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Responding to Emergencies, Protecting the Environment

EHA Global Training Template

Localisation and Integration of Environment in Humanitarian Action (EHA)

Preface

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS AND REVIEWERS

The Global Training Template was developed through a collaborative process, made possible by the invaluable contributions of environmental and humanitarian experts. We extend special thanks to everyone who dedicated their time and effort to shape this template and bring it to life. Your commitment and contributions are deeply appreciated.

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FOREWORD

The relationship between humanitarian action and environmental sustainability has become increasingly critical in recent years. As crises become more complex and widespread, incorporating environmental considerations into humanitarian responses is no longer an option but a necessity. This *Environment in Humanitarian Action (EHA) Training Manual* has been developed to provide humanitarian actors with the tools and knowledge to integrate environmental sustainability into their operations, ensuring that immediate assistance and long-term resilience go hand in hand.

The manual addresses a range of key issues, including environmental impact assessments, sustainable resource management, and cross-sectoral collaboration, offering practical strategies to minimize environmental footprints while optimizing humanitarian outcomes. Each module is designed to be both practical and adaptable, allowing users to tailor the content to their specific operational contexts. Through interactive exercises, case studies, and real-world examples, the manual equips participants to implement environmentally responsible practices in the field. Its adaptability ensures relevance across various humanitarian scenarios and encourages localized approaches, reinforcing the importance of environmental stewardship in humanitarian action.

What distinguishes this manual is its comprehensive and flexible framework, making it suitable for a diverse audience-from field practitioners to policymakers. The included *Training of Trainers (ToT) Module* further enhances its impact by equipping trainers with the necessary skills to deliver environmental training effectively, thereby scaling up the integration of environmental principles in humanitarian interventions. The manual also includes a set of PowerPoint presentations designed to support trainers and facilitators in delivering the content in an engaging and structured manner. These resources are flexible and can be adjusted to meet the specific needs of different contexts, ensuring the material resonates with a variety of audiences.

This manual is the result of a rigorous consultative process, involving stakeholders from humanitarian and environmental sectors, coordinated by the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit. It draws on best practices and existing resources to serve as a comprehensive guide for integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian programs. The contributions of case studies, peer reviews, and insights from practitioners across 22 countries have enriched this resource, ensuring it reflects the realities faced in the field.

We express our deepest appreciation to all those who contributed to this effort, particularly the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for their generous funding, and the technical experts who led the development process. Their invaluable support has made this manual a robust and practical tool for advancing environmental sustainability in humanitarian action. It is our hope that this resource will not only improve the environmental outcomes of humanitarian operations but also inspire a new generation of leaders dedicated to protecting both people and the planet in times of crisis.

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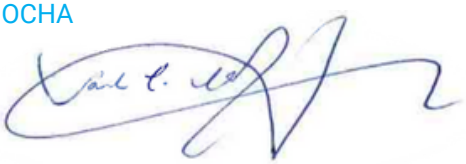

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GLOBAL TRAINING TEMPLATE OUTLINE:

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

This glossary combines a list of key terms that are useful for humanitarians to better understand essential concepts and terms related to environmental sustainability in humanitarian context, noting that the list is not exhaustive.

This glossary of key terms is part of the Global Training Template, and was developed under the Environment in Humanitarian Action Localisation Project. It combines key terms that are useful for the users of the Global Training Template.

Term	Definition	Source
Afforestation	The conversion of non-forest into forest as a result of direct human action through planting or seeding	FAO.
Agroforestry	Defined as 'agriculture with trees'. It is the use of trees and shrubs in agricultural crop and/or animal production and land management systems. This approach harnesses the natural interactions between woody plants, crops, and animals to improve overall productivity, enhance ecological balance, and increase the resilience of agricultural systems.	World Agroforestry. FAO
Anticipatory action	Acting ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. Effective implementation of anticipatory action ideally requires three elements: Pre-agreed trigger: This consists of thresholds and decision-making rules based on reliable, timely and measurable forecasts. Pre-agreed activities: This consists of accountable, feasible, effective and efficient actions to be implemented to support vulnerable communities in the window of opportunity between the trigger moment and the full impact of a shock. Pre-arranged financing: This consists of funding that is guaranteed and available to be released based on the pre-agreed trigger towards the pre-agreed activities.	UN OCHA
Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems	Convention on Biological Diversity
Capacity building	The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world. It involves targeted training, resource allocation, mentorship, and the enhancement of institutional capabilities to empower individuals and groups to effectively manage challenges, improve performance, and achieve sustainable growth and resilience.	United Nations
Carbon footprint	A calculation that estimates the amount of emissions in carbon dioxide equivalent that a country, a business, an organization, an individual or another stakeholder is responsible for. This measurement includes all greenhouse gases emitted directly (Scope 1 and 2) or indirectly (Scope 3) through activities such as energy use, transportation, manufacturing, and waste, providing a comprehensive assessment of the impact on climate change and guiding actions to reduce emissions.	UNFCCC

Circular economy	A model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. This approach aims to minimize waste and resource use by keeping products and materials in circulation, thereby creating a closed-loop system that reduces environmental impact, conserves natural resources, and fosters sustainable economic growth.	European Parliament
Climate change adaptation	In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.	IPCC
Cluster system	A coordination mechanism used in humanitarian response to ensure effective and efficient delivery of assistance by grouping organizations by sector, such as health, shelter, and logistics.	UN OCHA.
Community engagement (in relation to environment in humanitarian action)	The process of involving local communities in the assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring of environmental initiatives to enhance cultural relevance, ownership, and sustainability. This approach ensures that interventions are shaped by community needs and inputs, fostering collaboration, building trust, and empowering communities to take active roles in managing environmental challenges and achieving long-term positive outcomes.	
Deforestation	The conversion of forest to another land use or the long-term reduction of the tree canopy cover below the minimum 10 percent threshold. This process often results from activities such as agriculture, logging, infrastructure development, or urban expansion, and in the context of humanitarian action, it can be driven by emergency interventions such as the clearing of land for refugee camps, the overharvesting of wood for shelter and fuel, or the construction of roads and infrastructure to support relief efforts.	FAO
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.	UNDRR.
Displacement	The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.	IOM
Ecosystem	A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.	Convention on Biological Diversity
Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)	The use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall strategy to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. EbA involves managing, restoring, and conserving ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, and coastal areas to reduce climate-related risks, enhance resilience, and provide sustainable benefits to communities, while also supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health.	IUCN, UNEP
Ecosystem restoration	The practice of assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed, as well as conserving the ecosystems that are still intact.In humanitarian contexts, this can involve activities such as reforestation, wetland rehabilitation, and soil restoration, which help to rebuild natural habitats, enhance biodiversity, improve ecosystem services, and support the resilience of communities that rely on these ecosystems for their livelihoods and protection against environmental hazards.	UNEP
Ecosystem service	A direct or indirect benefit that people obtain from ecosystems. e.g. food, fuel and clean water.	Millenium Ecosystem Assessment

Environment	The sum of all physical, chemical, and biological surroundings in which people, organizations, and societies exist and which they influence. It encompasses natural elements like air, water, and land, as well as human-made components such as buildings and infrastructure, all interacting to shape living conditions, health, and overall well-being.	IASC
Environmental aspect	The elements of an organization's activities, products, or services that interact or can interact with the environment.	IASC
Environmental degradation	Any adverse change or disturbance to the environment, including the deterioration of natural systems. In humanitarian action, this degradation can occur through activities such as deforestation for shelter construction, over-extraction of water for emergency use, improper waste management in refugee camps, and unsustainable land use during relief operations, where urgent needs often lead to environmentally harmful practices that further degrade the natural surroundings.	IASC
Environmental footprint	The sum of impacts that a person, organization, or activity has on the environment. It encompasses all direct and indirect effects on natural resources, including energy consumption, water use, waste production, greenhouse gas emissions, and pollution, providing a comprehensive measure of the environmental burden imposed by human activities.	IASC
Environmental impact	Any change in the environment as a total or partial result of an organization's environmental aspects. This includes alterations caused by activities, products, or services, such as emissions to air, water use, waste generation, and resource extraction, which can lead to both positive and negative effects on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human health.	IASC
Environmental impact assessment (EIA)	A process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.	Convention on Biological Diversity
Environment in humanitarian action	The integration of environmental considerations into all stages of humanitarian response, ensuring that emergency relief and recovery efforts do not harm the environment and, where possible, contribute to environmental sustainability.	
Environmental mainstreaming	The systematic and informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns into an organization's decision-making, policies, rules, plans, investments, and actions. This approach ensures that environmental considerations are integrated across all levels of operations, promoting sustainable development, minimizing negative environmental impacts, and enhancing the organization's overall environmental performance and accountability.	IASC
Environmental management	Actual decisions and action concerning policy and practice regarding how resources and the environment are appraised, protected, allocated, developed, used, rehabilitated, remediated, and restored.	Encyclopedia of Ecology
Environmental responsibility	The duty to operate in a way that avoids and mitigates adverse environmental impacts. In humanitarian action, this involves implementing environmentally sustainable practices during relief and recovery efforts, such as minimizing waste, using eco-friendly materials, managing resources responsibly, and designing interventions that do not harm ecosystems, ensuring that humanitarian operations do not exacerbate environmental degradation or negatively affect vulnerable communities.	IASC

Environmental screening (in humanitarian context)	A rapid assessment process designed to identify, evaluate, and prioritize potential environmental risks and impacts associated with humanitarian interventions, guiding the integration of environmental considerations into planning and decision-making. This process helps ensure that emergency response activities are conducted in a manner that minimizes harm to the environment and supports sustainable outcomes, allowing humanitarian actors to make informed choices that reduce negative environmental impacts.	
Environmental sustainability	The capacity to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ecosystem components and functions that fundamentally sustain these needs.	IASC
Forecast-based financing	A program that enables access to humanitarian funding for early action based on in-depth forecast information and risk analysis. The goal of FbF is to use reliable forecasts to anticipate disasters, allowing for timely interventions that can prevent or mitigate the impacts of potential hazards, ultimately reducing human suffering and economic losses before a disaster strikes.	IFRC.
Green procurement	Procuring goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle. This approach prioritizes products and services that are environmentally friendly, energy-efficient, and sustainably sourced, aiming to minimize negative effects on the environment from production through to disposal, thereby supporting sustainable development goals within organizations and communities.	European Union
Green response	An approach to improve the environmental sustainability of humanitarian operations and to avoid, minimize, and manage the damage caused to the environment and the climate.This approach seeks to avoid, minimize, and manage environmental damage by reducing waste, conserving resources, promoting renewable energy, and ensuring that relief efforts do not negatively impact local ecosystems or contribute to climate change, thereby aligning humanitarian operations with broader environmental and climate goals.	IFRC
Greenhouse gas (GHG)	Gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation. This is turn contributes to global warming.Greenhouse gases include, but are not limited to, water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), ozone (O3), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF6).	UNFCCC
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	The release of greenhouse gases and/or their precursors into the atmosphere over a specified area and period of time	UNFCCC
Humanitarian action	The active provision of aid designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and restore and promote human dignity in the wake of disasters and during large-scale emergencies.	Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics
Integrated water resources management (IWRM)	A process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. IWRM emphasizes the holistic management of water resources by considering the interconnectedness of various water uses, stakeholders, and ecosystems to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and efficient use of water resources.	Global Water Partnership

Land degradation	The reduction in the capability of the land to produce benefits from a particular land use under a specified form of land management. In humanitarian action, land degradation can be exacerbated by emergency activities such as uncontrolled settlement of displaced populations, unsustainable agricultural practices, and over-extraction of natural resources for immediate needs, leading to diminished agricultural productivity, increased food insecurity, and prolonged recovery challenges for affected communities.	FAO
Livelihoods	A means of making a living, encompassing peoples capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life.	UNEP/IFRC
Mitigation (climate change)	A human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. This involves actions such as decreasing emissions from fossil fuels, increasing energy efficiency, adopting renewable energy sources, reforestation, and improving land use practices that absorb more carbon dioxide, all of which contribute to slowing the pace of global warming and minimizing the adverse impacts of climate change.	IPCC
Mitigation (environmental management in humanitarian context)	Addressing, remedying, reducing or offsetting the potential adverse impacts to the environment. This includes implementing measures such as proper waste management in refugee camps, sustainable sourcing of materials for shelter construction, and restoring natural habitats affected by humanitarian activities.	
Mitigation (risk management)	The lessening or minimizing of the adverse impacts of a hazardous event. In humanitarian action, this involves implementing strategies and measures such as early warning systems, building resilient infrastructure, and community preparedness programs to reduce the potential damage, loss of life, and economic disruption caused by natural or man-made hazards, ultimately enhancing the safety and resilience of vulnerable populations.	UNDRR
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously benefiting people and nature. In humanitarian contexts, NbS can help reduce disaster risks, support food and water security, and enhance climate resilience by using natural systems like wetlands for flood control, reforestation for landslide prevention, and mangrove restoration for coastal protection, ultimately creating safer and more sustainable environments for vulnerable communities.	UNEP
Precautionary principle	Acting to prevent environmental harm when there is uncertainty about potential impacts.	Rio Declaration
Preparedness	The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters.	UNDRR
Reforestation	Establishment of forest plantations on temporarily unstocked lands that are considered as forests	FAO
Resilience	The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.	UNDRR
Recovery	The restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better”, to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.	UNDRR

Response	Actions taken directly before, during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected.	UNDRR
Reverse logistics	The supply chain process of returning products from end users back through the supply chain to either the retailer or manufacturer. In humanitarian action, reverse logistics can involve the collection of unused or damaged relief items, equipment, or packaging materials from crisis-affected areas for recycling, repurposing, or safe disposal, helping to reduce environmental impact and improve the sustainability of humanitarian operations.	Association for Supply Chain Management