

# Addressing the Role of Natural Resources in Conflict and Peacebuilding

A Summary of Progress from UNEP's Environmental  
Cooperation for Peacebuilding Programme

2008-2015



ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION FOR PEACEBUILDING

## About This Report

The Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding (ECP) programme is one of the four work streams under UNEP's Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB). The overall aim of the ECP programme is to strengthen the capacity of countries, regional organizations, UN entities and civil society to understand and respond to the conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities presented by natural resources and environment.

To achieve this goal, the ECP programme is divided into three main pillars. First, it works with academics and practitioners to develop an extensive evidence base of good practices and lessons learned from conflict and peacebuilding case studies. This wealth of material is managed in a global knowledge platform and disseminated to a community of practice on environmental peacebuilding. Second, it conducts policy analysis and creates partnerships with UN and other actors in order to help formulate more effective response policies and programmes across the spectrum of peace and security operations. Finally, it provides technical support to UN country teams, conflict-affected countries and other stakeholders in the field to conduct assessments and apply good practices through catalytic partnerships and pilot projects.

The purpose of this report is to highlight both the progress and results that the ECP programme has achieved in the field of environmental peacebuilding from 2008 to 2015 within each of these main activity pillars. The report also shares some of the key lessons learned and recommendations for future focus areas.

ECP contributes to UNEP's programme of work for 2014-2015 within the Disasters and Conflicts subprogramme, under expected accomplishment (a): "The capacity of countries to use natural resource and environmental management to prevent and reduce the risk of disasters and conflicts is improved."

Further information on the ECP programme can be found on [www.unep.org/ecp](http://www.unep.org/ecp)

All of the publications mentioned in this report can be found on [www.unep.org/ecp/publications](http://www.unep.org/ecp/publications)

The knowledge platform and community of practice can be accessed on [www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org](http://www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org)

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United Nations Environment Programme

P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, KENYA

Tel.: +254 (0)20 762 1234

Fax: +254 (0)20 762 3927

Email: [uneppub@unep.org](mailto:uneppub@unep.org)

Web: [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

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Programme management: David E. Jensen

Report coordination: Pauliina Upla and Sophie Brown

Report design and layout: Cristina Poiata

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# Executive Summary

Preventing, managing and resolving natural resource conflicts is undoubtedly among the key peace and security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Increasing demand for natural resources combined with environmental degradation and climate change will serve to intensify competitive pressures between countries and communities over resource access, ownership and use.

Many experts and governments expect natural resources to become key drivers in a growing number of disputes, with potentially significant consequences for international, regional, and national peace and security. At the same time, many academics and prominent figures such as the UN's Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson, have strongly advocated the idea of "working to make the scarcity of resources a reason for cooperation, not for conflict."

In the UN system, few other issues cut across as many institutional mandates and national interests as natural resources. Ultimately, supporting countries to effectively address conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities from natural resources requires a strategy that goes well beyond the mandates and capacities of individual UN agencies. The key challenge faced by the UN system is how to coordinate and deploy the five core operational areas in a more effective and coherent way. These include peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, humanitarian assistance and international law.

The creation of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture in 2005 reflected an important opportunity to address these key questions. The concept of peacebuilding aimed to ensure that UN field programming responded more effectively to conflict analysis, and established a more coherent strategy to support peace consolidation across the functional domains that constitute the UN system. Yet, as the UN's new architecture for peacebuilding was being formulated, one of the critical knowledge gaps was a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the different roles that natural resources and the environment could play across the peace and security continuum. Analysis was also needed on the range of tools and strategies that could be used to address different conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities from natural resources in a more coordinated and coherent manner.

UNEP's Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding (ECP) programme was founded in 2008 to address this need. Building on UNEP's field expertise from over 20 post-conflict environmental assessments, ECP aims to strengthen the capacity of countries, regional organizations, UN entities and civil society to understand and respond to the conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities presented by natural resources and the environment.

Between 2008 and 2015, the ECP programme adopted an ambitious workplan that was comprised of collecting evidence, developing policy and catalyzing the uptake of new practices and innovative pilot projects in the field for the benefit of the UN's peace and security architecture. These three distinct but inter-related pillars were based on UNEP's own mandate, technical orientation and operational reach, as well as on the needs of the UN system. The ECP programme is the first comprehensive and sustained effort to set in motion and catalyze new thinking, reforms and processes in each of these pillars that could become self-sustaining and up-scaled by the partners and beneficiaries.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the different outputs for each pillar and the results achieved. It also summarizes key lessons, with a future outlook for UNEP in the coming years under the ECP framework. ECP delivery partners and partnerships are also duly recognized.

This report also informs UNEP's approach for addressing conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities from natural resources and the environment in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the newly established Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, goal 16 on peaceful societies, access to justice and inclusive institutions can help to strengthen transparent natural resource governance based on well informed, inclusive decision-making, thereby maximising peace dividends and minimizing the risk of social grievances and violent conflict.

ECP has positioned UNEP to be a trusted partner in addressing this challenge. UNEP stands ready to deploy this capacity and specialized technical knowledge to help manage resource conflicts and to ensure peacebuilding is underpinned by sustainable management of natural resources and the environment.

## SUMMARY OF MAIN ECP IMPACTS AND OUTPUTS

**Pillar 1: Providing global thought leadership and building the evidence base.** ECP's first objective was to collect case studies from field practitioners, experts and academics documenting how natural resources had successfully supported post-conflict peacebuilding, and illustrating how different risks along the peace and security continuum had been addressed. This evidence base was used to inform the development of new policies, programmes and practices in Pillars 2 and 3, as well as helping to establish a community of practitioners working on the topic. This work resulted in five key outputs:

- **Case studies:** The programme co-generated 150 original peer reviewed case studies by 225 experts and practitioners, covering 12 natural resource sectors across 60 conflict affected countries. All cases are freely available online with over 43,000 chapter downloads to date. The process also formed the basis for a TEDx talk on natural resources and peace.
- **Books:** The case studies have been published in a series of six thematic books on post-conflict peacebuilding and natural resources published by Earthscan/Routledge. Each book includes a summary of key lessons learned covering high-value natural resources, land, water, livelihoods, governance, assessment and restoration.
- **Knowledge platform:** An environmental peacebuilding knowledge platform has been built and is being used by visitors from 185 countries. It consistently receives 5,000-8,000 page views per month, and now contains over 4,300 documents and resources. The knowledge platform supports a virtual Community of Practice with over 2,500 people from 90 countries that have signed up to a regular Environmental Peacebuilding Update.
- **Al-Moumin Distinguished Lecture and Award:** This annual lecture and award recognizes leading thinkers who are shaping the field of environmental peacebuilding. The lecture series is co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, American University, and UNEP, and is named in honor of Dr. Mishkat Al-Moumin, Iraq's first Minister of Environment.
- **Academic courses and training:** A dedicated module on environment, conflict and peacebuilding was designed and delivered for the University of Eastern Finland's training on multilateral environmental agreements and diplomacy, and for the NATO school in Oberammergau, Germany. ECP also supported the development of one of the world's first certificate programme on environment, peace and security with Columbia University. An Environmental Peacebuilding Academy has also been established to engage professors and educators in cultivating the next generation of environmental peacebuilding practitioners, researchers, and decision makers.

### Three major outcomes have resulted from Pillar 1:

- **Evidence base generated by ECP is influencing both the research community as well as international policy and practice:** ECP's case studies have been indispensable for increasing global awareness, influencing the content of academic courses and the priorities of the research community as well as shaping the international policies and practices of both the UN system and key development partners. They have been referenced in a number of high profile publications by the UN, the World Bank, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as in specific guidance by a number of donors including EU, USAID, DFID, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and AusAID.
- **Many lessons learned are being adopted by conflict-affected countries and supporting institutions:** The lessons learned are being used as the basis for policy development in a number of conflict-affected countries by a range of different stakeholders, including by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and members of the g7+ group of fragile states.
- **Vibrant community of practice and new multidisciplinary field of Environmental Peacebuilding established:** The ECP programme has helped establish a new community of practice in "environmental peacebuilding". The knowledge platform provides a repository of state-of-the-art resources for public and academic use, helps to inspire new initiatives and research, and supports the next generation of experts and field practitioners.



**Pillar 2: Conducting strategic advocacy and joint policy analysis across the UN system.** ECP's second objective was to establish partnerships with key UN agencies to jointly analyze the evidence base and identify more effective response measures to address conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities from natural resources. This work resulted in four key outputs:

- **UN policy reports:** Joint policy reports and UN partnerships to address natural resources across the peace and security continuum were published, ranging from peacebuilding, peacekeeping and mediation, to international law, women and gender, and ex-combatants. Each report has generated further field guidance, policy, and training materials.
- **UN-EU Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention:** ECP catalyzed a partnership between the EU and the UN that developed six guidance notes on conflict prevention linked to extractive industries, land, water and other renewable resources. The EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention has also combined and deployed the economic, social, political and environmental expertise of the partner agencies into joint assessments and integrated field programs in different countries.
- **UN guidance:** ECP initiated and supported the adoption of a UN-wide guidance note on natural resources in post-conflict peacebuilding, endorsed by 38 UN entities. The guidance helps UN Country Teams and missions understand the negative and positive roles that natural resources can play in peace consolidation.
- **Collaboration with the World Bank and g7+:** ECP is working with the World Bank to conflict-sensitize

the extractive industry value chain and develop an open data resource concession platform called MAP-X for the disclosure and compliance monitoring for the g7+ group of fragile states.

### Three major outcomes have resulted from Pillar 2:

- **Natural resources, conflict and peace linkages are recognized at the highest international political level:** The sustained advocacy and outreach of ECP has strongly contributed to ensuring that the complex role of natural resources across the peace and security continuum is recognized in high-level independent reviews on the Peacebuilding Architecture and Peace Operations, in a range of reports by the UN Secretary-General and in debates of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council and the General Assembly. The process of translating these higher level policy statements and commitments into new field programmes on the ground has started.
- **New international norms and guidelines are emerging:** ECP work triggered the International Law Commission (ILC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to review the international legal frameworks protecting the environment during armed conflict and to establish new normative principles and guidelines of good practice.
- **Multi-donor trust funds for peacebuilding increasingly encourage and finance projects on natural resources:** The UN Peacebuilding Fund, the European Union's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, and the World Bank-United Nations Fragility and Conflict Partnership Trust Fund have each made natural resources, conflict and peacebuilding projects eligible for funding and support.

**Pillar 3: Catalyzing uptake of good practices and pilot projects in the field.** The third main objective of ECP was to help catalyze the use and uptake of lessons learned and good practices on natural resources, conflict and peacebuilding in the field by the UN system, member states and other stakeholders. This involved offering technical assessments and impartial expertise on a “rapid response” basis to UN partners and national stakeholders, as well as developing pilot projects and joint programmes aiming to tackle specific resource-driven conflicts. This work resulted in three key outputs:

- **Technical assistance to UN peacekeeping missions:** Assessments on mitigating environmental impacts of peacekeeping missions or on threat financing from conflict resources and environmental crime in DR Congo, Mali, South Sudan, Somalia and Central African Republic.
- **Environmental diplomacy and mediation support:** ECP provided technical analysis and environmental diplomacy support to Western Sahara, Haiti-Dominican Republic, Bougainville, the Sahel region, Sudan and Nigeria to address ongoing or potential resource disputes.
- **Assessments and capacity building on conflict prevention and peacebuilding:** ECP conducted rapid field assessments and provided inputs on conflict prevention or peacebuilding programmes in CAR, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, DRC and Somalia.

#### **Four major outcomes have resulted from Pillar 3:**

- **Increasing level of technical analysis and UN response coordination in the field of peacebuilding:** ECP has promoted increased shared technical analysis between UN agencies and improved UN coordination on addressing natural resources in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The best examples can be found within the work of the UN Country Teams for Afghanistan, Haiti and Sierra Leone.
- **The analysis and technical support provided by ECP has been successfully used in resource conflict resolution and reconciliation processes:** UNEP notably applied lessons learned and good practices generated by ECP in the mediation and environmental diplomacy support provided in the Ogoniland region of the Niger Delta. Negotiating partners have agreed on a USD one billion roadmap for an environmental remediation project. Other important work focused on supporting transboundary collaboration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic on environmental risks along the border region, as well as helping assess potential livelihood and security risks from climate change in the Sahel region.
- **Increasing application of good environmental practices in peacekeeping missions:** The idea of “greening the blue helmets” has become an accepted need and operational requirement for all UN peacekeeping missions. A Special Advisor on Environment and Peace Operations has been appointed to oversee this work.
- **ECP is successfully institutionalized within UNEP with a rapid reaction capacity to provide short-term technical assistance:** 15 unique technical missions have been undertaken within the ECP framework, and there is growing demand for UNEP’s assistance from the UN system, the European Union, the g7+ secretariat and the World Bank. These efforts are supported by ECP participation in HQ coordination mechanisms such as the UN Working Group on Transitions as well as links to DPA and DPKO desks. ECP is a flagship area of work for UNEP that has been successfully institutionalized within UNEP’s Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch as one of four work streams. Further internal investments in the ECP programme in terms of staff and resources are warranted.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

Recognizing the technical mandate and limited operational capacity of UNEP to directly address natural resource conflicts, ECP has adopted an approach to catalyze change by working through partnerships with other UN agencies and international stakeholders in the peace and security community. As the ECP programme matures and moves forward, six priority areas are proposed whereby UNEP's comparative advantage can be leveraged and technical assistance can be provided to help address specific conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities across the peace and security continuum at the field level:

1. Supporting the emerging field of Environmental Peacebuilding
2. Providing technical support to resource conflict mediation and environmental diplomacy
3. Improving environmental management and monitoring of the extractive industries
4. Addressing climate change and security risks
5. Empowering women in peacebuilding through strengthening their role in natural resource management
6. Combatting illicit trade of natural resources and environmental crime

To the extent possible, these six areas will be aligned to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the newly established Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In particular, these efforts can contribute to different targets within Goal 16 which aims to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". UNEP's efforts to support this goal will focus on addressing the natural resource and environmental dimensions of the following four targets:

- 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all
- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

These four targets are important anchors for governing natural resources in a manner which maximizes peace dividends and minimizes the risk of social grievances and violent conflict.

## RECOGNIZING ECP PARTNERS

UNEP duly thanks the partners and partnerships that have played a critical role in the delivery of the ECP programme. The government of Finland deserves special thanks for the vision, political leadership and sustained financial support for ECP during 2008-2015. Norway, Sweden, Italy, the United States and the European Union have also provided key support to different ECP outputs. The Environmental Law Institute, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Columbia University, the EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention, and the UNEP Expert Group on Conflict and Peacebuilding have played critical roles in the implementation of the different pillars and merit special thanks. UNEP looks forward to establishing new technical and political partnerships as the ECP programme continues to shift focus from the global policy level to field application.

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