

## COHAB 2 Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity

Galway, Ireland, 25th to 28th February 2008

### Guidance for participants:

## Workshop 1: Disaster Prevention, Relief and Recovery

Updated: January 2008

### 1. Background

The loss of ecosystem services can increase our vulnerability to the impacts of natural and man-made disasters – flooding, storms, earthquakes, drought, conflict, etc. Those who are poor or sick, or who experience low levels of livelihood security, are likely to be at greatest risk from such events, and are typically more dependent upon ecosystems for their well-being. There is compelling evidence that the effects of natural and man-made disasters may be exacerbated by ecosystem change, unsustainable development and biodiversity loss. A failure to recognise these issues and to account for biodiversity and essential ecosystem services in disaster risk reduction, relief and redevelopment programmes, may simply negate today's relief efforts if such disasters recur in the future. Furthermore, in a world where climate change may result in more unpredictable weather patterns, sea level rise and more frequent and more extreme storms, the services provided by biodiversity will be critical for human communities most at risk from such events, in both developing and developed countries. Refugees from disasters, including climate change refugees, may be particularly vulnerable to added burdens of disease, food insecurity and malnutrition as a result of their displacement or the loss of access to ecosystem benefits. Therefore, where appropriate, the protection, management, monitoring and restoration of ecosystems should play a central role in disaster prevention, early warning, recovery, and emergency aid programmes. Ecosystems and the benefits they provide, and the impacts of disasters (including refugee crises) often straddle national boundaries, and influence the lives of communities over huge areas. Collaboration across disciplines and across borders in addressing this issue is therefore essential.

The potential importance of ecosystems to reducing disaster risk and providing security for people in the wake of disasters has not been fully addressed by either the biodiversity conservation or disaster relief communities. There is a gap in awareness, policy and action that needs to be filled. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (formerly known as the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction) held its first meeting in July 2007, in Geneva. The meeting included a workshop on Ecosystems and Environmental Management. The workshop report states:

*"Around the world, examples can be found of how indigenous communities, national governments, and international organizations have incorporated environment into their risk reduction efforts. Yet, clear guidance on best practice is not readily available. In addition, considerable confusion persists regarding the role of environment in disaster risk."*

This COHAB 2 workshop on "Disaster Prevention, Relief and Recovery" aims to help address this uncertainty. The discussions will highlight successes where conservation and disaster reduction projects have been integrated, and explore how the two sectors can better co-operate. The Workshop will produce a series of recommendations on best practice for cross-linking between biodiversity conservation, the MDGs, and disaster risk reduction, including disaster risks associated with climate change.

## 2. Workshop format and organisation

This workshop will be chaired by the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, representing the major multi-lateral process on the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from genetic resources; and the ProAct Network, a global non-governmental organisation established in 2007 to support disaster risk reduction, crisis management and relief efforts, as these are shaped by global environmental change.

## 3. Themes

The central theme of WORKSHOP 1 is **“harnessing ecosystem services for prevention, relief and recovery programmes.”**

The workshop will discuss how biodiversity and ecosystem services can play a role in reducing the risk and / or impacts of natural and man-made disasters; how they can support relief and recovery efforts following a disaster or conflict situation; and how biodiversity and ecosystem integrity must be considered in planning and implementation of rebuilding programmes.

Each workshop is tasked with addressing three key cross-cutting problems. These are as follows:

- (i) **Systemic approaches to health and development** – building, communicating and reinforcing the conceptual framework on health and biodiversity linkages.

*(How can the ecosystem approach to health and development be mainstreamed into policy and decision making processes? What barriers exist to the development of a common understanding of the concept of “healthy ecosystems = healthy people”, and how can such barriers be overcome? For example, in the context of Workshop 1, how well do organisations working in the areas of crisis prevention, emergency relief, refugee aid and rehabilitation etc, communicate and co-operate with conservation organisations? How can ecosystems support disaster risk reduction and emergency response strategies? What are the most important ecosystems / goods and services in the context of crisis prevention and disaster recovery? Is the humanitarian sector sufficiently aware of the value of ecosystem services in avoiding and reacting to disasters? What exactly is that value? Which ecosystems are of greatest importance? Which regions are most dependent upon ecosystem services in this context? Can donor countries do more to promote and support an ecosystem approach to crisis prevention and recovery? What are the information needs of each sector? What can agencies within the U.N. system do better in this regard? How can the programme of implementation of the CBD support be mainstreamed into disaster / crisis management planning? Could multi-lateral biodiversity agreements (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, Convention to Combat Desertification, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands etc) play a supportive role in the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction? What lessons can be drawn from past experience? What case studies of multi-disciplinary approaches can be highlighted? What gaps in research, policy and action must be addressed?)*

- (ii) **The use of strategic assessments** – ensuring that health-biodiversity relationships are appropriately considered and monitored in the design and development of plans, programmes and policies on health, social welfare and economic development.

*(Once a common understanding of the linkages is achieved, how can biodiversity and health considerations be addressed holistically? What lessons can be learnt from experience with Strategic Environmental Assessments, Health Impact Assessments, economic Cost Benefit studies, and Root Causes analysis? What specific lessons should*

*be drawn from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment? For Workshop 1, how should the links between ecosystems and human well-being be factored into assessments of disaster risk reduction or crisis management strategies? Are there common cross-cutting indicators that can be used? Can specific practical approaches be utilised to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration? What are the roles and responsibilities of various sectors in maintaining ecosystem integrity in high-risk areas? How should ecosystem services and vulnerabilities be factored into risk assessment and crisis management procedures? How can conservation strategies, for example in respect of protected areas, take into account disaster risks? And how should refugee support programmes take account of ecosystems? In refugee situations, can issues such as the availability of food, fuel, and water resources, and the risks of disease emergence, be meaningfully addressed through an ecosystem approach?)*

- (iii) **Climate change** – accounting for the potential impacts of climate change on ecosystem services in the context of each workshop theme.

*(Considering that Climate Change is likely to be a major complicating factor for these holistic approaches, and the potential risks to biodiversity conservation and public health protection which it presents, what are the key threats to ecosystem services which need to be addressed? In the context of Workshop 1, what are the greatest threats to human communities? If climate change is expected to increase the vulnerabilities of certain communities, and increase the risks of disasters associated with extreme weather events, water scarcity etc, how can ecosystem integrity and biodiversity conservation reduce such risks? Conversely, if biodiversity and ecosystems are likely to be severely affected by climate change, in what areas will this lead to greatest risks to human communities? Can specific solutions be devised from traditional knowledge, e.g. of food resources?)*

Other general points for consideration during the workshop include:

- The role of biodiversity in disaster risk reduction.
- The value of biodiversity to human health in the wake of disaster events (e.g. protecting against disease, providing food security, and protection from further emergencies).
- Roles and responsibilities in maintaining ecosystems in high risk areas.

#### 4. Links with other workshops

There is a great deal of overlap between the theme of this workshop and the other two workshops: **WORKSHOP 2: Food Resources, Diet and Nutrition**, and **WORKSHOP 3: Emerging Infectious Diseases**. The participants at each workshop are requested to identify key cross-cutting issues (e.g. food resource security linking Workshops 1 and 2; disease epidemics linking Workshops 1 and 3, etc) which the conference organisers should highlight in the conference report. A team of rapporteurs will move between workshops on both days, rotating between morning and afternoon sessions, to facilitate cross-linking between the discussions.

The final day of the conference (Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February) will include a review of the workshop discussions, with presentations of preliminary reports.

#### 5. Workshop Reports

The reports from the workshops will outline current knowledge and practice in each discussion area, with examples of experience and best practice from around the world, and recommendations for further research, collaboration and action. The reports will be prepared by the COHAB Initiative Secretariat in partnership with the workshop chairs. It is expected that the reports will be published in March or April 2008, and will be presented

for discussion at subsequent multilateral meetings and international conferences on biodiversity, climate change, health and development.

The content of the reports will be based on discussions and presentations during the workshops, and therefore every participant is invited to have a direct input to the outcomes. Delegates to the COHAB 2 conference are invited to make submissions for consideration in the preparation of these reports before, during and after the conference (up to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008).

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### Tentative timetable for COHAB 2 Workshops:

#### Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February – Morning Session – “*Building cross-sector understanding*”

08.50 – 9.10	Morning coffee
9.10 – 9.20	Welcome
9.20 – 9.35	Overview of workshop themes and format
9.35 – 10.05	Keynote address
10.05 – 10.50	Discussion OR presentation
10.50 – 11.10	<i>Refreshments</i>
11.10 – 12.00	Working Groups Part 1
12.00 – 12.30	Discussion OR presentation
12.30 – 14.30	<i>Lunch and Side events</i>

#### Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February – Afternoon Session – “*Strategic Assessments*”

14.30 – 15.00	Overview and Discussion
15.00 – 15.50	Discussion OR presentation
15.50 – 16.10	<i>Refreshments</i>
16.10 – 17.00	Working Groups Part 2
17.00 – 17.30	Discussion OR presentation
17.30	CLOSE

**tentative timetable for COHAB 2 Workshops (continued):**
**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February – Morning Session – “Climate Change”**

08.50 – 9.10	Morning coffee
9.10 – 9.20	Welcome
9.20 – 9.35	Overview of workshop themes and format
9.35 – 10.05	Keynote address
10.05 – 10.50	Discussion OR presentation
10.50 – 11.10	<i>Refreshments</i>
11.10 – 12.00	Working Groups Part 3
12.00 – 12.30	Discussion OR presentation
12.30 – 14.30	<i>Lunch and Side events</i>

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February – Afternoon Session – preparation of report**

14.30 – 15.30	Review of workshop discussions
15.30 – 15.50	Discussion OR presentation
15.50 – 16.10	<i>Refreshments</i>
16.10 – 17.30	Agreement of report content
17.30	CLOSE