

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: OUR RESPONSE



The Covid-19 outbreak has caused devastating human, social, and economic distress in almost every part of the world. Decades of progress to address poverty and to reverse environmental degradation is at risk as a result. UNEP-WCMC is working in collaboration with the international community to contribute to a better understanding of global pandemics and seek a transformative change in the relationship between people and nature.

The cause of the pandemic was a virus that crossed from a wild animal to people and spread rapidly around an interconnected world.

The pandemic has reminded us that our own health is inextricably linked to the health of ecosystems and food systems. Indeed, it is unsustainable global food systems and the degradation of ecosystems that results from this that also threatens societal and economic health more widely, undermining our ambitions to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

Covid-19 is just one of a range of diseases to have made the jump from wildlife to people in recent years. It is estimated that one new infectious disease emerges in society every four months and 75% of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, that is, transmitted to people from other animals.

Major drivers of biodiversity loss include unsustainable land use practices (including deforestation, overgrazing, water abstraction, soil degradation), direct exploitation of nature (including through unsustainable or illegal

wildlife consumption and trade), climate change, pollution and invasive, non-native species. These drivers disrupt the balance of nature and can raise the risk of zoonotic disease transmission.

To 'build back better' from the Covid-19 pandemic, recovery at national and global scales must include an urgent effort to better understand and manage this intimate link between people and nature.

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of all emerging infectious diseases are transmitted to people from other animals.

UNEP-WCMC – OUR EXPERTISE, DATA AND KNOWLEDGE*

The United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) is a centre of global excellence in biodiversity. We operate as a collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WCMC, a charity with headquarters in the UK.

Our approach brings together governments, businesses, NGOs and research bodies to put nature at the heart of decision-making and, in doing so, drive positive change for the environment, the economy and society.

We are uniquely placed to ensure our science, knowledge and insights shape global and national policy, in addition to promoting and facilitating the use of science and knowledge more broadly.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for urgent action on reversing ecological degradation worldwide. Our absolute focus has always been on optimizing the real-world impact of our work and this has become more important than ever as we help in the global response to the pandemic.

UNEP-WCMC is working in collaboration with the international community to assess the scale of the challenge posed by Covid-19, map out response pathways and actions, and ensure these are aligned with international policy efforts under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Our global expertise, data and knowledge could contribute to a better understanding of zoonotic pandemics, for example by; modelling how and where zoonotic diseases might emerge in the future and; providing advice and guidance on creating long-term resilience to pandemics in both built and natural environments.

OUR TWO MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS

As the world responds to the Covid-19 pandemic, UNEP-WCMC will focus its contribution in two main areas;

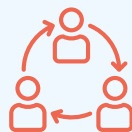
- 1 understanding and addressing the drivers of zoonotic disease emergence**
- 2 seeking transformational change in the relationship between people and nature**

We will work through the United Nations Environment Programme, other partners in the UN system and elsewhere, to provide technical input to help improve understanding, address risk and support the recovery process in these two areas. More detail on the impact we intend to generate from this programme of work is outlined below.



We maintain and analyze

global patterns of trade in wildlife, thought to be a contributing factor in recent zoonotic disease outbreaks



We collaborate with the largest networks of researchers on wild meat and its consumption as food in Africa and south-east Asia, a key link in the chain of potential zoonotic transmission



We lead the development

and use of datasets on global biodiversity patterns and trends including for species that may act as vectors for coronavirus and other viral groups



We work with countries, business, finance bodies and civil society organizations to provide advice on how to include biodiversity and 'nature based solutions' to the climate crises and other societal objectives in their plans and strategies. Credible plans and strategies that take nature fully into account will be vital in global recovery from the pandemic and reducing future risk



We have considerable expertise

on modelling and scenario development. We can also communicate these scenarios through well-designed web-based platforms to facilitate open-access knowledge delivery and exchange. Furthermore, we are currently enhancing capacity to deliver electronically across all our work areas and to provide an education as well as information sharing capabilities



We are expanding our work

on food systems and agriculture, poverty and environment, health and environment and behavioral change. Transformational change in these areas will address the big, indirect drivers of ecosystem degradation, a key underlying cause of devastating pandemics

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UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING DRIVERS OF ZOO NOTIC DISEASE EMERGENCE

We will use our existing expertise to leverage current projects and fundraise for new work in order to better assess the risks posed by disease emergence and how these risks can be managed:



Improved science and policy options to better understand and respond to threats from disease emergence

Specifically, we will:

- Use our considerable knowledge on trade in wildlife and wild meat to collaborate with disease and health experts to generate insights on ways to reduce risks from this trade
- Use remote sensing data of landcover and climate variables together with our knowledge on species patterns and trends and human interactions with ecosystems, to develop a better understanding of the relationship between pandemic risk and biodiversity loss
- Build models and scenarios on the zoonotic emergence risk at various spatial scales



Raising awareness of the links between nature, health and sustainable living

Specifically, we will:

- Strengthen connections in our work between partners working on wildlife and wildmeat trades, biodiversity mapping, and human health and disease. We will leverage this combined expertise to support education and awareness programmes, and shape solutions to co-dependent, global human and environmental health challenges
- Greatly expand our capacity to communicate electronically by capturing materials from our seminars, workshops, training events and presentations in a way that generates a compelling collection of world leading resources on the connections between nature and people



Science, technical support and advocacy to ensure progress on addressing environmental challenges at national and international levels

Specifically, we will:

- Work with national governments, the finance sector, business, communities and civil society to deliver scientific advice on green recovery pathways that could reduce the risk of further disease emergence
- Provide evidence and advice to international policy processes to highlight the importance of environmental resilience in a zoonotic disease context



SEEKING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATURE

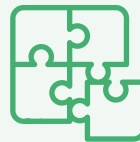
We will work with our network of collaborators, and seek new collaborations, using our expertise to help improve the resilience of ecological, economic and social systems.



Continue to provide support for the development and delivery of global environmental agreements

Specifically, we will:

- Work with the Convention on Biological Diversity to help create an impactful, future strategic plan for biodiversity
- Work with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to help deliver the data and analyses required to ensure the effective implementation of international wildlife trade policies and to ensure wildlife trade is legal and sustainable



Linking recovery efforts with nature-based solutions and commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate

Specifically, we will:

- Build on our climate-related portfolio of work to create packages of learning and advice on how ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions can address the climate and biodiversity crises, and also reduce challenges from future health risks through strengthening the resilience and lowering the risk of disease transmission
- Support the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement – in particular to ensure the consideration of natural habitats as a means to reduce climate change and its negative impacts on people



Collaborate with key actors in the economy to rebuild, scale up and accelerate sustainable consumption and production, and create new green jobs

Specifically, we will:

- Greatly enhance the quality and reach of our existing business and finance focused tools that address risk and dependency, and develop new tools that provide action orientated advice to the private sector
- Enhance our partnerships with companies and the finance sector to accelerate the transition to business models which are positive for nature



Supporting public and private sector to rebuild the next generation of social, ecological and productive infrastructure

Specifically, we will:

- Develop guidance on how to create built infrastructure that is more resistant to climate and other risks, including those posed by zoonotic disease
- Work to develop approaches and guidance to bring nature-based solutions in support of healthy urban populations and enhance the positive role consumers can play in leading more sustainable patterns of consumption and production



Support the 'One Health' approach, linking public health, agriculture, ecosystem health and climate change as interconnected issues

Specifically, we will:

- Define areas for investment in nature and ecosystem-based approaches that reduce risks from future disease emergence and deliver improved human health, sustainable socio-economic recovery, poverty reduction and livelihood recovery
- Use approaches such as National Ecosystem Assessments, risk mapping and futures modelling to provide vital information necessary to understand and reduce risk of future zoonotic disease emergence.



Raising awareness of the links between nature, health and sustainable living

Specifically, we will:

- Contribute resources to online learning platforms to enhance the global understanding of the roles of nature and the broader environment in maintaining the health of people
- Build upon existing work on poverty and environment and health and environment, to deploy our expertise and develop partnerships with other key sectors to enhance the impact of our work

* UNEP-WCMC operates an Open Data Policy. We are custodians of hundreds of local, national and global data sets and work collaboratively with partners across the world to effectively collate and communicate this data



UNEP-WCMC IS A GLOBAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE ON BIODIVERSITY.

The Centre operates as a collaboration between UN Environment Programme and the UK registered charity WCMC.

Together, we are confronting the global crisis facing nature.

We do this through our unique position ensuring science, knowledge and insights shape global and national policy, and by collaborating with partners around the world to build capacity and create innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

We use our position as respected custodians of powerful and trusted environmental data to create positive impact for people and nature.

June 2020