

THE ENVIRONMENT

BACKGROUND

Excessive damage to the environment, competition with local populations over scarce resources, or depletion of these resources, can all adversely affect a country's decision to provide asylum to refugees. Experience has shown that if, however, environmental concerns are factored into the earliest stages of a refugee operation, damage to the environment can be limited and costly rehabilitation projects avoided. UNHCR's environment programme, managed by the Engineering and Environment Services Section (EESS) aims therefore to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of refugee settlements on their surroundings, and to serve as a catalyst for long-term rehabilitation. The Environmental Guidelines, published in 1996, are based on four principles: 1) prevention before cure, 2) an integrated approach, 3) local participation, and 4) cost effectiveness. Throughout 1999, UNHCR endeavoured to integrate these principles into all relevant sectoral activities such as forestry, agriculture, shelter, water, sanitation, and education.

OBJECTIVES

Incorporate (mainstream) environmental considerations into all levels of activity and decision-making in UNHCR operations as follows:

- environmental policy compliance and the development of environmental guidelines for each sector;
- environmental training and the promotion of environmental awareness;
- environmental assessment and monitoring, including a Geographic Information System (GIS) database and indicators;
- environmental planning, co-ordination and technical support;
- support for field activities and model projects designed to promote UNHCR's environmental policy and guidelines.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Mainstreaming and Support to Operations

Environmental concerns were integrated into training initiatives such as People-Oriented Planning (POP), Workshops on Emergency Management (WEM), and the Operations Learning Programme currently being developed. Key inputs were incorporated into the Operational Management Systems (OMS) programming guidelines for 2001.

The Environment Trust Fund, established in 1993, has given the EESS considerable flexibility, enabling it to operationalise UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines by responding quickly and efficiently to enquiries for assistance. Throughout 1999 punctual technical advice or assistance were provided at the policy or field levels, ensuring that environmental concerns were taken into account in all phases of project design and implementation.

Environmental Awareness-Raising, Training, and Education

Launched only in 1998, regional environmental management training workshops were in considerable demand in 1999. These workshops increased awareness among UNHCR and implementing partner staff of the need for sound environmental management in refugee operations, and provided advice on how to routinely incorporate environmental components into operational activities. Three workshops were held in 1999, each attended by more than 20 participants: in New Delhi (for South Asia), Johannesburg (for Southern Africa), and Nairobi (for the Great Lakes region). The workshops significantly raised environmental awareness among middle-level managers, as reflected in the increasing demand for environmental guidelines and technical guidance in day-to-day operations.

The EESS also contributed to training courses organised by other agencies. The training manual, *Environmental Management within Refugee Operations*, was

updated. Key environmental awareness-raising documents were translated into French, for example: *Opérations d'Aide aux Réfugiés et Gestion de l'Environnement: Quelques Leçons Apprises et Principes-clés pour la Prise de Décisions*. The UNHCR Environment web-site was revised and updated to reflect current activities, and another issue of Environmental News, the EESS newsletter, was issued.

Environmental education activities were carried out in Benin, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, and the Sudan through a joint arrangement with UNESCO's Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction. A set of environmental education booklets and posters prepared for refugee children in Ethiopia was distributed around the world to serve as an example. Educational projects were implemented for Afghan refugee children. A review was undertaken of the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) programme, which involved dissemination of environmental and scientific educational resources for refugee children in Benin and Senegal. The review showed positive feedback from school principals, teachers, and pupils who became more aware of scientific matters and of a wider world beyond their immediate environment. The GLOBE programme has helped children develop curiosity, as well as a capacity for observation, analysis, and interpretation.

Environmental Planning, Co-ordination, and Technical Support

Field-based environmental co-ordinators were supported in Tanzania, Kenya, the Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia, and an additional co-ordinator post was established in Rwanda. The co-ordinators helped convert into practice the principles underpinning the sectoral environmental guidelines.

A variety of demonstration projects were undertaken to illustrate how UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines could be put into practice. These embodied crucial lessons gleaned by UNHCR and its implementing partners over many years of field experience. UNHCR continued to focus its attention on reforestation, promotion of domestic energy conservation, natural resource management, environmental awareness-raising, gender and environment, and environmental assessments. In Afghanistan, such activities included establishing 17 tree nurseries, supplying environmentally sound building materials for 640 households, and a pilot project on bio-gas technology. An educational component involved 20,000 children in 20 primary schools.

Another environmental demonstration project launched in 1999 focused on the crucial link between gender roles and environmental problems. In the Horn of Africa, women frequently bear a disproportionate burden of the result of environmental degradation. Women and girls are sometimes subject to assaults which occur while they are engaged in activities such as wood collection and livestock herding. Responding to this, UNHCR initiated a gender-and-environment project in Djibouti that involves small-scale environmental rehabilitation, home gardening, and domestic energy activities. These activities helped reduce the need for the refugees to venture far from the camps and thereby reduced the risk of assaults, while at the same time improving the welfare of targeted populations. The project also included a training component so that refugees would benefit from these skills following their repatriation.

In 1999 UNHCR launched an environmental assistance project for refugees in Liberia that aimed, in co-operation with the Environmental Foundation for Africa, to promote sound natural resource management. The activities included: surveys of refugees' use of firewood and construction materials; the formation of Environmental Action Groups involving refugees and host communities; environmental education and awareness-raising; the production of fuel-efficient stoves; and training and education. Tree nurseries have been established and environmentally sound agricultural techniques such as composting and agro-forestry are being encouraged.

Other demonstration projects were funded in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and the Sudan, while in Zimbabwe a pilot study was conducted to examine the appropriateness of permaculture in a refugee setting. It showed that permaculture could indeed become a major contributor to food security and natural resource management in refugee settlements. UNHCR will further explore this experience in the coming years.

In 1999, investigations continued into other appropriate environmental technologies, such as fuel-efficient grass stoves, and paper poles as supplementary shelter materials. A final analysis of the appropriateness of these technologies will be produced in 2000.

Framework for Environmental Assessment and Monitoring

A new three-year project to develop methodologies for environmental assessment and monitoring in refugee situations was designed and prepared for launch in early 2000. The project brings together a combination

of practical yet sophisticated tools, which range from simple participatory appraisals to remote sensing with satellite images. A range of methodologies will be developed, based on trials in Guinea, Uganda, and other countries. This initiative will also incorporate ongoing work to develop environmental indicators in the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

UNHCR's environmental database, which constitutes the core of a Geographical Information System (GIS) was further expanded in 1999. A field project to assess environmental degradation around refugee camps in Kenya demonstrated the potential of this approach. The study's findings were complemented by a ground-based survey of firewood availability around the Dadaab camp.

Increased Monitoring of Policy Compliance and Evaluation

UNHCR's work on environmental mitigation can be divided into three main phases. From 1992 to 1997, policy development was the major focus. From 1998 to 1999 strategic planning, the production of technical sectoral guidelines, and the identification of best practices led to an increased emphasis on institutional re-orientation, training, and demonstration projects.

The current phase is the assessment phase, in which UNHCR is developing its ability to accurately monitor changes in the environment, and to assess the impact of measures taken to counter environmental degradation.

In keeping with this phased approach, an increasing number of EESS-supported projects will be evaluated, and a closer monitoring mechanism put in place in the coming years. Future work will also build on comments received from more than 50 countries in response to a survey on environment-related problems and the needs of different offices in different situations. The result of this survey indicates that while much has been achieved in ensuring that environmental concerns are incorporated into all activities, there remains a great deal to be done in providing support to the field and implementing partners.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

Since the reorganisation and restructuring of the Division of Operational Support (DOS) in mid-1999, UNHCR is now better positioned to address environment-

Developing Environmental Performance Indicators: Field Testing in the Sudan

Background

For many years UNHCR has funded environmental support projects throughout the world. One of the main lessons learned is the need for effective monitoring and evaluation. UNHCR is therefore selecting key environmental indicators which, when applied to field situations, will improve systematic data-gathering, analysis, and evaluation.

The Hawata settlement in the Sudan was selected for testing indicators of land use and forestry sectors. This site hosts an environmental demonstration project which aims to heighten refugees' awareness of sound environmental practices, alleviate environmental degradation, and contribute to local site rehabilitation.

Implementation

In April 1999, using a draft monitoring and evaluation manual from EESS, a score card system was introduced allowing UNHCR and implementing partner staff to use selected indicators to determine progress made on environmental activities supported

by UNHCR. After a preliminary phase of local scepticism and irregular use, the system is now being applied with more confidence and commitment.

The score card system takes into account lessons learned from over 10 years of experience with environmental issues, and is grounded on UNHCR's 1996 Environmental Guidelines. The pilot phase has highlighted the need for: clear and timely baseline studies against which future results can be compared; the verification of reported activities such as the number of surviving seedlings per year; the querying of decisions taken such as determining species preferences when offering seedlings to refugees; the choice of planting sites, etc. Furnished with such details, and a clearer understanding of the reasons behind any observed successes or weaknesses, the project team (which now includes an implementing agency, government department, and refugee committees) is now better prepared to resolve outstanding issues and tackle new concerns as they emerge.

related policy and technical issues since these are now more closely co-ordinated within the EESS. In line with this reorganisation, the position of Senior Co-ordinator on Environmental Affairs, established in 1993, was discontinued in 1999 and the Co-ordinator's functions were taken over by the Chief of the EESS. This blending of environmental policy and technical functions within the EESS allows a logical and efficient integration of environmental concerns with basic sectoral activities covering water, sanitation, shelter, infrastructure, and site planning.

The field-based environmental co-ordinators play an instrumental role. On the one hand, they keep EESS informed of environmental concerns and needs in the field, and on the other, provide quick and highly qualified guidance to the field offices in their planning and implementing activities. The close relationship between EESS and the environmental co-ordinators is facilitated through daily contact and guidance, as well as through regular reporting.

Working with Others

Workshops were organised to plan for the Project on Environmental Assessment and Monitoring (FRAME),

which represents a broad range of NGOs and UN agencies, including the World Conservation Union (IUCN), World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF), UN Environmental Program (UNEP), and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

An inter-agency initiative to assess the environmental impact of the refugee presence in Guinea was carried out in co-operation with UNEP. UNHCR participated in the implementation of an inter-agency workshop on "Conservation of Bio-diversity in West Africa." UNHCR's co-operation with UNESCO in providing environmental education to refugee children was extended to include activities in Djibouti.



Voluntary Contributions - Earmarked (USD)

Donor	Special Programmes / OTF	
	Income	Contribution
France	706,208	706,208
Japan	558,000	558,000
United States of America	730,000	730,000
Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center (NOR)	30,603	30,603
TOTAL	2,024,811	2,024,811

Financial Report (USD)

Country/Operation	Name of Project	Amount
Headquarters	Programme Delivery and Related Costs for Coordinator on Environmental Affairs	354,078
Various	Environmental Coordination of Refugee Programmes	515,984
	Regional Support Service for Refugee and Returnee	
	Environmental Education Curriculum Development and Training	175,196
	Programme Delivery and Related Costs for Environmental Affairs	114,768
Sub-total Disbursements/Deliveries		805,948
Unliquidated Obligations		527,254
TOTAL		1,333,202