
**Side Event to the 60th Session of
the Executive Committee**



Why Environment Matters in Displacement: 'Voices from the Field'

**Panel discussion moderated by Mr. John Mitchell,
Director of Emergency Response, CARE International**

Organizations to be represented on the panel:

**IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
PROACT Network**

**SAFIRE – Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

**Thursday, 1 October 2009
09:00-10:00
Palais des Nations, Room XXIII**

CONCEPT NOTE

“Why Environment Matters in Displacement: Voices from the Field”

Recognizing that the presence of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) can have an impact on the environment, especially where displaced populations find themselves in already ecologically fragile areas, UNHCR and its partners have actively engaged in environmental conservation measures in the context of its operations for refugees, IDPs and returnees.

Over the past ten years, UNHCR, working together with governments, implementing partners and other UN agencies, has put in place activities and programmes aimed at mitigating such impacts and promoting adaptation to resource-scarce environments in order to encourage a more consistent and sustainable management of natural resources.

UNHCR and its partners have made important progress in developing and applying a number of technically sound environmental interventions in field operations worldwide. This approach has been applied from the initial contingency planning stage, during emergencies, and at the moment when a camp prepares for closure and possible rehabilitation. Many valuable lessons have been learned from these joint experiences, which can guide future field interventions, as well as inform and assist practitioners, planners and decision makers. Some of these experiences will be shared at this Side Event - the intention being that it serves as an introductory platform for wider discussion among refugee and IDP hosting States, donors and other interested partners. This Side Event will provide a forum for sharing:

- Tools, approaches and resources available for environmental management
- Selected experiences from field operations
- Views on how environmental issues can be integrated into cluster coordination
- Views on the possible future impacts of climate change on humanitarian operations
- Common constraints and challenges to implementing environmentally sound interventions

An overview of selected approaches and lessons learned from a number of refugee, IDP and returnee situations will be presented. This will be supported by a panel of four experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), Proact Network, and UNHCR.