

UN launches online tool to help humanitarians assess environmental risks in urban areas

(Geneva/Nairobi, 31 August 2021): The United Nations today launches an online tool to help humanitarian practitioners rapidly identify and mitigate environmental risks when responding to crises in urban areas.

The free, cloud-based [Urban-Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool \(U-NEAT+\)](#) offers an easy way to assess a range of potential environmental threats and sensitivities and suggests how to mitigate them. Assessments are recorded in an online questionnaire that can be completed with a smartphone.

The tool's special features dive deeper into specific response areas such as shelter, food security, health, livelihoods, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

Climate is integrated as a cross-cutting issue in all U-NEAT+ modules, and it is possible to compare projects across regions and over time, thus providing humanitarians with insights into the effects of their mitigation activities.

The assessment data collected aim to improve the aid response by helping to foster dialogue among humanitarian organizations, members of affected communities and donors.

“Humanitarian responses today are taking place in urban contexts as often as in rural. Working in urban contexts, we have been eagerly waiting for the U-NEAT+ to become available because it will allow us to do more relevant environmental screenings in all areas that we operate and accordingly, providing better humanitarian assistance to those in need,” said Torill Saeterøy, Project Manager Greening the Orange, Norwegian Refugee Council.

U-NEAT+ was developed by the Joint Environment Unit (JEU) of the UN Environment Programme and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in response to the global surge in urban displacement and the need for a humanitarian response in population centres. Currently, more than 60 per cent of the world's refugees and 80 per cent of internally displaced people live in urban areas.

Conflict and displacement are increasingly intertwined with climate change, environmental degradation, and destruction or depletion of natural resources. Concentrations of displaced people in urban areas can also negatively impact local resources, putting pressure on water resources, waste management systems, and access to land.

At the same time, humanitarian action itself can impact the environment through deforestation, large amounts of packaging waste, and over-exploitation of natural resources. It is important that humanitarian organizations minimize their negative environmental impacts, including in urban areas.

U-NEAT+ has been created with the help of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Brazil and support from Data Friendly Space, a US-based international non-governmental organization.

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Photos are freely available here: <https://ocha.smuqmuq.com/Category/JEU/Aug2021U-NEAT-Press-release/>.