



Greening the Blue Helmets

Environment, Natural Resources
and UN Peacekeeping Operations



United Nations Environment Programme

About UNEP's Disasters and Conflicts Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) seeks to minimize threats to human well-being from the environmental causes and consequences of conflicts and disasters. Through its Disasters and Conflicts programme, it conducts field based environmental assessments and strengthens national environmental and resource management capacity in countries affected by conflicts and disasters. Since 1999, UNEP has operated in more than 35 countries and published over 20 environmental assessment reports.

Based on this expertise, UNEP is providing technical assistance to a number of UN and international actors, including the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Field Support (DFS), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission, in assessing the role of natural resources and the environment in conflict and peacebuilding. The main objective of this technical cooperation is to help member states identify conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities from natural resources and the environment. The aim is to promote the use of natural resources in ways that create jobs, sustain livelihoods and contribute to economic recovery and reconciliation while avoiding new forms of grievances or major environmental degradation.

About this report

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how peacekeeping operations affect and are affected by natural resources and environmental conditions. The report is divided into two main parts. Part 1 reviews the environmental management of peacekeeping operations and showcases good practices, technologies and behaviours that have already been adopted. Part 2 examines the role that peacekeeping operations have played in stabilizing countries where violent conflicts have been financed by natural resources – including diamonds, gold, timber and oil – or driven by grievances over their ownership, access and control.

It has been developed by UNEP in consultation with a number of international experts and nongovernmental organizations. In particular, it draws from valuable inputs from the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Global Witness. In the process of conducting the analyses, extensive consultations were conducted with the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department for Field Support (DFS) at both the field and headquarter levels.

The report is a component of ongoing technical collaboration between UNEP, DPKO and DFS, to increase the consideration given to natural resources and the environment in UN peacekeeping efforts. It has been developed in the context of UNEP's mandate to "keep under review the world environmental situation in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by governments."

This report has been open to peer review by all of the current UN peacekeeping missions as well as to a selected number of international experts, academics and non-governmental organizations. The development process for this report has also been supported by UNEP's Expert Group on Conflict and Peacebuilding. This work has been financed by the Government of Finland as a component of UNEP's Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding programme. This report and a separate Executive Summary are available at:

<http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/>

Other reports in this series

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Foreword

This two-year analysis by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) opens a new chapter for the UN in leading by example towards a greener and more equitable world.

It is the result of ongoing collaboration between UNEP and the UN Department of Field Support (DFS) and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to increase the consideration given to natural resources and environmental issues in UN peacekeeping efforts.

Following violent conflict, a country's natural resources are its primary assets, which can help kick-start economic recovery, employment and livelihoods. Early decisions on how they are used, managed and allocated can have fundamental implications for short-term stability, security and peacebuilding.

While 25 percent of UN peacekeeping missions since 1948 have had a direct or indirect mandate to address natural resources, the broader issues surrounding natural resource and environmental management have until now not garnered sufficient attention within the peacekeeping community.

This report shows that peacekeeping operations not only have important natural resource implications, as well as significant impacts on the environment, but also that natural resources are often a fundamental aspect of conflict resolution, livelihoods and confidence-building at the local level.

It is therefore important that UN peacekeeping missions be given a more systematic mandate to support national authorities in restoring the administration of natural resources like diamonds, gold, oil and timber, in cases where they have fuelled or financed violence, or become militarized.

With more natural resource provisions in peace agreements today, it is also clear that there is a need for the international community – and peacekeeping operations in particular – to build new capacities and partnerships to be able to support the implementation of these provisions.

The report concludes that addressing the risks and opportunities presented by natural resources is often critical to the success of UN peacekeeping efforts and can no longer be seen as distinct from the maintenance of peace and security.

At the same time, the report also highlights the positive efforts that have been undertaken to reduce the environmental impacts of UN peacekeeping operations. By adopting creative and transformational practices, technologies and behaviours, peacekeeping missions can curtail energy and water use and waste production, and also generate significant financial savings. The improved health, safety and security of local communities and personnel, self-sufficiency of camps and reduced potential for disputes with local communities are further benefits.

The two parts of the report are inherently connected – showcasing better environmental practices and minimizing the impacts of peacekeeping operations are necessary prerequisites and form a foundation for engagement and building confidence at the community level.

With inputs from DPKO, DFS and field missions, this UNEP report is part of a broader effort to strengthen joint learning, strategic partnership and, ultimately, the UN's ability to "deliver as one" in meeting these local and global challenges. It also draws on valuable inputs from partners beyond the UN, notably the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Global Witness.

I hope this analysis can make a substantive contribution to a new global understanding of the interdependent and inter-linked nature of efforts to maintain peace and enable good stewardship of the environment. I look forward to working with DPKO and DFS, the UN system and member States to help take forward the recommendations contained in the report.



Achim Steiner

United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme

Foreword

We are very pleased to introduce the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report “Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment, Natural Resources and UN Peacekeeping Operations”. UNEP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) have worked closely together to develop this report, capturing the work being done by peacekeeping both at headquarters and in the field. The report makes a timely contribution in two key areas: firstly, it helps us to see how we can manage the environmental impact of peacekeeping missions; and, secondly, it examines the role that peacekeeping missions have played in stabilising countries where violent conflict has been financed by natural resources.

DPKO and DFS adopted an environmental policy in 2009. The policy represents a joint commitment to reduce the environmental impact of peacekeeping operations in order to improve operational performance, and protect the health, safety and security of local communities and United Nations personnel, as well as improve the self-sufficiency of our camps.

United Nations peacekeeping missions constitute the largest environmental footprint in the UN system. Our broad-ranging mandates to keep the peace and help stabilise countries after conflict, protect civilians, promote democracy and human rights and contribute to the early stages of peacebuilding present a major challenge as we deploy over 120,000 peacekeepers to our 15 peacekeeping operations. Our operations demand extensive logistical support, deployed rapidly in countries with minimal infrastructure. How we manage our deployments and operations clearly affect local communities, economies and the environment. We are working hard to implement innovative ways to minimise our environmental footprint and to maximise our positive contributions to local communities, economies and environmental management.

We aim for United Nations peacekeeping operations to lead by example in managing environmental impact. Our partnership with UNEP is key to continuing to improve our performance, as we work together to translate our environmental policy into action on the ground.

This UNEP report identifies good practices and behaviours already emerging from the experience of peacekeeping missions. Power generation, road transport, water management, waste management, design and construction are key areas of focus to innovate and improve our environmental impact.

In Darfur, UNAMID changed its construction methods for mission buildings to soil blocks rather than bricks fired in wood-fueled kilns, thus reducing the impact on local forests. In South Sudan, UNMISS operates 39 wastewater treatments plants, generating 78,000 litres of non-potable water each day for such activities as firefighting, dust control, soil compaction and gardening. In Timor-Leste, UNMIT powers remote VHF communications repeaters with solar panels. And, in Haiti, MINUSTAH partners with the Government, local communities and UNDP to recycle shredded paper and cardboard boxes to make charcoal briquettes, both as a valuable source of fuel and as a means of reducing the deposits of waste at dumping sites. This report highlights these and many other ways peacekeeping missions are implementing innovative ideas with local and United Nations partners.

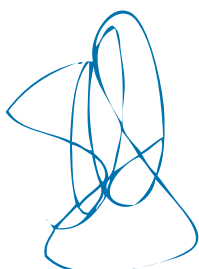
The report also shows how peacekeeping operations can help support and build national capacities for better environmental management.

The second key theme of the report is the role that peacekeeping operations play in stabilizing countries, where violent conflicts are financed by natural resources or driven by grievances over ownership, access and control of natural resources. The report shares some case studies that demonstrate how peacekeeping missions have addressed natural resource grievances as part of their conflict resolution and reconciliation activities; helped to reduce criminal exploitation of natural resources; reduced sexual violence against women by supporting fuel efficient ovens; helped to re-establish livelihoods for former combatants; and, supported UN Groups of Experts monitoring embargoes on weapons, diamonds and timber. The report demonstrates innovative approaches from peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Darfur and Lebanon as valuable experiences to set the path for the future.

The report also shows that peacekeeping support to national authorities in their management of natural resources contributes to stability and early peacebuilding outcomes, in stimulating employment and economic recovery.

We thank UNEP for this substantive and timely contribution to our efforts to continually improve our management of the environmental impact of our operations and our stewardship of natural resources. As the report shows, we have come a long way in recent years, but there is much more to do!

We remain committed to working in partnership with UNEP, national governments, regional organizations and civil society to address the report’s findings and recommendations. We are confident that the “greening the blue” initiative represents an important opportunity not only to keep the peace but to help countries move from the devastation of conflict to a stable and sustainable future.



Susana Malcorra
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
for Field Support



Hervé Ladsous
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
for Peacekeeping Operations

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