

United Nations Development Programme

ABOUT THE UNDP

Following World War II, the United Nations was created in order to form a coalition between previously warring countries and to create lasting global peace and cooperation. Among the many organizations within the UN at its start were the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the Special Fund, originally called the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development. These two groups rose from the ideas of the Marshall Plan and the Technical Assistance Program, in which more powerful countries helped the weaker and poorer countries in Europe through re-development programs and loans following the collapse of the continent after World War II. The EPTA and the Special Fund were created to economically and politically aid underdeveloped countries, with the original plan being that the Special Fund could provide loans for particular countries through programs and funds provided by the UN. However, more developed countries such as the United States did not want these countries to have the power to control which funds they received, so the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development became the Special Fund, which allowed it to merely negotiate terms for private investment instead. Thus, the World Bank Group gained the power to provide investment capital, as it was (and is) a non-UN organization. In 1966, the EPTA and the Special Fund were finally joined to form the United States Development Program and its reach became specialized to focus on global development and to reach the Millennium Development Goals (2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2030). The UNDP also works to reduce poverty, support democratic governance, environmental health, crisis prevention and recovery, and both women's rights and

human rights. The UNDP is funded completely by voluntary donations from UN member nations and it works in 177 different countries with a number of partners and other organizations.

TOPIC 1: Healthcare during Emergency Crises

One of the main areas of development that the United Nations Development Program focuses on is crisis response, which includes both violent conflicts as well as disasters. Therefore, the UNDP has to be prepared to be able to react to an extensive amount of issues at any time throughout the entire world. In order to deal with this wide range of crisis situations, the UNDP has to be able to quickly adjust to a number of different circumstances. One of the first steps in responding to a crisis is the organization of first responders and planning teams for both the current crisis as well as post-crisis. Another first step includes the creation of procedures in order to get supplies and to continue the operation according to the context and location of the crisis. But, above all of this, the most important quality the UNDP can have during crisis response is to have the ability to adapt to each new situation it encounters, while at the same time having a plan, and while also being prepared to be flexible as the plan progresses.

Some of the basic necessities needed in a crisis situation include shelter, nutrition, and clean water, so these are often the first things addressed during most crises. However, giving basic necessities like nutrition and shelter the priority often leaves out many other issues that also need attention during crises, namely healthcare. Furthermore, it is very difficult to focus on just one type of aid, just as it is difficult to provide all the basic necessities at once. For instance, if you focus on providing shelter first, you put food, water, and healthcare as second, third, and fourth priorities, and if you provide all four at once, it can create chaos in an already chaotic environment. And both methods, if done wrong, can further hurt an already weak population following a crisis.

Additionally, during both violent conflicts and disasters, healthcare is usually the very first issue that needs to be addressed, for example following an earthquake or during the Syrian Civil War. However, it is often impossible to provide adequate healthcare immediately, without having other basic necessities first – you cannot perform surgeries in most environments without tents and medical supplies, and water is also extremely necessary to provide any medical attention at all. Thus, these issues can create the loss of lives that could have been easily saved. Therefore, it is extremely important for the UNDP and all of its partner organizations during crises to work together, to work calmly, and to work flexibly in all situations they handle.

A primary example of the issues the UNDP has faced was the Ebola crisis. When the Ebola outbreak struck around 2013, the UNDP had already been working in different capacities throughout West Africa. However, the UNDP took a different outlook towards this particular crisis and chose not to intervene immediately, leaving that to other, more healthcare-oriented organizations. Instead, the UNDP chose to intervene when the Ebola crisis had subsided somewhat and the danger from the disease itself had lessened. In this case, the role of the UNDP was to help the effected countries, namely Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, return to normalcy through economic and social services. This was a different kind of crisis response; this was a post-epidemic economic crisis.

The three main steps the UNDP followed to help these countries stabilize and re-develop their economies were to first coordinate the paying of Ebola workers. This included improving the payment systems and means of delivery of payment for the healthcare industries throughout these countries for treatment center staff including nurses and doctors, lab technicians, and burial teams. Second, the UNDP worked with local communities, leaders, and volunteers to educate people on how Ebola is spread and how to avoid contracting it. The UNDP also worked to identify

cases, raise awareness of the disease, fight stigma, reintegrate survivors, and support their families. Finally, the UNDP worked to analyze the socio-economic and developmental impact of Ebola on these countries through studies on budgets, development spending, livelihoods and the availability of essential services. This enabled the countries in question to create recovery plans following the epidemic. Through these plans specific to each country, the UNDP began to focus on, “rebuilding economies, making welfare payments to vulnerable communities affected by the disease, supporting the health sector, promoting peace and stability, and preventing future crises” (*Recovering from the Ebola Crisis*).

Some of the primary questions this topic will be dealing with when encountering violent conflicts and disaster situations end up being both philosophical as well as logistics-oriented questions. What should the UNDP provide first? What should be provided second? Should the UNDP provide multiple types of aid at the same time? And the most important ethical question during crises: *who* should the UNDP and its partner organizations address first? This calls into question a number of ethical issues because helping one sector of a suffering population often leaves out a generous chunk of the other members of the effected population. And finally, what does an organization like the UNDP do when the crisis has been resolved? When does a group like the UNDP feel like it is both necessary and acceptable to leave post-crisis? How can one know if it is the proper time to leave? Thus, the UNDP’s greatest skill through every crisis it has handled is being able to quickly adapt to change and under pressure, and to be flexible as the crisis fluctuates through its phases.

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TOPIC 2: Ethics of Effective Water Governance

Since communities first settled along the banks of greater bodies of water, “the reciprocal relationships between water supply, arable land, food production and social organization has significantly transformed how human societies and social organization are structured. Over time, there has been an exponential growth in demand for water as the demand for water by cities has expanded due to emergence of urban areas. The aforementioned relationships paired with an increased demand for water have spurred on ingenious developments, such as the use of “irrigation and drainage methods, water-lifting devices, long-distance water transport technologies and storage facilities. In the context of human population size, history shows that effective water management leads to increased food production with a continued increase in the population (UNESCO).

The United Nations defines water scarcity as: the point at which the aggregate impact of all users impinges on the supply or quality of water under prevailing institutional arrangements to

the extent that the demand by all sectors, including the environment, cannot be satisfied fully. The UN predicts that by 2030, due to ongoing climate disruptions, half of the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress. In the whole world, the region with highest water stress index is Sub-Saharan Africa (refer to Figure 1). Though water scarcity, especially in certain regions, is partly occurring due to climate disruption and the fact that water is more accessible in certain areas of the world, it is a phenomena that is being exacerbated by human beings. Inefficient distribution of water globally, alongside water pollution due to poorly maintained infrastructure, and substandard water management systems contribute to widespread reductions in freshwater. Perhaps the biggest problem causing further water scarcity is the uneven balance of groundwater extraction and natural recharge. Groundwater is one of the world's most important freshwater resources, and is replenished when rainwater and snow melt or seep into the ground. Depending on weather conditions and the porosity of the ground, more or less water will seep into the aquifers. However, if there is no water in the groundwater storage to begin with, this can lead to land subsidence, drying up of wells, and deterioration of water quality. This is happening in aquifers around the world where humans are extracting groundwater faster than is being replenished.

Furthermore, just as important as water quantity can be, water quality is just as crucial. It is estimated, however, that in developing countries, 90% of sewage and about 70% of industrial waste is discharged into water streams without any treatment at all, where Asian rivers are the dirtiest. In response to deteriorating water quality, the UN has created the Millennium Development Goals, to facilitate access to clean drinking water, and highlight the "importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene for improving health and economic opportunities" (Pacinst). Addressing water quality is an arduous task as water is contaminated naturally and by human interference. For example, in Bangladesh alone, nearly 70 million individuals only have access to

contaminated groundwater with arsenic beyond World Health Organization suggested maximums. Globally, almost a third of the world's population lacks access to secure sanitation, Sub-Saharan Africa being the home to many of these individuals.

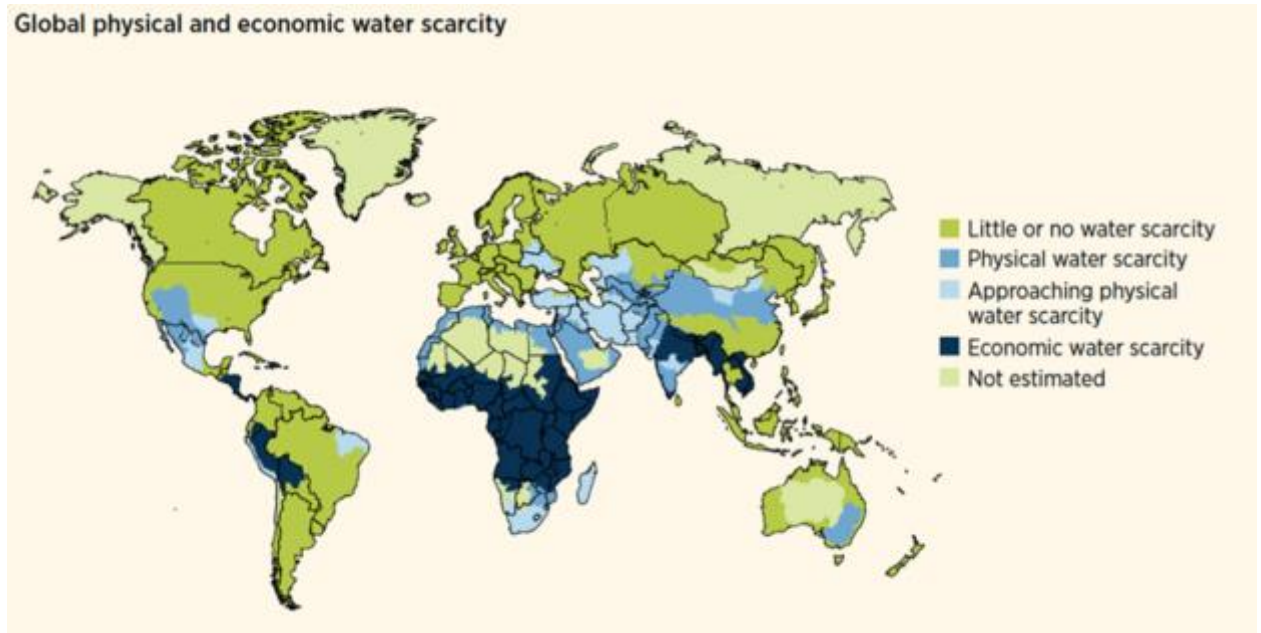
The solution to ongoing water problems must be done structurally, with organizational backing to ensure that certain policies are followed. There exist many organizations to address water challenges in varying capacities, and while the coordinated action in the water sector has helped to identify challenges and water related issues, these NGOs and groups lack clear leadership and regulation. For example, as UNESCO includes in its paper on Water History, notes that in India, there are some critical shortcomings in the governance structure as it requires “reform its bureaucracy for greater accountability and linking performance with reward.” In order for the country to achieve institutional reform in its water sector, India must secure “greater coordination and integration within the organizational structure for water management.” Organizations such as UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNDP, and the Food and Agriculture Organization all have jurisdictions in water related issues. The problem is that if all these groups exist with similar purposes, there will be overlap over what each group manages in the water sector which can lead to managerial problems. These groups need to be interdisciplinary and financially autonomous organizations that function collaterally as to ascertain no overlap in policy. In order to remediate and clarify water governance, the roles of NGOs need to be more clear, the UNDP must promote greater collaboration among these groups, and it must secure sustainable funding to coordinate intergovernmental actions.

Moreover, in order to ensure effective coordinated water governance, it is important that water related policy account for the relationships between water, energy, and food. It is important to acknowledge that agriculture is a major user of water accounting for approximately 70% of all

freshwater extractions, energy is a heavy user of water and that new forms of energy sources such as biofuels place major strain on local water resources. Thus, crafting water related policy can be very nuanced as there are multiple factors to account for. UNESCO has worked with the International Hydrological Programme has declared certain actions that water related intergovernmental groups must strive to do which include: “secure equitable access to water for all people, ensure that water infrastructure and services are delivered to poor people, promote gender equity, appropriately allocate water among competing demands, share benefits, promote participatory sharing of benefits from large projects, improve water management, protect water quality and ecosystems, manage risks to cope with variability and climate change, encourage more efficient service provision, manage water at the lowest appropriate level, and combat corruption effectively.”

Every year, 2 to 5 million people die from preventable water-related diseases. Around 780 million people do not have access to clean drinking water. As of 2012, the United Nations announced that issues related to water has “long ceased to be solely a local issue”, declaring that water scarcity and lack of access to clean water are global problems that impact the globe politically, socially, and economically. Such water issues prevent the proper economic advancements and social progresses in many underdeveloped countries (pacinst). As water problems continue to grow, we find ourselves faced with similar challenges in today’s day and age, and as such the UNDP must respond carefully and ethically, accounting for parties and factors involved in any water policy. With the looming issue of water shortages, the prospect of global water droughts, and disruptions in climate conditions, legislators around the world must resolve water scarcity through water management and technical solutions.

Figure 1:



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