

2.4.3 Environmental Sustainability

2.166. Environmental Sustainability refers to development that meets the needs and realizes the rights of people in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and realize their rights.

2.167. Environmental pollution and resource depletion are among the underlying causes of poverty, malnutrition, and deterioration in livelihoods, of which the impacts are most severely manifested on children, especially those in ecologically vulnerable areas. Environmental sustainability is integrally linked with climate change, which threatens the health, water and food security of children, in addition to potentially reversing the hard-won gains toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As risks related to climate and environment increase and threaten the lives and development of children, and particularly the most vulnerable, country offices need to strengthen environmental mainstreaming and adequately incorporate environment and climate risks and solutions for children into country programming.

2.168. A comprehensive UNICEF assisted programme cannot be fully achieved without taking into account environmental sustainability and climate-related factors. They are intimately linked to UNICEF's work on health, WASH, nutrition, emergency preparedness and response, education, child protection and human rights. (See UNICEF 2010 submission to the OHCHR and [Child Rights, Climate Change and Intergenerational Justice](#)). UNICEF's basis for mainstreaming environmental sustainability and associated threats such as climate change throughout the programming process stems from the programming principles identified by the undg (see [UNDG guidance on mainstreaming environmental sustainability throughout Country Programming](#)) and UNICEF-Board approved documents (in response to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and response to General Assembly resolutions [42/186](#) and [42/187](#)). [The working paper, 'UNICEF and Climate Change in the Framework of the Medium Term Strategic Plan' \(2009\)](#) lays the groundwork for how climate change interventions apply to each MTSP Focus Area, as displayed in this matrix. The November 2010 speech by UNICEF Deputy Executive Director highlights the human and equity dimensions of climate change. ['Our Climate, Our Children, Our Responsibility' \(2008\)](#) is another important source for supporting the integration of environmental sustainability into UNICEF assisted programmes of cooperation.

Contextualizing UNICEF action: Global Standards and References

2.169. Many of the legal obligations and moral aspirations encapsulated in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#), not least the right to life itself and the right to the highest attainable standard of health, are dependent on the existence of a sound physical environment. As such, UNICEF's mission to contribute to child survival, protection and development, as enshrined in CRC, is dependent on a safe physical environment and the fulfillment of the wider goals of sustainable development as

expressed in [Agenda 21](#). Environmental sustainability is one of the five UNDG programming principles, and consequently a standard against which UNICEF programmes are assessed. (See [Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability in Country Analysis and the UNDAF](#) and [Guidance Note on Application of Programming Principles to the UNDAF](#) for further information).

2.170. When assessing the frameworks for action on climate change, refer to the 'Frameworks for Action' section of UNICEF's Policy Review Paper, '[Climate Change and Children: A human security challenge](#)' (2008). The following documents are particularly relevant to integrating environmental sustainability into programmes of cooperation:

- [Millennium Development Goal 7](#)
- [UNEP State of the Environment Reports](#)
- [World Bank Country Environmental Analyses](#)
- [Mainstreaming Poverty-Environment Linkages into Development Planning: A handbook for practitioners, PEI \(UNDP-UNEP\), 2009](#)
- [Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal \(Basel\)](#)
- [UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(CCD\)](#)
- [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#)
- [Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1997 \(Kyoto, 1997\)](#)
- [Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#)
- [Agenda 21](#)
- [Convention on Biodiversity](#)
- [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(2007\)](#)

(See [Guidance to Applying a Climate Change Risk Management Approach to UNICEF WASH Programming](#)).

2.171. Article 24 of the CRC calls on States Parties to pursue full implementation of the right to the highest attainable standard of health and, in particular, to take appropriate measures to provide adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking water. Climate change, has been identified by the Lancet (16 May 2009) as "the biggest health threat of the 21st Century", seriously threatening children's full enjoyment of the right to health, food and water, and with the potential to worsen existing health challenges, such as control of water- and vector-borne diseases, particularly for the poorest populations of women and children. During disasters and their aftermath, health problems are compounded by general infrastructure breakdown, notably with respect to water supply, sanitation, and drainage. Droughts, a major health concern, can lead to increased morbidity and mortality from a combination of diarrhoea and dehydration. Checkley, W., Epstein L.D., Gilman R.H., Figueroa D., Cama R.I., Patz J.A.

and Black R.E., *Effects of El Nino and ambient temperature on hospital admissions for diarrhoeal diseases in Peruvian children*, Lancet, 2000, pp. 355, 442–450. Seasonal peaks in diarrheal disease are, in some cases, also associated with seasonal rains and floods, Few, R., Ahern, M., Matthies, F. and Kovats, S., *Floods, health and climate change: A strategic review*. Tyndall Centre working paper No. 63, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 2004. as are cholera outbreaks. Koelle, K, Rodo, X, Pascual, M, Yunus, M and Mostafa, G., *Refractory periods and climate forcing in cholera dynamics*. Paper in *Nature Magazine*, 2008. Vol 436|4 August 2005 | doi:10.1038/nature03820.

2.172. Through UNICEF's cooperation with governments and other partners, access to safe water and sanitation, and improved approaches to water resource management are just some of the responses to the consequences of climate change. These approaches must integrate sustainability as technological, behavioural, logistical and political solutions are proposed. To seek appropriate adaptation at scale, UNICEF has launched a WASH-focused vulnerability and capacity assessment tool to analyse available climate change impact data at country and community levels and to map current UNICEF and partner-led actions in 60 countries. The objective is to incorporate climate risk into WASH programmes. Pilots are underway in Bangladesh, Sudan and Indonesia.

2.173. Many UNICEF offices are already actively pursuing climate action in the WASH Sector. For example, UNICEF China supports capacity building for groundwater monitoring, modeling and climate change impact adaptation (through policy) in three provinces and at the central level. The UNICEF office in Sierra Leone through support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), supported rainwater harvesting in schools to supplement supply during the dry season. The UNICEF Sudan office with support from the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) identifies vulnerabilities due to excess pumping for appropriate interventions. It is expected that UNICEF's country programmes will increasingly engage in activities of this sort.

Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability in Country Programmes

2.174. Any analysis of the situation in which a programme will be implemented cannot afford to ignore environmental and climatic changes. The state of the environment, how it impacts child health and development should become integral to the programming process. Currently, there is a limited understanding of environment and climate issues in the situation analysis. Intervention at this level is necessary to integrate environmental and climatic considerations into all programmes, allowing synergies to be explored among all sectors that support child survival, development and protection. (See [Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability in Country Analysis and the UNDAF](#) and [Guidance Note on Application of Programming Principles to the UNDAF](#) for further information).

2.175. When mainstreaming environmental sustainability, the Country Office should frame and address the following questions:

- How well does the Country Analysis and the Country Programme examine and connect environmental problems with human [and children's] rights standards related to food, safe water, sanitation, housing, and health? *Guidance Note on Application of Programming Principles to the UNDAF*, p. 14, <<http://www.undg.org/docs/11190/UNDAF-Guidance-Principles.pdf>>
- What are the environmental causes of major development problems and how do these affect the enjoyment of human rights, especially among vulnerable and excluded groups? *Guidance Note on Application of Programming Principles to the UNDAF*, p. 16, <<http://www.undg.org/docs/11190/UNDAF-Guidance-Principles.pdf>>
- Are there any negative environmental impacts in country (including oil or chemical disasters, deforestation, climate change) that increase the vulnerability of children? If so, what are the Country Office programming responses and gaps?

2.176. Three entry points are suggested by the UNDG guidance for mainstreaming environmental sustainability during the preparation of a programme. These will be considered in subsequent chapters of the manual:

1. Positioning of environmental issues in the review of country analytic work;
2. Engagement of stakeholders in the mapping exercise;
3. Identification of UNICEF Country Office comparative advantages and gaps to help mainstream environmental sustainability considerations into the programming process.

Anticipating natural disasters and conflict in the Country Programme

2.177. Disasters and conflicts can occur at any time and should be considered fully integrated in all country programming phases. It is estimated that 9 out of every 10 disasters are now climate-related Holmes, John, *Climate Change and Displacement*, <<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR31/FMR31.pdf>> and that, over the past 60 years at least 40 per cent of all intrastate conflicts were linked to disputes over the control and use of natural resources. *From Conflict to Peacekeeping: the Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*, UNEP, 2009 <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/environment/resources.shtml>> Timely and high quality information about their environmental causes and impacts, especially on livelihoods, is critical. But environmental considerations are often overlooked. Given the strong linkage between environmental sustainability, climate change, natural disasters and conflict, the UNICEF Country Office should:

- Assess the quality of disaster risk and conflict analysis, particularly the understanding of links between environment and vulnerability to natural disasters and conflicts;
- Understand the important actors involved in disaster and conflict recovery planning and how they relate to key environmental actors, such as the Ministry of Environment,

as well as the level of understanding about the links between environmental sustainability, disasters and conflicts;

· Identify whether the UNCT has comparative advantage to support country capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and conflict prevention.

Integrating climate change in Country Programmes

2.178. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) envisions a world in which children have the right to survive and grow in a healthy physical environment. Yet child rights, and children themselves, are rarely included in international and national discussions on climate change and how to respond to it, despite experience and research indicating that children are highly susceptible to climatic shifts. Changes in disease patterns, health services, water supply, food production and distribution as a result of climate change will also contribute to a large increase in human migration of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations, with particularly severe consequences for children. Brown O., *Climate Change and Forced Migration: Observations, Projections and Implications*, Human Development Report Office, Occasional Paper, 2007.

2.179. According to the World Food Programme, climate change is forecast to increase the number of malnourished children by 24 million, or 21 per cent, by 2050, with the biggest rise in the number of malnourished children predicted to be in sub-Saharan Africa, where a 26 per cent increase is forecast in the number of children (10 million) lacking adequate nutrients. *Climate Change and Risk of Hunger: The Scale of the Challenge and Required Response*, WFP, 2009, <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/newsroom/wfp208099.pdf> A report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) puts the number of additional children suffering malnutrition due to effects of climate change by 2050 at 25 million, which represents an increase of child malnutrition by 20 per cent relative to a world with no climate change. *Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Adaptation*, Food Policy Report 21, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), September 2009. As gender discrimination in the allocation of food puts girls at greater risk than boys, particular attention must be paid to the gender-specific impact of climate change on the right to food. *Gender and climate change: mapping the linkages*, BRIDGE, 2008, p. 3.

2.180. In the face of increased environmental degradation and climate change, countries and communities must be enabled and empowered to manage greater shocks and fluctuations. Concretely this means diversification in such areas as crop and nutritional choices, skills and occupational training acquired through formal and informal education, development and deployment of appropriate technologies for development and basic service delivery (e.g., rainwater harvesting), and structural reinforcements of crucial infrastructure such as schools and health centres. Resilience also involves storage (of food and water), migration (e.g., agro pastoral and rural-urban, often involving household splitting) and communal action such as disaster preparation, including early warning systems and public information campaigns.

2.181. UNICEF-assisted country programmes span the national and sub-national levels, and are ideal vehicles to prepare for, prevent and mitigate climate and disaster risk. UNICEF has relationships at the national, sub-national and local/community level for local level service delivery. UNICEF support to Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH), education, nutrition and child protection can offer an integrated approach to encouraging community level resilience and understanding disaster risk. UNICEF's work in the education sector that reaches schools is an important platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and environmental and climate change education. Given that today's and tomorrow's children will be the ones most immediately impacted by environmental and climatic changes, UNICEF can play an important role in supporting youth mobilization and leadership development for climate action, including through youth networking, awareness raising and skill-building for mitigation and DRR.

2.182. Healthy ecosystems and sustainably managed natural resources are important facets of managing climate change and establishing synergies between adaptation and mitigation in areas such as forestry and land management. Likewise, sound environmental practices and resource efficiency can help build the path to a low-carbon future. (A Guidance Note for UNCTs and implementing partners on Mainstreaming Climate Change in Country Analysis and the UNDAF is forthcoming).

Climate Change and Emergencies

2.183. Article 6 of the CRC on the child's right to life, survival and development, is a general principle and crucial to the implementation of the Convention overall. According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the right to survival and development must be implemented in a holistic manner, "through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, [and] a healthy and safe environment ...". Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 7, *Implementing child rights in early childhood*, 2005, paragraph 10.

2.184. In 2010, UNICEF responded to over 290 emergencies in more than 98 countries, with 45 per cent triggered by natural disasters and an additional 33 per cent constituting health and nutritional crises. If climate-related disaster trends continue in line with current predictions, UNICEF – with its humanitarian cluster lead role in nutrition and WASH, and its co-leading role in education and protection – will be faced with a responsibility to respond to a potentially significantly larger incidence of emergencies. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is specifically addressed in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

2.185. Schools are key avenues for disaster reduction. UNICEF advocates for sustainable school construction and disaster-oriented education in risk-prone countries and regions. For example, recently completed schools in Myanmar are designed so that they can be used as shelters in the face of floods, earthquake and high wind forces. In response to the 2004 floods in Bangladesh, UNICEF supported the design and construction of raised hand-pumps in schools located in flood-prone areas. This design was found to be very effective and has since been considered a useful DRR strategy to alleviate water supply problems in future flooding events.

2.186. With respect to internal office operations, a CO that is fully implementing environmental sustainability mainstreaming will have environmentally sustainable office operations in line with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Country Offices are reminded that *Environmental Impact Assessment screening* **must** be carried out on all programmes and projects included in the CPD/CPAP or added to the CP as a result of an MTR, using the checklists contained in the Toolbox of the PPP Manual.

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