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SDG Achievement in Crisis Contexts

Climate Change, Energy and Nature Based Solutions for Conflict Affected Communities in the Arab Region



Background

The cumulative implications of climate change, energy insecurity, water depletion, and ecosystem fragility threaten achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unless addressed, these drivers of change will act as decelerators, slowing the rate of progress on SDG achievement, and could well lead to a reversal of development gains, eroding the fundamental freedoms and choices at the core of human development. This holds special relevance for communities affected by crisis, for whom environmental factors pose risks for recovery efforts. By 2030, 50% of the world's poor could live in fragile and crisis contexts, with SDG achievement prospects increasingly shaped by multi-dimensional risk. Converging risks from climate change, water and energy insecurity, and ecosystem fragility exacerbate social vulnerability prior to onset of crises while also being key factors to address within stabilization and recovery measures for conflict affected communities.

With continued co-evolution of environmental risks, resource insecurity, conflict and displacement globally in coming years, it has been estimated that more than 200 million more people could be displaced by 2050, with serious implications for our ability to achieve the SDGs. This holds relevance for the environmental pillars of the SDGs such as SDG 6 on water, SDG 7 on energy and SDG 13 on climate change, and it is also critical for achieving SDG 16 on peace, justice and institutions. As countries proceed to take local actions to accelerate SDG implementation, innovative solutions are needed to rapidly scale-up green solutions for crisis prevention and recovery goals in crisis settings.

To help accelerate this transformation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched a new Strategic Plan (2018-2021) – a blueprint to help countries eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development, and build resilience to crises and shocks. The latter is a particular priority in the Arab region, with the nexus to environmental sustainability of growing importance. By better understanding the role of environmental sustainability as a development and humanitarian imperative, more integrated solutions can be adopted for crisis prevention and more risk-informed models of development to achieve the SDGs, recover from crisis, and sustain peace.

In partnership with fellow members of the UN Development System (UNDS), UNDP is now scaling up its support to address climate change, energy insecurity, water depletion, and ecosystem fragility in crisis settings. This builds on our presence in over 177 countries and territories, and our role as the UNs largest provider of grant assistance on climate change and the environment, with over \$4 billion of grant initiatives around the world today. This includes over \$200 million of ongoing grants today from bilateral donors specifically dedicated to addressing climate change, energy and nature based solutions in crisis affected countries in the Arab region. What follows is an overview of local solutions emerging across the region to address these issues and accelerate SDG achievement in the crisis contexts of the Arab region.



SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

The Arab region receives rainfall well below the world average, with the average person accessing just one-eighth the renewable water that the average global citizen enjoys. Fourteen of the world's twenty most water stressed countries are in the Arab region, while water demand in the region continued to grow, expected to increase by 85 billion cubic meters (Bcm) by 2030; a 47% increase from 2005. By 2030 the effects of climate change will also take a toll on the challenge of water security, possibly reducing renewable water resources by a further 20%. If these trends of growing demand and reduced supply continue, projections are that the region's water deficit would increase from 28.3 Bcm in 2000 to 75.4 Bcm by 2030.

An urgent need exists to enhance systems for integrated water resource management, to find synergies with and generate co-benefits across the SDGs. Water plays a vital role in achieving various SDGs including those on poverty reduction, food security, energy access and gender equality. New capacities are needed to improve the nexus between water, food and energy security, to expand water access for empowering livelihoods and health of women, to manage risks from climate change, reduce water loss and enhance conservation, explore innovations in water reuse and recycling, and scale up investments in community based solutions and private partnerships.



Poor and marginalized communities, and women suffer the most from lack of water access and stand the most to benefit from new initiatives to enhance water security. In the Arab region, an important focus in this regard is the growing numbers of communities across the region displaced by conflict, for whom access to water is an existential need and a key foundation for recovering from crisis. UNDP has a growing portfolio of initiatives meant to address this challenge, with over \$100 million of ongoing grants to expand water access in crisis contexts with support of bilateral donors.

In Yemen, the world's worst humanitarian crisis, more than 19 million Yemenis, close to 80% of the population, lack access to clean drinking water and sanitation, as the country faces the largest and fastest outbreak of cholera in modern history. UNDP's Emergency Crisis Response Project, with \$300 million support from the World Bank, helps to expand access to water for the

benefit of over 2 million people, alongside the project's other key areas of focus such as cash-for-work initiatives, access to social services, livelihoods in agriculture and fisheries sectors, improved nutrition, and clearance of landmines. The project supports more than 300 water harvesting and water supply projects around the country, having established more than 70,000 cubic meters of water reservoir capacity at the local level. This also generates benefits through emergency employment and labor-intensive activities around irrigation rehabilitation, water harvesting, improvement of drinking water resources and watershed management.

In Iraq, millions of IDPs have been returning to areas of the country newly liberated from the Islamic State group. UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, with over \$400 million of assistance from a group of 20 donors, supports over 1,000 projects for various stabilization needs across electricity, health, education and infrastructure rehabilitation. A key focus of assistance has also been on rehabilitation of water treatment facilities. UNDP and partners under the multi-donor Facility have supported of twenty-five water rehabilitation initiatives in Ramadi, fourteen such initiatives in the Ninewah Plains region, and rehabilitation of twelve water treatment facilities in Mosul. These and other activities are helping to expand water access for hundreds of thousands of people, supporting overall stabilization and resilience in crisis-affected parts of Iraq.



Similarly, in the Kurdish region of Iraq, UNDP's Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, with more than \$120 million of support from Germany, Japan and other donors, helps enhance social services, enhance livelihoods and improve social cohesion across the region. One important component has been to upgrade key water treatment facilities, water pumping stations and transmission pipelines. The region has experienced a large influx of IDPs in recent years, especially into areas facing pre-existing challenges of water insecurity and access challenges. By repairing and upgrading water systems, UNDP and partners promotes social cohesion and resilience in IDP host communities, alleviating chronic water shortages and the related impacts on health and livelihoods.

In Syria, damage to water systems and departure of skilled water maintenance workers and managers, have resulted in a lack of access to clean and safe water for people across the country. This has had serious impact on residential water needs as well as agricultural livelihoods. In support of addressing the needs of poor and crisis affected communities, UNDP provided technical assistance to local communities to rehabilitate thirty-six ancient roman wells, helping clean and pump out stagnant water, widen and deepen the wells, monitor the quality of extracted water, and in the process generating emergency livelihoods for conflict-affected communities. Thousands of conflict-affected individuals have regained access to water for household needs, while farmers are able to resume basic livelihoods.

Likewise, in neighboring Jordan and Lebanon, the challenge of hosting Syrian refugees converges with high levels of water insecurity. UNDP supports a programme on Enhancing Resilience of Host Communities in Jordan by Promoting Sustainable Water Solutions, supported by \$300,000 from the OPEC Fund for International Development. It focused on Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa, Jarash and Ajloun, regions of the country on the frontline of refugee influx, and helps strengthen water access and resilience of water systems in host communities. UNDP helps generate innovative solutions such as rainwater harvesting and reuse of waste water, while providing local communities the tools needed to collect and conserve water. In Lebanon, UNDP has supported a programme of Support to Host Communities for Water and Sanitation, with more than \$8 million support by Germany, Switzerland and the US. The initiative has helped enhance water networks and household connections for villages across the Akkar region of North Lebanon, along with water pumps, rehabilitation of water reservoirs, and development of wastewater networks.

Meanwhile in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UNDP has been supporting a programme for establishment of the Khan Younis Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Gaza strip. Through a grant of over \$14 million by Japan and \$41 million by Kuwait, UNDP is helping address the water and sanitation crisis faced in this and other areas of Gaza, with raw sewage has been disposed in the environment without treatment, posing risks to human health and coastal aquifers. Through the programme, UNDP helps design and establish the facility, bringing capacity of over 26,000 cubic meters of wastewater treatment per day, helping reduce the environmental risks to the community while generating new sources of renewable water supply for agricultural and related uses.

Finally, in closing the water gap in the region a key challenge is the fact that only 43% of water originates from within the region itself, making the Arab region the most dependent on external sources of water. In this regard, a need exists to enhance transboundary co-management of water resources, to prevent tensions over shared resources and ensure the sustainable use of this increasingly scarce resource for the benefit of all. Such challenges exist around the use of transboundary rivers in the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates river basins, and they are also relevant for sustainable use of groundwater resources, on which communities have a growing reliance for agricultural livelihoods.

One example is the Nubian Aquifer, one of the largest aquifer systems in the world, stretching over approximately 2.6 million square km under Chad, Egypt, Libya and Sudan, countries that face similar problems of arid climate, scarce surface water resources, persistent droughts and fragile ecosystems. The aquifer is a critically important source of water in the region and will be increasingly in demand in the future. Growing pressures on the aquifer pose threats to sustainability of the shared resource, and could lead to transboundary tension unless cooperative measures are put in place.

Through support of UNDPs Nubian Aquifer project, supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented in concert with IAEA, partner countries produced in recent years a Shared Aquifer Diagnostic Analysis and a regional Strategic Action Programme (SAP) identifying strategic actions to be undertaken jointly among the countries. To support future results under this emerging regional framework of cooperation, UNDP is launching a regional project to

implement the SAP, in partnership with UNESCO, FAO and IAEA, and with \$3.9 million of support from GEF. It will help enhance scientific understanding of the shared resource, develop regional and national institutional capacities for co-management of the transboundary water resource, design national action plans to align water resource management actions with poverty eradication, women's empowerment and other development objectives, and achieve equitable and sustainable water use of the Nubian Aquifer among partner countries.



SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Energy has played a key role in the Arab region's development trajectory for decades, and as countries in the region seek to craft new development trajectories towards 2030, it is again arising as a key factor in the emerging agenda for change. While oil has been a resource of primary focus over the years, today it is the potential of solar power and other forms of sustainable energy solutions that is quickly rising up the policy agenda. The Arab region hosts the planet's largest levels of solar radiation, and harnessing just a fraction of this could power the entire region's needs now and into the future. But most countries have yet to develop this potential. Renewable energy capacity remains low, at just 7% of the energy mix in the region.

A particular challenge in achieving SDG 7 in the region regards the growing needs of the most poor and vulnerable in society, for whom lack of access to energy is a major barrier to development. In the Arab region, this includes the large number of communities displaced by conflict, usually in countries already experiencing high levels of energy insecurity. The ability of communities to cope with and rapidly recover from crisis hinges in many ways on their ability to regain access to energy. But too often countries affected by crisis are unable to rapidly bring back the type of energy systems needed for recovery.

In such contexts, decentralized solar solutions are receiving greater attention as a means of addressing emergency needs while setting the foundations for longer-term recovery. UNDP and UN sister agencies have commenced a series of new initiatives across the Arab region adapting solar solutions to very localized needs of displaced communities in places like Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Through these initiatives, solar solutions are deployed not as an end in themselves, but as enablers of poverty reduction, women's empowerment, water access and livelihoods regeneration;



helping putting communities on a path from crisis to recovery. This includes over \$30 million of ongoing grants to expand solar solutions for crisis recovery with support of bilateral donors.

In Yemen, for example, risk of famine risk, lack of access to water and breakdown of health and education facilities are all exacerbated by the energy crisis ongoing in the country. Yemen was already one of the region's most energy poor countries, and the ongoing conflict has dramatically reduced conventional energy supplies every further. Decentralized solar solutions have arisen as one solution to ease the suffering of an estimated 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the country today.

To address these needs, UNDP in partnership with WFP, ILO and FAO is implementing the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen programme. With \$38 million from the EU, ERRY supports livelihoods stabilization, food security, local governance and social cohesion. It also supports local deployment of solar technologies to expand energy access in schools, health facilities, small businesses, and solar irrigation pumping for agricultural livelihoods and food security. Decentralized solar solutions were initially provided to 20 schools, 20 health clinics, 800 households, two food markets and 20 public agencies, and this has now been scaled up to reach a further 32 schools, 32 health facilities, nine markets and 2,400 households. Through support of UNDP and partners, solar solutions are helping to meet emergency development and recovery needs, regenerating livelihoods, and powering better access to critical social services like health and education facilities.

Another important example is in Sudan, which hosts over 3 million IDPs, converging with high levels of energy insecurity. After a decade of conflict and displacement in Darfur, the Document for Peace in Darfur and the Darfur Development Strategy set the foundations for the return of a large number of IDPs to the Darfur region of Sudan. But as IDPs return, the lack of access to energy is a barrier to regenerating livelihoods and access to water, health and education services. In



response, UNDP in partnership with UNIDO, WHO and UN Habitat, and with over \$5 million support by Qatar via the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, is supporting the Darfur Solar Electrification programme. It helps the Darfur Regional Authority and the Government of Sudan deploy solar solutions in 70 settlements for enhanced health clinics and schools, street lighting and solar water pumping, directly benefiting 7,000 households, with additional dividends for a further 35,000 households in neighboring satellite settlements.

Beyond deployment of innovative solar technology, UNDP is also supporting upstream policy frameworks that promote scaled-up use of sustainable energy for crisis recovery. Around the Syria crisis for example, UNDP assistance has been provided to national partners in Jordan and Lebanon to integrate sustainable energy solutions into national crisis response plans, to help close the energy gap and build stability in communities hosting Syrian refugees. Through such support, UNDP and partners help empower affected communities, while supporting broader goals of national stability and resilience based approach to SDG 7 achievement.



SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Commercial and industrial expansion is being pursued across the region as a means of increasing growth rates to generate new youth employment, and as a means of recovering from crisis. But this also brings risks from growing waste production and the health risks from chemical use in various sectors. Systems to prevent impacts on ecosystems and human health are often inadequate, with landfill systems increasingly under pressure and a lack of effective reuse and recycling systems. As part of the 2030 vision for sustainability, countries across the region now seek more environmentally sound management of waste and chemicals to significantly reduce toxic risks to air, water and soil to minimize impacts on ecosystems and communities.

One key focus is on developing capacities to enhance solid waste management approaches and to promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling in the economy. Innovative solutions can generate valuable resources for reuse of materials in the local economy, with important benefits for poor. This also includes solutions in areas affected by conflict, where waste clearance is often a major challenge. This includes over \$20 million of ongoing grants from bilateral donors for waste initiatives in places like the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.



In Jordan, municipal solid waste is growing 5% each year. Only 7% of this recycled or salvaged, through the support of 7,000 informal workers from local Jordanian and Syrian refugee communities. Enhancing recycling and materials recovery is thus an opportunity to address the waste management challenge while also improving livelihoods of informal workers, including in Syrian refugee host communities. Through a UNDP programme on Improving Solid Waste Management and Income Generation in Refugee Host Communities, with over \$19 million from Canada, UNDP is helping prevent impacts

of waste on ecosystems and communities in some of the less developed parts of the country's Irbid and Mafrq regions. In Irbid for example the programme has helped establish the first sanitary cell at the Al Kaidar landfill. As the landfill reaches its capacity in recent years and with forecasts of growing needs owing to continued growth in waste generation and growing generation from influx of Syrian refugees, the programme has helped establish a new cell at the landfill using international standards for cell lining, leachate collection and biogas collection.

UNDP helps prevent toxic pollution from the landfill expansion, while also reusing biogas for energy needs within the facility. The assistance is helping enhance life and working conditions for waste pickers and efficiency of waste management in 33 municipalities, expand recycling for metals and plastics, and construct composting systems to reuse organic waste and prevent its entry to landfills. It also supports women's empowerment, with the composting facility to be managed and operated by women from the local community. The programme also helps establish new public-private partnerships for recycling and materials recovery in various parts of Jordan, to improve and standardize the nature of contracts with informal sector workers in 18 landfills and disposal sites across the country, supporting monitoring of contractors and private sector investors, and enhancing occupational health and safety standards for workers.



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

In the Arab region, climate change presents one of the single biggest threats to the future of development, and has already emerged as a new driver of social vulnerability, inequality and displacement. As one of the planet's hotspots for climate risk, temperatures in the region are rising faster than the global average. Droughts have already become more frequent and severe, with most countries in the region having suffered from reduced agricultural productivity, water scarcity and land degradation as a result. From 2007-2017, the region suffered one of the most severe drought cycles in its modern history triggering food insecurity and famine in some parts of the region and internal displacement from rural to urban areas in others. On the region's coastlines, more frequent and severe storms and flood events have been recorded, while sea level rise now threatens to displace millions of people in coming decades. Looking ahead, these trends are expected to get worse, with the Arab region possibly seeing average daily temperatures rise between 2-4°C by 2030 and 4-7°C by 2100.



The entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change and enactment by member countries of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to climate change (NDCs) now set the stage for action. Unless scaled up actions are taken to achieve climate resilient development pathways, climate change will serve as a barrier to SDG achievement in the region, reducing the rate of progress on food and water security goals, entrenching challenges of gender inequality, exacerbating trends of displacement, and pushing people back into poverty. Across the region, UNDP is helping scale up access to climate finance and put in place a new generation of climate resilient development policies, institutional responses, and technological solutions that build the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate risk. This includes over \$50 million of ongoing grants from global funds such as Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund as well as bilateral donors.

Somalia for example has been among the most ravaged by the impacts of climate change, and was the first country in the Arab region to sign onto the Paris Agreement. The last decade has seen the onset of two famine episodes, with severe drought exacerbating challenges of social vulnerability, poverty and displacement. Nearly 70% of Somalia's population depend on agricultural and pastoralist livelihoods, with livestock accounting for 40% of GDP and more than 50% of export earnings. Farmers and pastoralists are increasingly sensitive to more frequent and intense droughts and resulting loss of grazing land. Women in rural areas are especially vulnerable. To address these challenges and achieve Somalia's NDC under the Paris Agreement, UNDP is implementing a programme on Enhancing the Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Communities and Ecosystems, with \$8 million support from the Least Developed Country Fund (LDC-F). UNDP and partners help Government partners in Somaliland and Puntland regions of the country to integrate climate risks into development, natural resource management and disaster preparedness policies and plans. Capacities are also built at the community level, supporting CBOs to take the



undertake ecosystem-based preparedness and adaptation to climate change and disasters. A particular focus is on community based infrastructure for enhancing the capture of water resources and promoting more climate resilient approaches to land and water management.

In Sudan, rain-fed farmers and pastoralists are particularly affected by climate change and are in desperate need of risk reduction measures. A main challenge in taking action has been the lack of access to climate finance and capital needed for resilience building measures. Through UNDP's Climate Risk Finance programme, with \$5.7 million support of the LDC Fund, national capacities are being built to initiate new financial mechanisms to scale up investments into climate change adaptation. The programme helps develop Sudan's first Weather Index Insurance products, helping design new adaptive social protection tools and building the capacity of

national insurance providers to support the resilience of farmers to climatic disasters. Activities are also underway in climate affected regions of Sudan to develop capacity of hydro-meteorological services for enhanced monitoring and interpretation of weather information, better risk mapping, rainfall forecasting and drought early warning.

In neighboring Egypt, the Nile Delta is home to 90% of Egypt's agricultural production, but it is also among the most climate vulnerable areas on the planet. With sea levels expected to rise in coming decades, climate change threatens to impact the country's food security, and its ability to sustain poverty reduction results beyond 2030. Unless actions are taken, rising sea levels will impact poor rural farmers in the Delta and displace millions of inhabitants in the decades to come. To address these challenges and achieve this component of Egypt's NDC climate plan under the Paris Agreement, UNDP has launched a new landmark initiative to Enhance Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast and Nile Delta Regions of Egypt, supported by a US\$31.4 million grant from the Green Climate Fund. Through the programme, UNDP helps develop the capacity of national partners for integrated coastal zone management that reduces vulnerability of coastal developments and local communities from expected sea level rise. This includes new strategies, policies and regulations and the installation of 69 kilometers of sand dune dykes to protect communities from future sea level rise.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, communities face growing pressures from climate change and long standing social vulnerabilities resulting from conflict and occupation. Climate risks in Palestine are serious, with increasing scarcity of water resources, growing fragility of natural resources and land resources. Climate change is increasing already high levels of social vulnerability of the marginalization among local communities. To act on these challenges, UNDP implemented a



programme to Enhance Capacities of Palestinian Institutions to Mainstream Climate Change, with \$1.4 million support of Belgium. Through the programme, UNDP helped assess the state of climate risks across Palestine, implications for social vulnerability in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, and support for the definition of plans and measures to build resilience across sectors and achieve targets set in Palestine's NDC climate plan. The programme also included a series of local community based grants to generate innovative local solutions for possible future replication. This is coupled with a UNDP programme to Enhance Hydro-Climate Modeling to Foster Cooperation among Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli Water Authorities, through \$411,800 of support from the European Union.

To help Palestine scale up climate measures, a new UNDP programme on Readiness and Preparatory Support for scaled up climate finance is underway, with a \$318,996 of support from the GCF. The programme helps develop the institutional capacity of Palestinian institutions to effectively plan for climate actions, and put in place an enabling environment of policies and mechanisms to mainstream climate change with broader processes for development and resilience. The programme will result in definition of a gender response and social inclusive country programme that defined priorities for scaling up climate investments across various sectors in the West Bank and Gaza.



SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss

Biodiversity and ecosystems have been at the base of development in the Arab region for millennia, with the effective use of natural assets a key foundation in the onset of agricultural civilization in the region and achievement of a human development goals in recent decades. While communities have adapted to ecosystem change throughout history, the pace and scale of change from the humanity's ecological footprint is surpassing the ability of people to cope. This is a particularly critical challenge for nomadic and rural communities who have relied heavily on natural assets for livelihoods and social cohesion for generations. Ecosystem disruption is also a serious challenge in areas of the region affected by conflict, with ecosystem rehabilitation an important foundation for resuming livelihoods and promoting resilient forms of recovery.

There are several critical ecosystems of concern in the region. About 80% of the Arab region is made up of dryland ecosystems, impacted by converging trends of land degradation and exposure to more frequent and severe drought cycles. Dryland ecosystems are particularly fragile, but they are also areas in the region where biological productivity is declining, and where rates of poverty and conflict are highest. Limited levels of productivity in drylands is a major barrier to achieving community resilience, preventing conflict and recovering from crisis, and has emerged as a destabilizing force for communities across the region.

In Somalia, acacia ecosystems have been a basis for fodder and livelihoods in pastoral communities for many years, with drought-tolerant species of trees helping to moderate impact of extreme climate events. Unfortunately, these ecosystems have become decimated owing to

the conversion of acacia into charcoal for export, a trade which has been an important source of finance for the Al Shabab terrorist group. Security Council Resolution 2036 (2012) was issued to ban the Somali charcoal trade, but few results have been seen to date. To promote resilience of both nomadic communities and acacia ecosystems, UNDP, UNEP and FAO, with \$4.35 million support from the European Union, Italy and Sweden, are undertaking a Programme for Sustainable Charcoal Reduction and Alternative Livelihoods to halt loss of livelihoods and ecological destruction brought on by the charcoal trade, generate alternative sources of energy, increase food insecurity and reforest degraded areas.

In Jordan, local communities host over one million Syrian refugees, accounting for about 20% of the country's population and generating new strains on the economy. This also has implications for critical watersheds and groundwater systems, many of which are in proximity to refugee camps and host communities. To help address the challenge, a Jordan Response Plan (JRP) (2017-2019) was enacted in cooperation with the UN and other development partners, a framework to address refugee



and development responses in an integrated manner. Within the overall JRP appeal, UNDP supported the design of a dedicated pillar within the JRP on the environment, with \$10 million of planned activities elaborated to mainstream ecosystem resilience and conservation into host community planning and operations, and to mainstream environmental impact assessment across all planned activities under the JRP.

Neighboring Lebanon has likewise been hosting over one million Syrian refugees, accounting for about 25% of the national population. Sustainable use of biodiversity and land resources have emerged as critical challenges. Communities in the northern Bekaa Valley of Lebanon have hosted a large number of Syrian refugees in recent years. Within the valley, particular pressures have been seen in the Qaraoun catchment area, serving as a critical source of water for food production, ecosystem services and as a home for threatened species. The ability of the catchment to sustain these functions is increasingly at risk owing to accelerating land degradation resulting from the crisis. To help address these issues, UNDP implements a Sustainable Land Management programme, with \$3.1 million support from the Global Environment Facility, to address the main causes of land degradation such as deforestation, excessive firewood collection and overgrazing. The programme helps develop capacity of partners for sustainable use of forest and rangeland areas, and multi-sector platforms to mainstream ecological sustainability within local development plans and investments, and the use of strategic environmental assessments to identify ecosystem risks and take preventive action.

As countries move forward on SDG 15, local communities face growing levels of complexity, with converging risks from ecological change, conflict and displacement.

Taking action on biodiversity requires a shift beyond sectoral, linear solutions, towards integrated approaches that engage the multi-dimensional nature of development today. Through our expanding cooperation across the Arab region, UNDP helps partners design ecologically resilience approaches to crisis prevention and recovery, with benefits for both people and planet.



SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Partner countries across the Arab region are taking important actions to achieve the environmental pillars of the SDGs in crisis contexts. However, a need exists to further scale up actions on the road to 2030. To this end, UNDP and partners are initiating a new series of strategic regional partnership initiatives to help countries accelerate results across SDGs, scale up the use of green finance solutions, deploy innovative green technology, and catalyze new strategic partnerships across the UN system, with specific benefits for crisis contexts.

One example is a new partnership between Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and ESCWA to establish a new Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) Middle East Hub as a platform for mobilizing lending, commercial and grant financing to scale up results under SDG7. A related initiative is on Derisking Renewable Energy Investments between the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and UNDP. Under the partnership, UNDP and IRENA will promote opportunities to scale up clean energy technology and finance in the Arab region towards achieving the SDGs. This involves development of regional analyses on ways to reduce investor risk in the Arab region and using the convening power of IRENA and UNDP to bring together Governments and the private sector to identify gaps on the road to 2030 targets, with a priority focus on crisis contexts.

A flagship partnership emerging in the Arab region is the SDG-Climate Facility, a new UN inter-agency platform for action on the nexus of climate change and human security. Through programme, UNDP, UN Environment, UN Habitat, UNISDR and WFP join forces with the League of Arab States and the Arab Water Council to help countries achieve SDGs and take climate action in a way that catalyzes co-benefits for crisis prevention and recovery goals. A particular focus is on building resilience to the converging forces of climate change, conflict and displacement. Many countries affected today by conflict and displacement in the region are also among the world's climate risk hotspots. Through the programme, the UN helps develop regional and local capacities to manage the multi-dimensional nature of risk and generate results towards climate, development and humanitarian goals. It supports new risk management tools, early warning systems, scaling up climate finance solutions that address the unique needs of crisis contexts, deploying innovative green technology for communities recovering from crisis, and catalyzing new strategic partnerships with the private sector and local communities. The programme will advance climate solutions that generate integrated results across SDGs, and contribute to the goal of peace and security in the Arab region.

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This report was authored by Kishan Khoday, Regional Team Leader for Climate Change, DRR, Energy and the Environment at the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States (kishan.khoday@undp.org), and was prepared as contribution to the 2018 Arab Sustainable Development Week conference convened by the League of Arab States to review progress and challenges in SDG achievement in the region, with a special focus on crisis contexts.

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