



*A solar-powered water pump and treatment plant brings clean water in the Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Bangladesh. | © UNHCR/Will Swanson*

## Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability 2022-2025

The interplay of climate change and forced displacement is multi-dimensional, raising a range of challenges for UNHCR. UNHCR will work on mitigating the impact of the climate change and environmental degradation on forcibly displaced people and their hosts, supporting their resilience to climate-related and other environmental risks by preserving and rehabilitating the natural environment in displacement settings, and minimizing the environmental footprint of humanitarian assistance. UNHCR has a responsibility to address all of these issues, which can be broadly summed up in three key responses:

- 1** Improve the predictability of UNHCR's engagement, working with a wide range of stakeholders, to anticipate, prepare for and respond to emergencies brought on by climate-related and other natural hazards.
- 2** Incorporate climate and environmental considerations into sectoral operational responses, work with refugees, IDPs and communities in the most climate vulnerable countries, and develop innovative sustainable energy and reforestation programmes for refugee-hosting areas.
- 3** Improve the sustainability of the end-to-end supply chain, including planning, sourcing, contents, manufacturing processes, procurement, delivery and lifecycle management of core relief items and other goods.

UNHCR is tackling these challenges with its Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability 2022-2025. This identifies practical actions within the broad overarching objectives set out in [UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#).

Our actions are structured around two key approaches which are to, firstly, recognize forcibly displaced people, and their hosts, as agents of change, and secondly, strengthen the resilience and protect forcibly displaced people, and their hosts, from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation.

# 1 Prepare and respond

UNHCR will reinforce its proactive participation in country level coordination mechanisms to analyse the risks that may lead to emergencies, leveraging its protection expertise and data. While leading multisectoral preparedness in refugee contexts, UNHCR will fulfil its cluster lead role and respond operationally in other situations, ensuring that protection-related concerns are addressed as early as possible during the preparedness phase, including within the national disaster risk reduction and risk management policies, strategies and adaptation plans. UNHCR will maintain and continue building the capacity to mobilize rapidly, reliably and effectively in response to emergencies.

# 2 Respond and deliver

To minimize the twin risks of displacement creating environmental damage and of environmental factors adding to the plight of forcibly displaced people, UNHCR will incorporate climate and environmental considerations into its sectoral operational responses. Climate action provides an exceptional opportunity for UNHCR to strengthen the resilience of forcibly displaced people and host communities. It will work with refugees, IDPs and communities in the most climate vulnerable countries, and develop innovative sustainable energy and reforestation programmes for refugee-hosting areas, support local

## Expected outcomes by 2025

- Overall reduction of 172,000 tons of CO2 emissions through improved sectoral operational responses by the end of 2025.
- 30 displacement sites in the most climate vulnerable countries will conduct integrated spatial planning and climate resilient studies.
- 10 displacement sites at greatest risk of flooding will benefit from strengthened infrastructure management plans.
- 10 refugee camps will benefit from improved solid waste management systems.
- 50% of solar lanterns will be repaired or recycled in 12 operations.
- 60% of people in camps or settlements will live in an environmentally sustainable shelter.

## Expected outcomes by 2025

- An updated UNHCR Emergency Policy.
- UNHCR's early warning analysis and preparedness actions incorporate disaster engagement components.
- Stronger collaboration and sharing of knowledge on preparedness, early warning and early action.
- Emergency training includes greener protection and assistance interventions.
- Standby partner arrangements include specialized technical capacities.

economies to become greener, improve livelihoods opportunities and strengthen prevention, detection and control of communicable diseases.

UNHCR will identify and adapt sites that are most at risk, and advocate for their inclusion in national disaster preparedness plans. UNHCR will focus on environmentally sustainable shelter interventions, promoting the use of local materials and climate-smart considerations such as passive energy, insulation and minimal reliance on fossil fuel appliances.

- 80% of communal facilities will be environmentally sustainable.
- 30 sites at highest risk of drought will strengthen their groundwater monitoring.
- 30% of refugees will have access to clean cooking.
- Three countries will establish projects to generate 1 million tons of carbon offsets via reforestation and clean cooking programmes.
- 50% of water boreholes running on diesel generators will be solarized.
- 50% of UNHCR-supported health centres and schools running on diesel generators will be solarized.

# 3 Supply and deliver

UNHCR will undertake major initiatives to green the end-to-end supply chain.

An initial evaluation indicates that core relief items (CRIs) collectively represent approximately 60% of UNHCR's total greenhouse gas emissions, and almost all the emissions associated with CRIs are traced to eight specific items.

## Expected outcomes by 2025

- Environmentally sustainable (recycled, recyclable or sustainably sourced) contents of UNHCR's CRIs are increased by 20%.
- Specifications for 8 CRIs and generators updated and improved for environmental sustainability. Continue expanding to other products.
- Proportion of plastic in CRI packaging reduced by 20%.
- Energy efficiency from generators used by UNHCR increased by 20% in 70 target country operations with intensive supply operations.
- Aggregate greenhouse gas emissions from the production and delivery of UNHCR key CRI and other standard product item assistance to

UNHCR will undertake a comprehensive review of its supply planning, as well as the specifications and sourcing of CRI. The Global Stockpile Management network and country-level CRI procurement, inventory levels, locations and resupply strategies will be optimized for environmental sustainability, while minimizing inventory-related energy consumption.

- refugees and displaced population reduced by 20%.
- 70 country operations targeted with supply waste management services (full loads, recycling, repurpose, safe disposal).
- Geographic distribution of Global Frame Agreements for 8 CRIs expanded, with 25% reduction in source markets concentration.
- CO2 emissions from international freight reduced by 10%.
- Average duration of stock on hand (inventory aging) in country operation warehouses reduced by 25%.



Noor, 8, and Sameera, 10, play on swings by their home in a part of Kutupalong refugee camp, Bangladesh | © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

UNHCR will utilize innovative financing approaches to support climate action priorities while also enabling greater financial efficiency and sustainability compared to traditional pure-grant approaches. Two key innovative financing initiatives for climate action are:

- **Project Flow** – revolving fund mechanism to solarize refugee & host community infrastructure such as water boreholes, schools, and health clinics. Multi-year savings from transitioning to solar power will be re-invested in additional clean energy systems – allowing each dollar to support multiple communities over time.
- **Refugee Environmental Protection Fund (REP Fund)** – a blended finance fund to address the deforestation in and around refugee-hosting areas and mitigate the impact of the 20-25 million trees cut down per year, mainly due to the need for cooking fuel. This innovative initiative will empower refugees and host communities to replant forests and establish clean cooking supply chains. The REP Fund will register these programs as verified carbon credits, whose sale would replenish the fund and make it self-sustaining over time.

## Strategic approaches

**The active engagement and leadership of forcibly displaced people** in identifying, designing, and supporting solutions that are culturally appropriate and rely on effective traditional and indigenous adaptation practices.

**Partnerships** that build on and strengthen work with governments, UN agencies, NGOs and development actors, and which deepen new relationships such as with the private sector and academia.

**Operationalization** through concerted institutional efforts by headquarters, regions and countries.

**Capacity-building, innovation, learning and culture change** which leads to new solutions that may be more efficient, effective and environmentally sound.

**Guidance and tools** to support greening operations.

**Resources** to increase climate action in its country planning and fundraising efforts, including innovative financing mechanisms and new partners. The current baseline prior to this strategy is that UNHCR already budgeted climate action activities amounting to some 5% of the global OP budget for greening the operational responses. UNHCR seeks \$417 million for climate action in 2022 to respond to adverse effects of climate change (this total also includes \$60M to finance a multi-year effort to green UNHCR's own infrastructure, utilizing financially efficient innovative financing mechanisms such as the [Green Financing Facility](#)). In future years, UNHCR will seek to steadily further strengthen its funding of climate-related activities, in line with its strong commitment to sustained efforts towards the Climate Action agenda.

**Strategic planning and monitoring** on an annual basis using key indicators.



<https://www.unhcr.org/environment-disasters-and-climate-change>



Read the full strategy to green UNHCR's operations [here](#)

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