

Environmental Mainstreaming

During the past decades, environmental mainstreaming has become increasingly prominent in economic planning and development strategies. Environmental protection was recognized as “an integral part of the development process” under Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration during the 1992 Earth Summit (UN, 1992¹). Similarly, the humanitarian system has recognized the environment as a cross-cutting issue, which is supposed to be integrated into programmes and operations. But what exactly is environmental mainstreaming, and how does it work?

Generally speaking, mainstreaming denotes the systematic integration of a certain issue into a specific sector, including its policies, plans, legislation, and practices (Nuan et al., 2012²). Subsequently, environmental mainstreaming is a process by which environmental considerations become part of the existing core work of a predominantly non-environmental sector (see *Figure 1*). In the humanitarian context, environmental mainstreaming can be defined as “the informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns and considerations into the decisions that drive the humanitarian sector’s policies, rules, plans, investments and actions” (Hauer, 2017: 6³; Dalal-Clayton, 2009⁴).

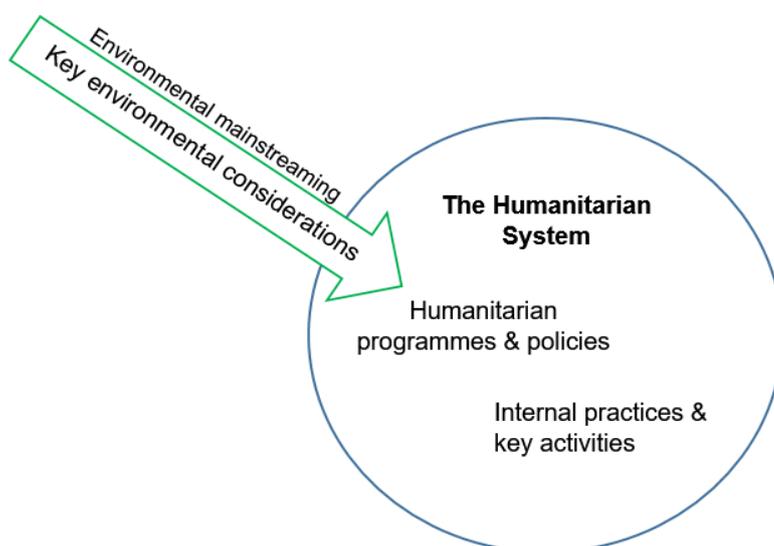


Figure 1. Mainstreaming environment across humanitarian programmes, policies and practices

¹ United Nations. (1992). Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Available online: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>

² Nunan, F., Campbell, A., & Foster, E. (2012). Environmental mainstreaming: the organisational challenges of policy integration. *Public Administration and Development*, 32(3), 262-277.

³ Hauer, M. (2017). *The Sidelined Cross-Cutting Issue: Mainstreaming Environment into the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster*. Lund University.

⁴ Dalal-Clayton, D. B., & Bass, S. (2009). The challenges of environmental mainstreaming: experience of integrating environment into development institutions and decisions (No. 1). IIED.

Environmental Mainstreaming Mechanisms & Strategies

It has been argued that environmental mainstreaming primarily occurs through two mainstreaming mechanisms, with several different strategies. Nunan et al. (2012⁵) illustrate that environmental mainstreaming typically happens either through horizontal and/or vertical mainstreaming mechanisms. The vertical mainstreaming mechanism occurs through a strong, leading entity that steers the integration process, e.g. a governmental body. Horizontal mainstreaming is instead characterized by “temporary arrangements such as liaison roles or task forces or more permanent arrangements such as teams, full-time integrating roles or an integrating department” (Nunan et al., 2012: 266⁶).

Wamsler et al. (2014⁷) further contextualized the two mainstreaming mechanisms with six corresponding strategies (see *Table 1*. for an overview of mainstreaming mechanisms and strategies). Additionally, adequately timed and targeted communication, and influencing planning as well as budgeting processes at the right time, can influence the success of environmental mainstreaming (Benson et al., 2014⁸).

Mainstreaming Mechanisms	Mainstreaming Strategies	
Horizontal	Add-on	The establishment of specific on-the ground projects or programs that are not an integral part of the sector’s core objectives but directly target environmental concerns or related aspects.
	Programmatic	The modification of the sector’s core work by integrating environmental considerations into on-the-ground projects or programs.
	Inter- and intra-organizational	Promotes collaboration of individual sections or departments with other stakeholders (departments, organizations, committees, or governmental bodies) to inform, consult, advise or collaborate for shared knowledge generation, competence development and action-taking for advancing the integration of environmental considerations.
Vertical	Regulatory	The modification of planning procedures and related activities by formal and informal plans, regulations, policies and legislations that lead to the integration of environmental considerations.
	Managerial	The modification of organizational management and working structures including related internal formal and informal norms and work descriptions as well as the configuration of sections or departments to better address aspects related to the integration of environmental considerations.
	Directed	Supports or redirects the focus onto aspects related to integrating environmental considerations by providing topic-specific funding, promoting the initiation of new projects, supporting the education of staff, or redirecting responsibilities.

Table 1. Horizontal and vertical mainstreaming with respective strategies (adapted from Wamsler et al., 2014).

⁵ Nunan, F., Campbell, A., & Foster, E. (2012).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wamsler, C., Luederitz, C., & Brink, E. (2014). Local levers for change: mainstreaming ecosystem-based adaptation into municipal planning to foster sustainability transitions. *Global Environmental Change*, 29, 189-201.

⁸ Benson, E., Forbes, A., Korkeakoski, M., Latif, R., & Lham, D. (2014). Environment and climate mainstreaming: challenges and successes. *Development in Practice*, 24(4), 605-614.