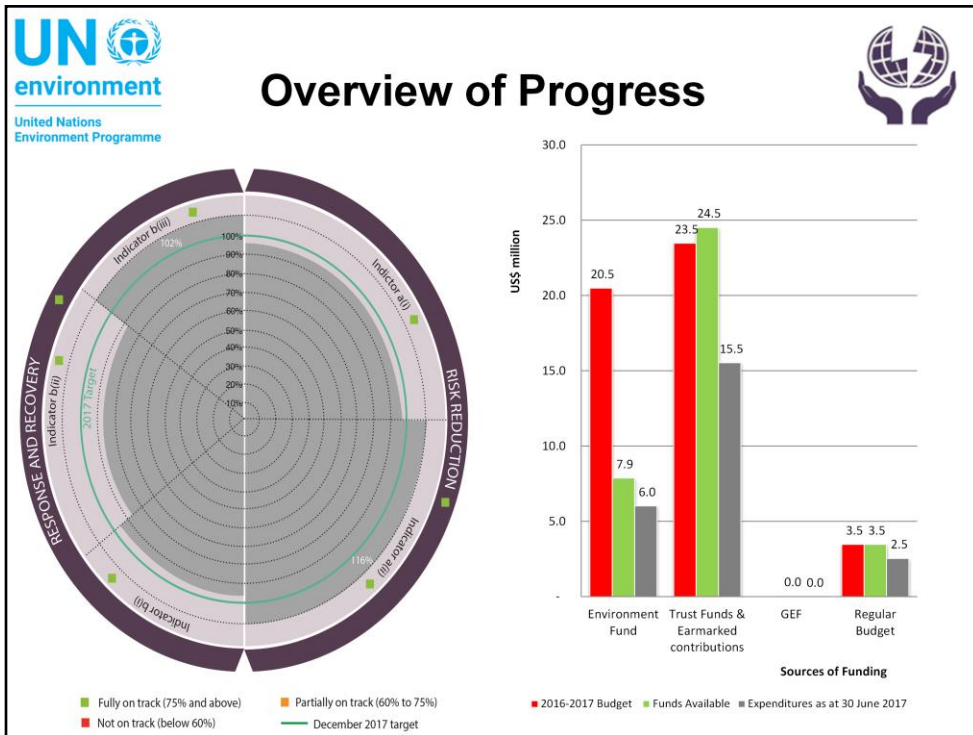# Disasters and Conflicts

UN Environment's **Disasters and Conflicts** programme works in two broad areas. The first is to encourage best practice environmental management in ways that **reduces the risks** and eventual impacts of natural hazards, industrial accidents and armed conflict. The second is to **assess and respond to the environmental impacts of crises**, and to **assist countries in recovery** from such events by putting appropriate environmental policies and institutions back in place.

UN Environment's Disasters and Conflicts programme is relevant to the achievement of all 17 SDGs, as external shocks such as natural disasters, industrial accidents and especially armed conflict have proven to be extremely powerful 'brakes' on development and progress ("Conflict is development in reverse" was the memorable phrase used by the World Bank). However, the organization in particular aims to deliver on SDGs 1 (poverty), 11 (cities), 13 (climate action) and 16 (peace).

For the past year, UN Environment has been laying the foundations for a strengthened engagement on issues surrounding environment and security. This has included technical support in Colombia, Iraq and Somalia, a new mechanism to facilitate more rapid assistance in areas affected by armed conflict, and an enhanced effort to communicate the many and important links between armed conflict and the environment.

Photo © UN Photo

Overview of Progress

UN Environment's work on disasters and conflicts is largely on track to meet its end-of-biennium (2016-2017) indicator targets in its Programme of Work.

We gauge our progress through a series of five indicators. The first indicator (EA.A.i), on country capacity, is repeated (also EA.B.i) as a way of tracking our progress on both risk reduction and response and recovery. Given the extensive data collection required for this indicator, the data are collected only at 12 month intervals and so this indicator has not been updated since the 2016 Programme Performance Review and retains its score from that report (set against the 2016 target).

Our risk reduction work is also assessed through the extent to which we can encourage 'system change' through influencing UN partners to incorporate best practice environmental management in their own policies, programmes and trainings (EA.A.ii). In this realm we can point to 116% achievement of our own targets so far in 2017.

Our response and recovery work is assessed through three indicators. One (B.iii) is the extent to which we meet national or UN requests for assistance. Our target is that we deploy in at least 90% of cases and during the 18 month period

we actually deployed to twelve of thirteen requests, thus exceeding our target slightly. The second indicator (B.ii) assesses the extent to which our technical deployments and assessments can be proven to have influenced eventual recovery plans from the government or UN partners. This is a key indicator as it shows that our deployments are timely, authoritative and relevant. We judge this against a rolling basket of five years of previous assessments that finished at least six months before the reporting date (given the inevitable time lag for assessments to flow into planning and action on the ground). Our target is that at least 85% of our assessments can be proven to result in tangible change. In this case we are falling behind where we would like to be, given that we can only show this is 74% of cases (i.e. 87% of the target).

The final indicator (EA.B.i) returns to our country capacity indicator, the data for which is only collected every twelve months and so is not updated here (see above).

The financial situation for the subprogramme shows that available resources ($35.9 million) are falling short of the targeted budget ($47.5 million). The drop in the expected resources from the Environment Fund has hit this subprogramme particularly hard. This is because many of the activities conducted under this subprogramme are reactive and unplannable, given that we can not always predict where the next natural disaster may strike, or the next conflict may begin.

In general, our post-crisis recovery programmes attract the majority of extra-budgetary funding, and they frequently deliver results to other subprogrammes as well as to this one. Historically, it has proven to be much harder to generate significant resources to support our work on risk reduction, which as a consequence does not proceed at the global scale that we think is necessary. It has also been difficult to generate sufficient resources to facilitate our work on response to crisis and environmental emergencies, which is inherently more difficult to plan around and fund raise for.

Jan 2016-June 2017: Major natural disasters and industrial accidents **in 36 countries**

UN Environment's work is more necessary than ever. It is set against a backdrop of ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world, as well as natural disasters and industrial accidents that have affected millions.

These crises displaced around 65 million people from their homes and land, a number that is unprecedented since the Second World War. Cumulatively, this is creating a series of complex and interwoven humanitarian crises that are straining the ability of the international humanitarian system to cope.

Between January 2016 and June 2017, 36 countries experienced "major"* natural disasters, industrial accidents or "complex" disasters (mixed events with technological hazards exacerbated by natural events). During this period, **UN Environment carried out risk reduction or response and recovery work in ten of these countries (China, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, South Sudan and Sudan).** Overall, as will be seen later, UN Environment carried out response and recovery work in 23 countries.

- By "major" natural disaster we are referring to events that have affected in excess of 100,000 people during the time period according to the International Disaster Database (www.emdat.be): Algeria (2017), Bangladesh (2017), Brazil

(2017), Cambodia, China, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Fiji, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar (2017), Micronesia, Mongolia, Morocco (2017), Mozambique (2017), Myanmar, Niger, Peru (2017), the Philippines (2017), South Sudan, Sri Lanka (2017), Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Thailand (2017), Timor-Leste, the USA, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe (2017)

* Photo shows the devastation after Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in October 2016
© UN Environment 2016

January 2016-June 2017: Major conflicts in 16 countries

Many parts of the world are also in the grips of devastating conflicts that are causing a huge human toll, which is often exacerbated by the environmental impacts of those conflicts.

Between January 2016 and June 2017, 16 countries were experiencing "major"* conflicts. During this period, **UN Environment carried out risk reduction or response and recovery work in seven of these countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Ukraine.**

More positively, the period also saw the end of 52 years of conflict in **Colombia** and the commencement of a process of reconstruction and peacebuilding. At the request of President Santos and the UN Country Team, UN Environment is supporting this process with an **in-country programme focused on post crisis recovery and environmental peacebuilding.**

• By "major" conflict we are referring to conflicts with in excess of 1,000 'battle deaths' in the current or past year.

Photo © UN Environment

Risk reduction in **25 countries**

Risk Reduction

Risk Reduction activities Jan 2016 - June 2017
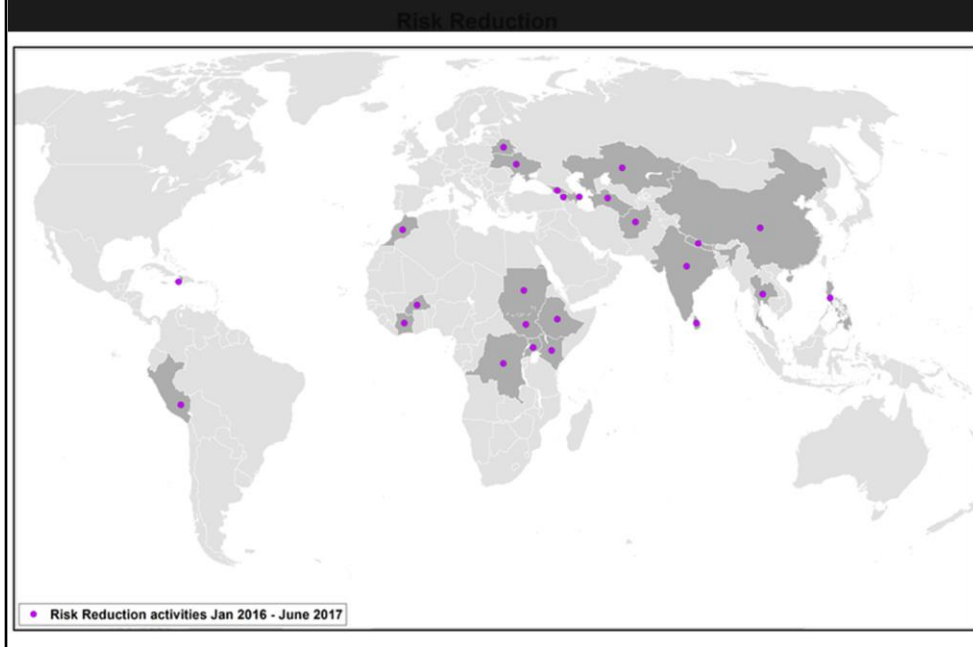
UN Environment tackles the burden of natural disaster, industrial accidents and armed conflict described above.

We promote and facilitate better environmental management and natural resource management that reduce the likelihood and impact of natural and man-made disasters. We do so through providing **assessments and technical support that enable countries to identify and address environmental risks which could have serious economic and social impacts.**

UN Environment supported 25 countries to reduce the risks of natural disasters, industrial accidents and conflicts between January 2016 and June 2017**:** Afghanistan*, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso*, China*, Cote d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Georgia, Haiti*, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya*, Morocco, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, South Sudan*, Sri Lanka, Sudan*, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uganda* and Ukraine.

['*' refers to activities carried out in the latest six month reporting period between January and June 2017]

This included training on emergency preparedness and response of local communities in the vicinity of the Kenya pipeline oil depot in collaboration with

the Kenyan Red Cross; Disaster Risk Reduction training and capacity development on the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool in Armenia; the development of flood and drought decision-making tools for Lake Victoria and the Chao Praya delta; capacity building on environmental emergency risk management with the Central Asian Centre on Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Reduction; and the pilot testing of a new platform for transparency around the impacts of extractive industries in situations of fragility in Peru and DR Congo.

Meanwhile, at the global level, UN Environment has been generating guidelines, policies and evidence on the value of ecosystem-based solutions for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the importance of integrating environment perspectives in UN policies, trainings and programmes on risk management and reduction. **Since 2010 UN Environment has helped to shape 13 programmes, 13 policies and nine trainings among UN and international partners. This is ahead of the organization's cumulative target of nine each of policies, programmes and trainings by the end of 2017.**

A **highlight** during the 18 month reporting period was the **new open data policy of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative** which reflects several inputs and lessons from UN Environment's work (https://eiti.org/files/english-eiti-standard_0.pdf). Another was the November 2016 launch of the **Secretary General's Resilience Initiative, for which UN Environment is co-providing the Secretariat.** A further example between January and June 2017 was best practice training on chemical accident preparedness and response that was developed with the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and delivered to government focal points in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Response & recovery in **23 countries**

92% response rate

Response and Recovery activities Jan 2016 – June 2017
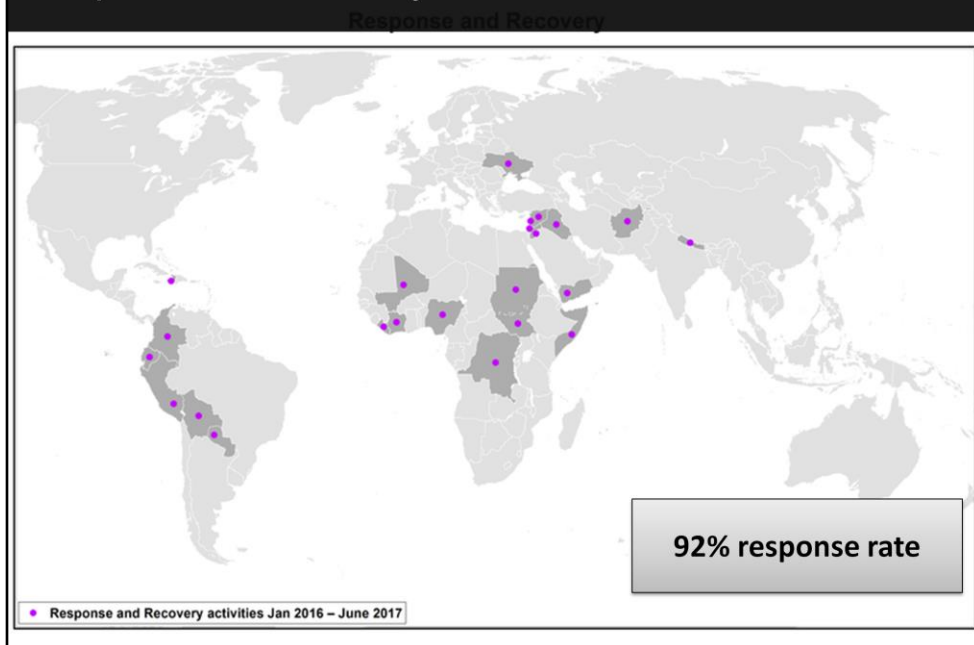
UN Environment works to help countries respond to and recover after natural disasters, industrial accidents and armed conflict. We aim to help countries identify environmental risks and assess environmental priorities during and after natural disasters, industrial accidents and conflict and recommends actions to mitigate the environmental impacts of crises. UN Environment also supports countries emerging from crisis as they seek to put in place critical environmental policies, plans and institutions as part of a wider recovery process.

One indicator to measure progress of our work is the extent to which UN Environment meets requests for assistance from governments and UN Country Teams in the event of environmental emergencies. During the reporting period **UN Environment received 13 such requests (from Palestine, Paraguay, Iraq, Somalia, Ecuador, Haiti, Iraq x 2 Colombia, Peru x 2, Bolivia, Syria and Ukraine) and was able to deploy expertise in 12 cases** (we were unable to deploy to Syria given the degree of insecurity).

This translates to a 92% response rate, which is marginally above the 90% target we had set ourselves.

During the 18 month reporting period, we **helped 23 countries assess, respond to and recover from a variety of natural disasters, industrial**

accidents and armed conflicts: Afghanistan, Bolivia, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ecuador, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine, Peru, Paraguay, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.

In Haiti, UN Environment was closely involved in the response and recovery efforts after Hurricane Matthew devastated parts of the southern coastal region. In Peru, UN Environment deployed experts as part of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team in response to floods and landslides. In Paraguay, UN Environment was part of a combined UN team assessing the impact of widespread flooding. In Jordan, UN Environment worked to incorporate an 'environmental marker' into humanitarian programming and the Jordan Recovery Plan approvals process.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, Haiti, South Sudan and Sudan, UN Environment continued to support environmental institutions and policy development, as part of those countries on-going efforts to promote stability and move onto more 'normal' development pathways. During the reporting period meaningful **steps were taken to develop similar long-term recovery programmes in Somalia, Iraq and Colombia.**

From 2012 to 2016, **UN Environment's recommendations** were taken up in the post-crisis recovery plans of governments and international partners in **74% of cases**

Another **new indicator for UN Environment's disasters and conflicts work is the extent to which the organization's assessment recommendations are taken und implemented by governments and international partners in post-crisis recovery plans. This is an important indicator of UN Environment's influence.** We gather the data on progress against this indicator by following up on the implementation of recommendations, where substantial recommendations have been made, over a five year period, six months before the end of the reporting period (given a certain time lag for the implementation of recommendations).

Between January 2012 and December 2016, we conducted 31 assessment missions in 28 countries. We made substantial recommendations for addressing environmental priorities in the post crisis phase were made in 27 of the 31 cases. Follow-up monitoring of post crisis recovery plans and their implementation showed that in 20 cases UN Environment's recommendations were acted upon. This reflects "**influence**" **74%** of the time (which is down slightly on previous years).

For example, in Iraq, UN Environment's response to the Mosul oil and sulphur fires and subsequent military action involved repeated technical assistance on combating environmental hazards, including a joint report with WHO and

UNOSAT on chemical hazards. Through its partnership with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN Environment provided advice on the possible impacts related to a failure of the Mosul dam. These interventions have influenced reconstruction plans for Mosul which will be further supported by a new in-country support programme in Iraq with a particular focus on addressing environmental hazards in areas reclaimed from the Islamic State/ Daesh group.

* Photos show the oil fires and their effects around Mosul © UN Environment 2017

Challenges (and Opportunities)

- Staff safety and security
- Reduced Environment Fund
- Funding risk reduction work
- Partnership

Staff safety and security is a primary concern and a priority. The civil war in South Sudan, and the on-going insurgency in Afghanistan complicate the delivery of our programmes. Hurricane Matthew, which hit southern Haiti in October 2016, also disrupted our programmes and personally impacted our national and international staff.

The lower than expected resources from the Environment Fund has hit the organization's work on disasters and conflicts particularly hard. This is because many of the activities conducted under this programme are reactive and unplannable, given that we can not always predict where the next natural disaster may strike, or the next conflict may begin.

Our post-crisis recovery programmes attract the majority of extra-budgetary funding, and they frequently deliver results to other subprogrammes as well as to this one.

Historically, it has proven to be much harder to generate significant resources to support our work on risk reduction, which as a consequence does not proceed at the global scale that we think is necessary. It has also been difficult to generate sufficient resources to facilitate our work on response to crisis and

environmental emergencies, which is inherently more difficult to plan around and fund raise for.

Finally, our partnerships are both a challenge and an opportunity. This subprogramme is especially reliant on strong partnerships, with UN Country Teams, with the Department of Political Affairs, with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and so on. These partnerships are absolutely critical in terms of our ability to influence change and represent a huge opportunity for UN Environment to expand and improve its impact. Yet, they also can constrain our options and complicate planning.