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Global Webinar Series

Environment and Emergencies in the face of COVID-19

UNEP and Environmental Emergencies
Some Reflections



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UNEP and Environmental Emergencies

Some reflections from three decades of field experience

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ALL Emergencies have Environmental Linkages

Cities, provinces and countries face many types of emergencies

- “Natural Disasters”
- Conflicts
- Health Emergencies and Pandemics
- Financial Meltdown
- And all of the above have some or other linkages with the environment
 - Consequences
 - Causes
- Linkages could be
 - Direct
 - Indirect

Conflict Linked Environmental Impacts



UNEP was involved in Kuwait and the Gulf to assess environmental impact after the first Gulf War

1.5 million cubic meters of oil spilled to the Gulf

More than 700 oil wells on fire

Conflict Linked Environmental Impacts

Direct Impacts

- Contamination caused by weapons; e.g., depleted uranium in Serbia
- Chemical contamination caused by use of weapon, damaged factory in Iraq
- Indirect Impacts
 - Deforestation when there is lack of supervision, e.g. Ivory Coast
 - Poaching as survival strategy of people, e.g. DR Congo
 - Refugees and internal migrants – associated impacts
- Governance Challenges
 - When country is in conflict, environmental matters get minimal attention
 - Environmental laws are diluted during recovery

COVID19 and Environmental Linkages

Direct Impacts

- Production of infectious solid waste produced by patients and healthcare professions
- Production of liquid wastes in quarantines and hospitals handling COVID19 patients
- Indirect Impacts
 - Deforestation when there is lack of supervision,
 - Poaching as survival strategy of people,
 - Impact on overall waste management
- Governance Challenges
 - Environmental laws are diluted during recovery

UNEP's activities linked to COVID19

Assessment Work

- South Africa, Serbia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
- 16 more countries planning assessments
- Technical Assistance
 - Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti and Nigeria
 - Iraq, Syria
- Awareness raising
 - Global and regional webinars on COVID19 Linked waste management
 - Webinar on COVID19 Impact on informal sector

Environmental Emergencies - Prevention



Floating Storage and Offloading Structure - SAFER.

Anchored offshore of Yemen
Currently in conflict area
No maintenance
Could spill up to 1.1 million barrels of oil into the Red Sea

UNEP works with other agencies to prevent the disaster
but also prepares to respond if the disaster happens

Climate Change Magnifies all disasters

Climate Linked Emergencies

- Cyclones
- Floods
- Droughts
- Climate Change and Security
 - Climate change could exacerbate existing divisions, due to resource competition
 - It could change global power dynamics
- Climate Change is an emergency
 - The planned scenarios for 2100 could already start to happen sooner

UNEPs Key Activities in the area of Environmental Emergencies

- Emergency Response
- Post Crisis Environmental Assessments
- Post Crisis Needs Assessments
- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Advocacy
- Awareness raising
- Capacity building

Thank you



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