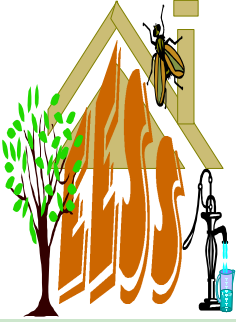


HAWATA MODEL PROJECT, SUDAN



1. BACKGROUND

Established in 1997, the Hawata Model Project set out to demonstrate how UNHCR's *Environmental Guidelines* (1996) might be applied to actual field situations in eastern Sudan. This region has hosted refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea for more than 30 years. Considerable environmental damage has been recorded in this region, mainly from the collection of fuelwood and building materials from local forests.

In the absence of accurate topographical information prior to the arrival of refugees it is difficult to judge the claims that refugees have been entirely – or even largely – responsible for the damage visible today. Large-scale mechanised agriculture, primarily for sorghum, has certainly contributed to the loss of tree and ground cover in this region. This is not to dispute the fact that refugee settlement can have a negative impact on the environment, but to highlight the fact that refugees alone are not solely responsible for such damage. Many large villages lie adjacent to refugee camps in eastern Sudan: the fuelwood and building materials needed for cooking and construction, respectively, being collected from the same forests and fields (for agricultural residues) as those used by refugees.

The Hawata Model Project was founded on a few essential ideals, primarily cost-effectiveness of support programmes, community (refugee and village) participation, environmental awareness raising and the promotion of energy-efficient stoves. The overall intention of this “package” was to demonstrate the links between these activities and to promote the adoption of an integrated package of activities to one particular situation in eastern Sudan.

2. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This project arose following a specific mission from UNHCR's Environment Unit, now part of the Human Settlements and Environmental Engineering Unit, in May/June 1997. The mission was specifically charged with developing a small-scale project that would apply the principles outlined in UNHCR's *Environmental Guidelines*.

Prepared by:

UNHCR Engineering & Environmental Services Section
EES/HQTS01
Case Postale 2500
CH-1211 Geneva 2 Dépôt, Switzerland



OP-1



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

2.1 SITE SELECTION

On-site visits were made to six potential camps in eastern Sudan. A list of criteria to be met and constraints to be overcome was established to guide the final selection of a project site (s). Three of the main factors which supported the choice of Hawata were:

- the positive reception of the ideas proposed by the mission by refugee and village elders, with their expressed interest in co-operating;
- with slightly more rainfall over a longer time period, the local climate is more supportive for agroforestry and tree planting than many comparable areas in eastern Sudan. This was viewed as crucial given the need of demonstrating visible changes over the short-term; and
- camp size – originally quoted as being around 4,000 people, with a similar number in the nearby Khalifa village – making this a manageable number for outreach.

At the same time, one of the main factors against the selection of Hawata was that the camp and village are cut off from communications for several months during the wet season. This aspect was, however, taken into consideration in the planning process.

2.2 PROJECT STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The Hawata demonstration project is operated as a three-way agreement between the Commissioner for Refugees (COR), the Forest National Corporation (FNC) and UNHCR. The FNC was chosen as the national implementing agency, while the roles of both COR and UNHCR are mainly in supervision and monitoring. Funding is provided through a Trust Fund established by the Environment Unit in UNHCR headquarters, Geneva.

The initial project duration was for 12 months, a period determined by UNHCR's funding cycle, which prevents longer-term commitments from being made.

In terms of implementation, the FNC team comprised an overall Project Manager, a Team Leader, three Extension officers and a Driver. The project was to be implemented in keeping with the principles outlined in UNHCR's *Environmental Guidelines*.

A Steering Committee was established comprising representatives from COR (2 representative), FNC (3 representatives), UNHCR (1 representative), village community leaders (3) and refugee elders (3). Specific terms of reference have been prepared for the Steering Committee. The role of the Steering Committee was intended to co-ordinate among different target beneficiaries/parties and advise project management. Four meetings were held during the project period.

At the outset of the project, baseline surveys were carried out by national teams on land use/availability in and around Hawata Refugee Camp and Khalifa Village. Separate surveys were also carried out on domestic energy needs and the techniques being applied. These were fundamental requirements for later project implementation as no accurate data existed on these, and other, areas of concern for environmental management and monitoring.

OP-I



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

In addition, two workshops were organized in Khartoum – domestic energy saving practices and environmental awareness raising – to better position this project and to strengthen the capacity of the implementing partner, in particular.

UNHCR's interests were maintained on an *ad hoc* basis. BO Khartoum followed progress via reports from SO Showak and other interventions brought directly to their attention by FNC and/or COR in Khartoum. UNHCR's environmental expertise was in the form of a qualified UNV agroforester during the planning and early stages of implementation. This UNV was later replaced with another short-term UNV.

3. OBSERVATIONS

An internal UNHCR evaluation of the Hawata Project was carried out in March 1999. Among the main observations were the following:

- The Evaluation's overall impression of project was very favourable. Many issues of concern came to light during meetings and discussions, but most of these were easily resolved, and suggestions adopted by the Project Team.
- The project has had a considerable influence not only on the attitudes of refugees and local villagers, but also on the attitudes and impressions of regional authorities, as well as FNC, COR and UNHCR staff.
- A dedicated and competent Project Team on the ground has been a major contributing factor to this success.
- Beneficiaries displayed interest in, and support for, the project, which is reflected in, among other visible aspects, the aftercare given to seedlings and small vegetable plots, for example.
- Also, interest in the project was expressed by many different levels of society: school-children, youth groups, men and women. Some start-up difficulties were encountered, despite the Project Team and others having been briefed on their roles. This suggests that greater attention needs to be given to briefing project staff and beneficiaries in future projects.
- A few technical problems were noted, particularly with the mud stoves, some of which cracked on account of the type of soil being used (a problem with the mixture and/or people drying the stoves in direct sunlight). These problems were, however, soon corrected and there does not appear to have been any loss of interest or confidence in this technique, or the Project Extension Officers promoting its use. Suggestions on how this might be avoided have been incorporated into future plans.
- Many spin-off activities have developed, for example, school forestry committees in Hawata, and the extension of basic ideas from Hawata to other camps, through FNC and UNHCR in-

OP-1



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

terventions. However, extension of such ideas may have taken place too early as other camps were not as well prepared as Hawata for these applications.

- Project monitoring and reporting are major concerns which need to be addressed. All three organisations need to play a greater role in consistently monitoring the implementation and flagging problems before they are allowed to develop.

4. KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Given the time available for this evaluation, an exhaustive inquiry could not be conducted into the workings of the project. Nonetheless, the experience has enabled the Evaluation Mission to compile a few lessons from this experience. These are outlined below, the purpose being to highlight some of the aspects which appear to be having an impact and to caution on certain types of approaches. These observations relate directly to the Hawata project but may find extension in other applications in Sudan and elsewhere.

Delayed implementation can undermine the impact of a time-bound project.

- Delays with project start-up and later implementation and interrupted cycle of activities caused serious disruption and delays to the programme cycle, especially where, as in the case of eastern Sudan, activities such as tree planting and even access to the site, may be dependent on the weather. Unnecessary delays with signing agreements and the like must therefore be avoided to ensure the smooth running of the project: such delays jeopardise continuation of project funding and perhaps even the involvement of donors.

The purpose and intended management framework of the project must be clearly explained to all those involved at the outset.

- Greater attention should be given to explaining the purpose of this type of project to all participants and beneficiaries at the outset. In the case of Hawata, this included the role of FNC, UNHCR and COR, as well as village and refugee elder committees, the main issues being addressed, the reasons for this, and what the expected outputs were. In terms of project administration and management, this is especially important in the Sudanese context given frequent staff changes.

Where staff changes occur it is essential that new staff are fully briefed on the project components as early as possible.

- Co-ordination between FNC-COR-UNHCR was not assisted by frequent changes in staffing. Detailed and up-to-date record keeping should be encouraged so that incoming staff are quickly and fully appraised of the situations and, in the event of needing more information, are able to refer back to project documents.

For lasting benefits, the mode of project implementation is possibly more important than the level of funds or time invested.

- In a demonstration project like this, a vital concern is that the implementing partner is competent in all of the activities being suggested and well-positioned to promote and repli-

OP-I



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

cate these. In addition to understanding and appreciating the rationale for introducing this type of “integrated demonstration project”, implementing partners must also be qualified to promote the use and application of the techniques being put forward. In circumstances where the selection of implementing partners is limited, it is best not to attempt to introduce new ideas or techniques.

Techniques being transmitted to refugees and villagers must be well grounded.

- The Project Team must ensure that appropriate messages and techniques are transmitted to refugees and villagers. Expensive and environmentally harmful practices such as applying fertilizers and pesticides should be excluded. Instead, people should be encouraged and shown how to make compost and how to plant alternative crops on a rotational system which diminishes the risk from pest attacks and contributes to soil improvement. Likewise, messages such as “adequate watering” rather than “over-watering” must be transmitted. Independent testing of materials, such as mud for stoves, must be carried out by the Project Team before being introduced to refugees and/or villagers.

Simple management techniques should not be overlooked.

- Where improvements or solutions to projects are sought, there is often a tendency to “overlook the obvious”. Simple refinements can often be made to project activities in a cost-effective manner. Extension agents should pay greater attention to small details, such as loosening soil around tree bases; ensuring that roots are not exposed; better use of water and avoiding wastage; minor modifications to stoves to retain heat; compost preparation; etc.

Project Extension Officers should not only focus on their own areas of expertise.

- Benefit should be taken of each contact meeting between Extension Officers and refugees, villagers or groups of people to examine what progress has been made on related activities (e.g. an Extension Officer concerned with energy-saving stoves should also investigate the status of planted seedlings in the compound and neighbouring plots). Such additional attention will build confidence between the project team and the beneficiaries, and will help prevent problems from arising where, for example, people might try and adopt a practice without fully understanding how it should be approached. Where more specialised assistance is required the Extension Officer should communicate this to the respective person in charge of that sector.

Project implementation should not be rushed.

- As many of the techniques being introduced are new to refugees and village communities, a period of confidence building is essential between the target audiences and the Project Team. It is essential that Project Team members are fully familiar with the techniques being promoted and that these have been thoroughly tested at each, local situation. At Hawata, extensive testing should have been carried out on the composition of mud being used for fuel-efficient stoves, before the technique was presented to individuals: many early stoves cracked and had to be replaced; others suffered from rain damage as they were not adequately protected.

OP-1



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

Environmental support should include as broad a range of the population as possible and should be shared across refugee camps and local villages.

- Environmental initiatives should preferably be targeted at multi-focus groups. Men and women, young and old, should all be considered with specific areas of intervention identified according to their needs/interests. In addition, attention should, wherever possible, focus on both refugee and local communities.

The Project Steering Committee should serve as the main forum for discussion and conflict resolution between beneficiaries and the project team and managers.

- It is essential that Steering Committee meetings are held as planned, as these are vital to ensuring the smooth running of the project. Reports from such meetings should be produced within one week and circulated. Follow-up actions identified during such meetings must be acted upon: this remains the responsibility of all members of the Steering Committee.

A reporting and monitoring format should be elaborated between partner organisations at the outset of the project.

- A suitable reporting and monitoring procedures must be agreed between all parties from the outset. Work sheets should be prepared for every activity and the entire Project Team, including Extension Agents and Enumerators, trained to fill these in correctly. Project Managers should supervise this process to ensure that data are correctly entered.

More attention should be given to training suitable trainers and to follow-up and supervision of trainers.

- Training of trainers should be encouraged and facilitated. This is not only a cost-effective means of reaching a larger proportion of the population, but is also an appropriate form of technical support for those interested in becoming actively involved with the project. At various stages during the project, UNHCR and the implementing agency should identify suitably interested candidates for training in this manner.

UNHCR must be able to provide back-up support to environmental projects, whether through Environmental Focal Points, UNVs or similar.

- UNHCR must ensure that it has the capacity to monitor (technical and financial) environmental project activities, including the work of implementing agencies. Often it is impossible to appoint a fixed co-ordinator for environmental activities. Solutions need to be worked out on a case by case basis. The lack of a focal point for environmental issues could be a limiting factor in project implementation and management.

OP-1



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

5. UNEXPECTED RESULTS

The enthusiasm for shade trees, live fences and fruit trees, as well as the construction of fuel-efficient stoves by refugees and rural Sudanese exceeded all expectations with the Hawata. There has been a significant change in attitudes of the implementing agency and state authorities concerning extension, energy saving and community participation. They, as institutions or individuals, are now supportive to the activities they once opposed.

6. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO RECORDED SUCCESSES...

The following are among the main factors identified as having contributed to the successful implementation of the Hawata project.

- Competent and concerned project team at the field level;
- Beneficiaries interest raised during the project formulation and continued through the implementation phase;
- Manageable target group – 1,000 households was the initial target set; more than 1,200 were reached;
- Visible, tangible outputs appearing shortly after project start-up, for example cash and time saved (in collection) from using/purchasing less fuelwood;
- Project responded to identified needs;
- Recognition that the skills and techniques being transmitted would benefit refugees and others in any situation;
- Inclusion of refugees and villagers in the project.

AND SOME CONCERNS...

- In a country like Sudan, where only a narrow window of opportunity exists for planting trees and seedlings, any delay with start-up activities can prove critical. In this context, initial delays with signing the project agreement caused a delay of four months. Additional delays were later experienced with another agreement;
- Insufficient attention was given to explaining the project process to partners at the outset;
- Proceeding too quickly: this aspect relates slightly to Hawata but applies more to other project sites where emerging lessons from Hawata were replicated in other camps, even before their effectiveness or suitability had been proven. When seen during the Evaluation Mission, these were found to be less efficient than those at Hawata largely as the target audiences had not received equal preparation and the beneficiaries had not received the same level of support and follow-up as those in Hawata and Khalifa;

OP-I



Hawata Model Project, Sudan

- Availability and pricing of water for trees and gardens: this has been a constraint in some parts of the refugee camp, in particular, as water (or the means for carrying it) may not always be available. Although this aspect was examined during the scoping mission, the availability of water was not then flagged as a potential problem. Provision of a water tanker is expected to alleviate this problem;
- Forestry and energy saving are not the only issues of concern: although a forestry-based institution, the implementing agency must address all four elements of UNHCR's *Environmental Guidelines* equally. In addition, greater attention must be given to practising good principles of agroforestry and tree selection for rehabilitation.

7. NEXT STEPS

The Evaluation Mission recommended the continuation of the Hawata Demonstration Project for an additional 12 months, with an extension of the main project activities to two other camps and associated villages.

Phase II of this project will concentrate on consolidating activities in Hawata and Khailfa: no new activities will be undertaken during this period. Particular attention will be given to strengthening the working capacity of the existing Project Team, re-inforcing the messages and techniques being presented to the beneficiaries, and ensuring that adequate support and follow-up is given to refugees and villagers alike. These steps are viewed as essential if the project's messages are to be firmly transmitted and people enabled to practise the various methods and techniques being demonstrated and promoted.

Some refinements to the project include :

- Construction of a simple hut in Hawata Camp to serve as a meeting and information centre for refugees and the Project Team. This will also serve as a possible demonstration centre for fuel-efficient stoves and other techniques.
- Re-inforced training through a series of workshops on environmental education, environmental awareness raising, project management, community participation, and agroforestry. These workshops will combine theoretical and practical aspects, with on-site visits to the camps and villages.
- Greater attention to awareness raising and introduction of environmental education materials. The latter will be initiated through a scoping exercise to determine the possibility of using existing UNHCR/UNESCO educational materials, prior to these being translated into appropriate local languages.
- Strengthened management and monitoring.
- Development of an awareness raising strategy for targeted camps and village; preparation and testing of public information materials.

