

## Environment & Humanitarian Action Network

### Terms of Reference

*Revised 20 June 2017*

#### Strategic vision

The quality, effectiveness and long-term outcomes of humanitarian action are improved by ensuring that life-saving and life-sustaining actions are conceived of and delivered in an environmentally responsible manner. This will enhance populations' resilience, minimize the chance of recurring crises and bridge the perceived humanitarian-development gap by reducing aid dependency through conservation of livelihoods.

#### Mission statement

*To maximize outcomes of humanitarian action by avoiding, minimising, or mitigating environmental impacts and promoting environmentally responsible humanitarian programming through collaboration and cooperation on:*

- *Advancing humanitarian policy and practice*
- *Communication & joint advocacy*
- *Support for on-going humanitarian operations and promotion of knowledge management, training and the development of environmental standards, guidelines and tools for humanitarian action*

#### Background

Disasters and conflicts, as well as relief and recovery operations, impact the environment in ways that threaten human life, health, livelihoods and security. Failure to address these risks can undermine the relief process, causing additional loss of life, displacement, aid dependency and increased vulnerability. Increasingly, disaster managers and humanitarian workers recognize the need to ensure that relief and recovery efforts contribute to building affected populations' resilience and self-sufficiency. This can be done without threatening the environment in ways that impair its ability to provide the functions and ecosystem services that support and sustain human populations.

The IASC Real Time Evaluations found that cross-cutting issues, including the environment<sup>1</sup>, are often neglected and not systematically integrated into humanitarian responses. Yet, it is clearly understood that their integration can improve the quality of humanitarian assistance. Related strategies and tools ensure sustained and/or improved environmental health and the availability of natural resources critical to food, water, and energy security, local livelihoods and community resilience. It is therefore important to understand the various links between humanitarian action and the natural environment, the perceived challenges, as well as the potential opportunities to develop strategies and institutionalize mechanisms that enable principled and environmentally responsible relief and recovery. Within humanitarian action, there must be greater appreciation for both the environmental drivers of disasters and conflicts and the potential for response efforts to exacerbate or improve underlying conditions through programme design and delivery.

More than 656<sup>2</sup> humanitarian partners worldwide have formally agreed to consider environmental concerns or issues throughout the planning and implementation of relief programmes by becoming signatory to the *Code of Conduct for the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*<sup>3</sup>. Principle 8 of the code specifies that relief aid must pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. Protection Principle 1 of the SPHERE handbook states that actors involved in humanitarian response must take steps to avoid or minimise any adverse effects of their intervention, re-emphasising the principle of doing no harm through environmental impact assessment. The Core Humanitarian Standard<sup>4</sup>, also part of the SPHERE handbook, has two commitments specifically referencing environment as part of an accountable, quality approach to programming. This includes Commitment number 9 on using resources efficiently and effectively, including the environmental impact and use of natural resources, and Commitment 3, where a "do no harm" approach encompasses evaluation of environmental dynamics as a critical part of assessments. The foundational principle of "do no harm" extends to the realm of the environment and our interaction with it, prescribing a responsibility for relief and recovery actors to exercise precaution in the design

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<sup>1</sup> 'Environment' as defined by the revised Sphere Standards.

<sup>2</sup> <http://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/the-movement/code-of-conduct/signatories-to-the-code-of-conduct/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/code-of-conduct-290296.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/Core%20Humanitarian%20Standard%20-%20English.pdf>

and delivery of programmes and activities, assessing potential positive and negative impacts before project implementation, and incorporating measures for mitigation and enhancement accordingly.

Mainstreaming the principle of environmental responsibility into humanitarian action is an objective that can offer many beneficial outcomes. It can bring together the efforts of different actors, ensure the accountability of relief and recovery actors to populations in upholding the principle of 'do no harm' and anchor strategies that account for the fundamental role of the local natural environment, and the resources and services it provides. It can further enable self-sufficiency, build resilience and support community stability. Adopting an environmental lens throughout all stages of preparedness, relief and recovery can help bridge the perceived divide between humanitarian and development actions and actors. At the same time, it offers invaluable avenues of integration across sectors/clusters, producing synergies that will improve the effectiveness of interventions and the long-term outcomes for targeted populations.

## Objectives

### ***Advance humanitarian policy and practice***

Support integration of environmental perspectives and issues into humanitarian decision-making and policies by providing a forum where members:

- Seek to inform and influence principal humanitarian coordination bodies and institutions on environmental dimensions of humanitarian relief and recovery operations
- Explore avenues for cooperation and promote network partnerships with institutions and initiatives that can elevate relevant issues within strategic fora (e.g. UN Environment Management Group)
- Identify links and entry points to contribute to agendas and initiatives emerging from the World Humanitarian Summit (e.g. 'One Billion Coalition for Resilience'; b) 'The Grand Bargain'; c) 'Global Preparedness Partnership'; d) the New Way of Working, and within the context of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, e.g. Sustainable Development Goals.
- Identify opportunities to engage the donor community in discussions on policies and contribute to reform and innovation

### ***Support communication & joint advocacy***

Facilitate communication among key humanitarian agencies and provide an effective platform to exchange knowledge, practice, ideas, and to pursue joint advocacy:

- Provide a forum by which members can exchange experiences during all phases of the humanitarian programming cycle, including assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.
- Share and identify opportunities to document, upscale and replicate good practice and lessons learned.
- Communicate effectively about the importance of environment in humanitarian action to different audiences from global to local level using a variety of tools
- Support the development of advocacy objectives, opportunities and messaging for improved stakeholder-specific advocacy for integration of environment into humanitarian action
- Encourage awareness raising of environmental issues in the wider community through advocacy and external knowledge dissemination by network members
- If possible, develop and distribute network bulletin on quarterly basis

### ***Operational Support and promotion of knowledge management, training and the development of standards, guidelines and tools***

Support/strengthen on-going initiatives by different agencies by:

- Providing a timely means of discussing emerging issues.
- Supporting and contributing to research on environmental dimensions of humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery.
- Remaining abreast of relevant environmental standards, guidelines and tools and identifying opportunities to contribute to their development.

- If possible, maintaining a repository of standards, guidelines, tools and relevant training materials, and facilitating their dissemination throughout the network.

The objectives of the network will be reviewed biannually to meet the needs of its members and wider humanitarian community and may evolve over time.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- The network will meet on a periodic basis through web-based calls and, if possible, one annual face-to-face meeting<sup>5</sup>.
- The calls will be organized on a rotating basis by different EHA Network members. Information relevant to the organization of these calls is contained as part of an EHA Network platform<sup>6</sup> to which each new member will be granted access. The EHA Network member that organized the last call will be responsible for the maintenance of the list of members until the next call when another EHA Network member will take over this responsibility. A respective calendar will be available on the platform.

## Members

- Members participate in their individual expert capacity.
- A list of EHA Network members will be available on the EHA Network platform.
- Anyone interested in becoming a member to the network can do so and will be added to the list by the responsible EHA Network member at the time of joining the Network.
- Members may invite other experts/humanitarian partners to the Network's meetings to discuss specific issues as required.

## Measuring effectiveness

In order to measure the value added of the network, the following indicators are proposed:

- Level of participation of operational humanitarian and environmental organizations and global clusters (# of organizations represented by individual experts)
- Evidence in humanitarian policy and practice of increased recognition for environmental dimensions of humanitarian action throughout the preparedness, response and recovery phases (# of policies/practices/guidelines updated)
- User numbers accessing materials available on the respective 'Environment and Humanitarian Action' website increase annually (# of users)

## Joint work plan

Once an agency can commit to take on a bigger role for the administration of the network, a joint work plan based on members' activities should be developed. Such a work plan would then also function as an overview of ongoing activities by EHA Network members and will contribute to information sharing and potential cooperation.

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<sup>5</sup> The period between calls will be subject to staff capacity and availability of EHA Network members to organize a Network call.

<sup>6</sup> The platform will be created by the JEU using an online tool such as google sites.