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) developed a proposal to encourage legal sales of gold, the most lucrative of the ‘conflict minerals’.

Until the recent start-up of industrial gold mining operations, artisanal mining generated more than 95% of the DRC’s gold production. Informal and unregulated, artisanal mining involves an estimated 250,000 people and accounts for a major share of the DRC’s gold production estimated at 11 to 14 tonnes with a market share of US$ 600-850 million. Less than 5% of this gold production is officially recorded and the illegal trade is largely controlled by armed groups and criminal networks, thus depriving the country of vital revenue. According to the UN Group of Experts and human rights groups, gold is now the most important ‘conflict mineral’ fuelling armed groups in Eastern DRC.

Burning gold amalgam in open air exposes people to inhaling toxic mercury vapours.
In addition, the environmental impact of artisanal gold production is distinguished by the use of toxic mercury in the gold extraction process. A persistent and global pollutant, the use of mercury adds a special dimension to the health and environmental risks of artisanal gold production. With an estimated yearly consumption of between 15-30 tonnes of mercury in artisanal gold mining, the DRC ranks as one of the largest sources of mercury emissions in Africa.

In this context, the core strategy of the proposed project is premised on trading technical assistance to increase miners gold production and lower production costs in return for legal sales. At the same time, cleaner and more efficient production methods that reduce and potentially eliminate the use of toxic mercury will improve the health of miners and protect the environment.

In an initial design phase to be implemented in 2015, the proposed project will focus on assessing and introducing technologies that lower production costs and increase yields, with a special focus on mercury reduction. An artisanal gold mining site in South Kivu that is conflict-free and accessible has been provisionally selected to pilot this work. Based on the ground work laid out in this first stage to introduce a system to track legal gold production, and contingent on additional funding, a second phase will aim to fully operationalize a chain of custody system for artisanal gold.

EXPANDING CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORK AROUND THE KAHUZI-BIEGA NATIONAL PARK

Kahuzi-Biega National Park was created in 1970 in South Kivu province in Eastern DRC. It was initially comprised of a highland sector of 600 km² that was extended in 1975 to include a large portion of forest known as the lowland sector.

A highly sensitive section is the Nindja corridor, which connected the highland and lowland sectors of the park up to the mid-1990s, and enabled large mammals such as elephants, gorillas and chimpanzees to move between mountain and lowland forests. During the civil war, farmers invaded the park, with the result that 90% of the forest cover in the corridor disappeared.

For several years now, UNEP/GRASP has been supporting the Congolese Wildlife Authority (ICCN) in bio-monitoring, law enforcement and conflict resolution. In collaboration with ICCN, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Wildlife Conservation Society, a conflict resolution strategy was developed and implemented in the aforementioned Nindja corridor. As a result, illegal settlers left the park and illegal activities such as poaching, farming and bamboo cutting decreased.

Based on an evaluation of the results attained, UNEP decided to expand its conflict resolution work to the Kibushwa area where human-wildlife conflict is rife. Other activities currently underway include bio-monitoring and support to the re-established ranger post in Kasese.
Watershed Action Planning Moves Forward in Kinshasa Catchment

UNEP’s demonstration project in the Lukaya river basin on the outskirts of Kinshasa launched a community-wide participatory process to develop a watershed action plan. Led by the Lukaya Watershed Users Association and in collaboration with the Environment Ministry a five day workshop was organized in mid-November to introduce a methodology and structured process for developing the catchment management plan.

Stakeholders brainstormed on the challenges facing the basin and developed a common vision to help guide the elaboration of the plan. Next steps include a series of working group meetings that will identify key action areas and elaborate one-to-two-page “action worksheets.” It is expected that the draft watershed plan will be completed by April 2015 and will be followed by a formal validation workshop to endorse the plan.

Meanwhile, catchment rehabilitation measures continue to progress. Vetiver grass is being planted as enclosures around houses threatened by gully erosion from uncontrolled urban development. These vetiver ‘fences’ will also serve as nurseries and a source for vetiver dissemination while also generating revenue for households. Furthermore, the project’s agroforestry demonstration site in Ntampa in the upper catchment is emerging as a model for other communities and at least three villages have so far adopted agroforestry activities. Site visits and exchanges are regularly taking place to support wider diffusion of agroforestry and better land use practices.

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Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding

UNEP aims to use environmental cooperation to transform the risks of conflict over resources into opportunities for peace in war-torn societies. This includes assessing and integrating environment and natural resource issues within the peacebuilding policies and strategies of the United Nations, as well as using the shared management of natural resources as a platform for dialogue, cooperation and confidence-building within and between conflict-affected countries. UNEP believes that effectively addressing the environmental dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding can only be done in partnership with a wide range of international and national actors. As a result, UNEP has developed partnerships with a number of peace and security actors including the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UN Women, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support in New York and the European External Action Service in Brussels.
NEW REPORT GUIDES MEDIATION OF RESOURCE CONFLICTS

UNEP and the Mediation Support Unit of the UN Department of Political Affairs have been collaborating since 2011 on a joint guide on mediating natural resource conflicts.

The report, “Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners”, is designed for mediators who work on natural resource based conflicts in fragile states or on peace processes where natural resources are amongst the drivers of conflict. With over 30 professional mediators and associated experts involved in the process, the report explores good practice in mediating disputes over land, water and the extractive industries. This publication aims to support the UN General Assembly Resolution 65/283 on Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution and in particular operational paragraph 11, requesting the development of more guidance for effective mediation based on lessons learned. The report will be publicly available in early 2015 and will be launched at a number of high-level events in New York, Nairobi, Geneva, Brussels, and Helsinki.

Training in Sudan, 2014. Training can be an important aspect of the pre-negotiation phase, enabling stakeholders and increasing the chance of success. Source: Greentree expert meeting on mediating natural resource conflicts.

MORE INFO

The full report will be available at:
www.peacemaker.un.org
www.unep.org/ecp/mediation

This report is the 6th in a series. Other reports in the series:

2009 – From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment

2009– Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law

2012– Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment and Natural Resources in UN Peacekeeping Operations

2013 – Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential

2013 – The Role of Natural Resources in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
TRACKING NATURAL RESOURCE INVESTMENTS AND PEACEBUILDING BENEFITS IN SUDAN

Local level tensions over access to and use of natural resources such as fertile land, water, and forests has become a defining feature of the greater Darfur and Kordofan area in Sudan. Environmental degradation, social and political tensions, rapid population growth, and a breakdown of environmental governance are further aggravating the situation. At the same time, natural resources underpin the vast majority of livelihoods in the region and remain an integral component of peace and sustainable development.

UNEP, in partnership with the EU, has developed a project that not only aims to improve local and state capacity to resolve resource conflicts, but will also track if and how natural resource management investments are bringing about peace dividends in the region. For some time, local and international NGO’s in the Darfur and Kordofan States have been working to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts over natural resources through a combination of livelihood services and conflict management support. Livelihood interventions, for example, may include migratory route demarcation, reforestation measures, or rehabilitation of water points while conflict management focuses on social aspects such as strengthening peace committees or supporting joint natural resource management plans. While this two-track approach has gained traction among peacebuilding actors in the region, limited evidence exists on whether natural resource investments are bringing peace and stability benefits. This project aims to gather that data.

The project will kick-off with a four month inception period to baseline local conflict dimensions and develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that will track social and environmental progress. During the project, communities will benefit from better access to and management of essential resources and related services. Grievances over natural resources between different user groups will be addressed through dialogue, discussion and agreed dispute resolution processes, thereby minimizing the potential for violent conflict at the local level. UNEP will partner with SOS Sahel and the Darfur Development and Reconstruction Agency for this project, which is expected to begin implementation in early 2015.

Community hearings and consultations such as this one on a local agricultural project with men from the village of Um Belut, Southern Sudan, were a critical component of UNEP’s Sudan that began in late 2005.
UNEP AND WORLD BANK PARTNERSHIP: “MAPPING AND ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES IN FRAGILE STATES”

UNEP and the World Bank are developing an on-line platform for "Mapping and Assessing the Performance of Extractive Industries" in fragile states (MAP-EI). While still in its early stages, MAP-EI could prove to be a powerful tool that helps fragile states map, monitor and assess the performance of extractive industry agreements.

At the national level, MAP-EI aims to consolidate all key extractive industry concessions together with underlying risks into a single online platform. This will enable governments to identify and prevent overlaps between concession boundaries as well as between other statutory and customary rights and designated land uses such as protected areas. It could also help identify key risks linked to extractive industry concessions and in turn help to determine optimal areas for new extractive investments.

At the concession level, MAP-EI could provide a platform that monitors the economic, social and environmental performance of specific extractive industry concession agreements. The platform could also enable local administrations, concession holders and local communities to monitor both monetary and non-monetary forms of benefits sharing. Additionally, MAP-EI could be used to identify specific types of stakeholder grievances and conflicts. As each country represents a unique profile in terms of extractive industries, risks, investment opportunities and conflict history, the platform could be adjusted to meet the specific national and sub-national needs, both in terms of scale and functionality. An initial prototype is currently being developed to demonstrate the MAP-EI concept in two pilot countries. Opportunities for MAP-EI to support other ongoing transparency initiatives such as EITI and the CODEX (Catalyzing Open Data for Extractives) initiative of the Natural Resource Governance Initiative are also being explored.

The plant site and the main ore body of the African Minerals Mine in Tonkolili District in Sierra Leone which started full production in 2012.
THE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ATTRACTS INTEREST

Since its launch on 6 November 2013, the Environmental Peacebuilding global knowledge platform has established itself as the primary online destination and “one-stop shop” for the latest information on environment, natural resources, and peacebuilding.

The knowledge platform makes available to the public a series of books, and accompanying policy briefs on natural resources and peacebuilding, including 150 case studies written by over 225 researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers from around the world.

Over the past year, the Environmental Peacebuilding knowledge platform has developed a vibrant community of practice, with members submitting information on the latest jobs, events, literature, news, and articles related to environmental peacebuilding. These materials are broadcasted to the entire community through bi-weekly email updates, a twitter feed and through the knowledge platform itself. In its first 12 months of operation, 2300 users signed up to the new community of practice, and over 2400 knowledge products have been collected and organized into 16 thematic areas.

For more information on the Environmental Peacebuilding knowledge platform, please visit: www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org

The knowledge platform contains 2400 knowledge products on natural resources, conflict and peacebuilding.
PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT DURING ARMED CONFLICT EXAMINED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW COMISSION

UNEP’s flagship report “Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law” recommended that the International Law Commission (ILC) “examine the existing international law for protecting the environment during armed conflict and recommend how it can be clarified, codified and expanded.”

As a follow-up to the report, the ILC added the “protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts” to its long-term programme of work in 2011. At its sixty-fifth session in 2013, the ILC included the “Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts” in its formal programme of work. The Commission appointed Ms. Marie G. Jacobsson (Sweden) as Special Rapporteur for the topic. In May 2014, Ms. Marie Jacobsson sought UNEP technical assistance for her preliminary report to the ILC. In particular, Ms. Jacobsson was interested in the lessons learned from the 150 case studies on natural resources, conflict and peacebuilding UNEP and partners had produced. The preliminary report was presented at the sixty-sixth session in 2014 (5 May to 6 June and 7 July to 8 August 2014). The report provided an introductory overview of the
topic, namely the environmental rules and principles applicable to a potential armed conflict (“peacetime obligations”). The report proposes that the Special Rapporteur establish a three-year programme of work divided in three phases. Phase I will produce a report on peacetime obligations for the protection of the environment, Phase II will cover measures to protect the environment during armed conflict, and Phase III will cover measures to protect the environment post-conflict.

As a follow-up to the report, UNEP helped the ILC organize a high-level discussion on the topic in New York on 28 October 2014, sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway. Support and technical assistance to this process will continue in 2015.


In October 2014, the UN Integrated Mission in the Central Africa Republic (MINUSCA) requested UNEP support on the assessment and management of the Mission’s environmental footprint in order to ensure it’s compliant with the environmental standards of a UN peacekeeping mission. The request and growing consideration of the mission’s environmental impact stems from a major UNEP study “Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment, Natural Resources and UN Peacekeeping Operations” published in 2012.

Responding to the request from MINUSCA, a senior UNEP expert was deployed to the Central African Republic in November 2014, where he spent a week embedded in the MINUSCA Engineering team. The scope of the visit included multiple site inspections in Bangui and Kaga Bondoro, interviews with DPKO/DFS teams and military personnel, and analysis of existing engineering and logistics plans. A detailed technical report which analyzed MINUSCA’s personnel and logistical footprint, key environmental priorities and investment opportunities as well outlined recommendations focusing on waste water management, energy efficiency and renewable energy was provided.

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Disaster Risk Reduction

The disaster risk reduction (DRR) pillar of UNEP’s Disasters and Conflicts programme focuses on countries that have been identified as vulnerable to natural hazards, and on human-made disaster events with an environmental component. As well as producing environmental risk assessments, UNEP seeks to strengthen the hand of Member States for environmental management through developing responsive strategies, building capacity and implementing pilot projects to reduce identified risks, thereby contributing to long-term disaster risk reduction. UNEP also contributes to global policy development by producing policy toolkits and training modules that demonstrate good practices and lessons learned in reducing risks, and provides environmental data and expertise on sustainable management of shared natural resources.
A promotional video for UNEP’s first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Disasters and Ecosystems was featured at several major events including the International Disaster Reduction Conference (IDRC) in Davos, Switzerland and at the UNESCO World Education Conference for Sustainable Development in Nagoya, Japan.

The MOOC entitled “Disasters and Ecosystems: Resilience in a Changing Climate” is composed of two tracks: the Leadership Track, which will be two hours per week for three weeks, and the Experts Track, which will comprise a total workload of 40 to 50 hours. Developed in partnership with Cologne University of Applied Sciences, the MOOC went live on 12 January 2015, with enrolments accepted through Iversity, a German-based MOOC platform. Over 7,000 participants from 180 countries have registered for the MOOC.

For further information, visit www.themooc.net.

Enrol for the MOOC
ECO-DRR FIELD INTERVENTIONS: LESSONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

Since 2013, UNEP in partnership with the EU have been implementing Eco-DRR demonstration projects in specific sites in four countries where UNEP currently has ongoing country operations: Afghanistan, Haiti, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan. See below features new highlights from the project sites.

HAITI

At this year’s World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, UNEP and the Government of Haiti, discussed how marine protected area management can reduce disaster risk and promote resilience. To date, Eco-DRR investments have focused on increasing the ecological potential of its marine and coastal resources and reducing disaster risk reduction through a ridge-to-reef approach.

DR CONGO

As part of the Eco-DRR project, UNEP organized a five-day workshop aimed at introducing a methodology for developing the catchment management plan in the Lukaya River basin on the outskirts of Kinshasa. The Eco-DRR strategy applies Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) to improve water quality in the Lukaya river basin.

SUDAN

In Sudan, the Eco-DRR demonstration project currently being implemented in North Darfur is creating opportunities for mainstreaming DRR as part of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the state.

AFGHANISTAN

In November, UNEP and UN OCHA organized a study tour of Central Asia for national governments to learn about current practices and future opportunities in promoting ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction in the Central-Asian region.
THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT IN THE POST-2015 GLOBAL FRAMEWORK ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

UNEP and its Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) continued to engage with Member States to strengthen the role of environment in the Post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (successor to the current Hyogo Framework for Action or HFA2).

Two Preparatory Committee meetings were held in July and November in Geneva, Switzerland. The meetings served as formal deliberations in preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) to be held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015. At the WCDRR, the international community is expected to endorse the Post-2015 Global Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will set the strategy on disaster risk reduction for the next ten years. Several countries have been vocal advocates for including ecosystem-based DRR solutions in the new agreement.

Although sustainable ecosystems management for resilience is explicitly recognized in the Zero Draft of the HFA2, PEDRR partners developed a joint statement suggesting ways to further strengthen the role of ecosystem and ecosystem-based DRR solutions in the draft.

Moreover, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Government of Japan, UNEP and the Ramsar Convention organized an awareness-raising event on 30 October for all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva on the role of ecosystems in disaster risk reduction. Attended by over 50 people, the event presented practical examples of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction from different countries, featuring speakers from the Governments of Japan, Philippines and Chile, as well as from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

As a follow-up event, UNEP and Wetlands International organized a similar discussion in the margins of the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting held in November for Member States. The Governments of the Netherlands and the Democratic Republic of the Congo presented on their experiences implementing ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction. On 10 December, UNEP presented on the role of the environment in HFA2 at an event organized by Wetlands International for the EU Parliament in Brussels.

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APELL is a programme developed by UNEP in conjunction with governments and industry with the purpose of minimising the occurrence and harmful effects of technological accidents and environmental emergencies.

UNEP LEADS SESSION ON CHEMICAL ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS AT GLOBAL SUMMIT

UNEP organized a session on Responsible Collaboration for Chemical Accident Prevention and Preparedness at the 2014 Center for Chemical Process Safety Global Summit. The summit was held in Mumbai, India, on December 15-16. The session included an overview of UNEP’s programmes on Safer Production, discussed the APELL case study from India (National Safety Council of India), featured approaches for improved stakeholder collaboration on chemical accidents in Sri Lanka (NCPC Sri Lanka), and discussed lessons learned from chemical accidents in China (Tsinghua University’s APELL and Responsible Production Centre).

The fireworks factory accident in Sivakasi Tamil Nadu India was one of the case studies discussed at the global summit in Mumbai. Source: V.B. Sant’s presentation at the summit.
TURNING GLOBAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION INTO LOCAL LEVEL ACTION

On 25 August, during the 5th International Disaster and Risk Conference in Davos, Switzerland, UNEP led a parallel session on Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL).

The session, entitled “APELL: Turning Global Disaster Risk Reduction into Local Level Action,” brought together 35 representatives from academia, civil protection services, as well as local and regional authorities. Five speakers representing government (Norway), private sector (BASF), academia (Tsinghua University, China), and stakeholders implementing APELL (Peruvian NGO Rapid LA) discussed the role of local authorities and communities in preparing for emergencies. The event concluded with participants acknowledging the need for multi-stakeholder engagement on prevention and preparedness for emergencies, and the importance of policies and capacities that encourage action at a local level.

The session also served as a launch platform for the second edition of the APELL Handbook, anticipated in 2015. Find out more about the APELL Handbook.

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The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is an inter-agency initiative of international organizations comprising UNEP, UNDP, the Organization for Security and cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). The ENVSEC partnership aims to reduce tensions and increase cooperation through the joint management of natural resources and environmental threats in Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.
ENVSEC SUPPORTS DAM SAFETY IN CENTRAL ASIA

During the second half of 2014, the ENVSEC programme in Central Asia helped advance dam safety for a number of countries of the region. In September, a meeting on dam safety for Kazakhstan took place in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The meeting was organized by the government of Kazakhstan, UNECE and the International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea (IFAS). The roundtable concluded that Kazakhstan needed to strengthen its national legislation and institutional capacity, and that it should draw assistance from international institutions. The meeting discussed developing dam safety monitoring agreements between Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries, primarily Kyrgyzstan, that share transboundary rivers.

Following the September gathering, a second meeting on regional dam safety took place in November in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Participants included representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and international organizations. The meeting provided a platform for participants to exchange experiences and agree on a comprehensive project work plan for 2015 in Central Asia. Participating countries further agreed to support the development of national legislation and institutions. In addition, representatives encouraged continued joint work on smaller dams, where safety has been less regulated.

With the support of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), safety assessments of the Kirov and Ortotokoi dams in Kyrgyzstan, located up-stream of Kazakhstan on the Talas and Chu rivers, will be undertaken in 2015. Work designed to establish a formal framework for cooperation on dam safety between the Central Asian states will continue, and UNECE will further implement capacitybuilding strategies. The UNECE dam safety project is a component of the UNECE Water Convention and SPECA programs implemented with the IFAS. Participating countries and institutions recognize that dams and reservoirs are an efficient means of addressing floods and droughts, but aging dams present increased risks to life, health, property, and the environment and immediate steps need to be taken.

Dam safety in Central Asia.
ENVSEC REGIONAL COORDINATION MEETINGS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Two annual regional coordination meetings were organized in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in fall 2014.

The ENVSEC Eastern European Regional Coordination meeting took place between 8-9 September in Minsk, Belarus. The meeting was convened by UNEP and hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. Participants included representatives from the governments of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, academic and non-governmental institutions, and ENVSEC’s international partners. The high-level participants discussed the future outlook for ENVSEC in Eastern Europe, identifying priority areas that require immediate action by Eastern European countries and their ENVSEC partners.

The two-day negotiations included a closed-door session, moderated by UNEP, that resulted in an Outcome Statement for ENVSEC in Eastern Europe. The statement elaborated on salient regional challenges associated with the environment and security, but also provided a new vision for cooperation. The priority areas identified include: Water issues and transboundary water basins, Climate change: an ecosystem approach, Management of chemicals and hazardous wastes, Transboundary environmental security, Environmental cooperation in conflict situations, and Industrial activity and environmental security.

Following the Belarus meeting, a Regional Coordination meeting for Central Asia took place on 11 November in Almaty, Kazakhstan. It brought together representatives from Central Asian governments and international organizations accredited in the region. The participants reflected on the progress made by ENVSEC programs to date defining new priorities for its short-term (2015-2018) and long-term (2015-2025) program implementation in Central Asia. Partners of the ENVSEC Initiative are expected to develop work programs for assessing environment and security risks in the region based on the outcome statement of this meeting.

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