
From Isolation to Integration: New UN Report Provides Roadmap to More Sustainable Resource Management

Press Release

Dresden, 15 February 2018 – To solve the world’s biggest problems – from climate change to urbanisation to population growth – we must approach environmental solutions in an integrated manner, according to a new report by the United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and Resources (UNU-FLORES). The new report “From Isolation to Integration” – released today at UNU-FLORES’s 5th Anniversary Symposium – introduces the Nexus Approach to resource management, outlines capacity gaps that exist in its international implementation, and recommends approaches to implement this concept in the management of environmental resources.

The goal of the Nexus Approach is to provide a more wholistic perspective for managing environmental resources. To manage resources sustainably, it is necessary to overcome barriers between individual sectors and scientific disciplines to develop integrated strategies. The approach is based on the understanding that individual environmental resources are closely linked. If these relationships are considered, this can lead to more resource efficiency, while at the same time environmental risks and ecological degradation may be minimised.

“Achieving sustainable development for all requires a change in mindset,” says Dr Kai Schwärzel, Officer-In-Charge at UNU-FLORES and contributing author to the report. “Right now, around the world we can find a ream of examples how a siloed approach to managing resources is having unforeseen adverse impacts. For example, in China we can see very successful soil erosion mitigation strategies that are resulting in increased water and food scarcity. We argue that if approached from a different perspective, a few well-planned adjustments can reduce negative consequences. The links in our environment can even be used to create many positive impacts. It all depends on how we approach it. One thing is for certain, we cannot ignore the interconnections in the natural world; advancing sustainable development requires a shift from isolation to integration in our approach to managing environmental resources.”

While the discussion on the Nexus Approach has gained momentum internationally and diversified since 2012, UNU-FLORES argues that there are still several key knowledge and capacity gaps along the path from isolation to integration:

- Rigorous research and good practice examples are needed to develop clear policy recommendations.
- Independent, reliable, and current data for identifying linkages and tools for analysing and monitoring the effect of management strategies must be made available.
- Decision makers need to be supported by professionals with a grasp of the Nexus Approach and guidelines for inter-ministerial and cross-ministerial collaboration and implementation. This means

availability of capacity development and expert training mechanisms and access to an established network of experts and practitioners for knowledge sharing and cross-fertilisation purposes.

Each of these gaps is discussed in the report, and UNU-FLORES offers examples from its first five years on how to address them.

The content of the report has also been translated into a wandering exhibition designed for use at trade fairs, in exhibition spaces, and conferences around the world. Those interested in displaying the exhibition can contact Ms Rachel Ahrens (see below).

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Attention journalists:

- The report can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/2C4N7vO> (PDF, English)
- The editor and contributing authors are available for telephone or in-person interviews upon request

For further enquiries, or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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United Nations University Institute for the Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources

The United Nations University (UNU) aims to develop sustainable solutions for pressing global problems of human survival and development. The UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources (UNU-FLORES) was established in Dresden, Germany, in December 2012. The Institute engages in research, capacity development, and advanced teaching and training. UNU-FLORES develops strategies to resolve pressing issues surrounding the sustainable use and integrated management of environmental resources such as water, soil, and waste.

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