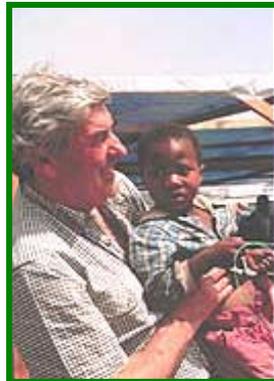


The Environment in Refugee Operations: We Need to Care



Caring for the environment in refugee operations is not an option. It is an issue that we should all be aware of, and one that we strive to address. UNHCR cannot afford to ignore the environmental consequences of refugees and, I would like to stress, of refugee operations, as this could so easily jeopardise the basic rights and needs of refugees – the institution of asylum. That is why we have made environmental issues a priority in our work.

It is clear that many decisions taken in our work have a bearing on the environment – the physical location of camps, for example, or the organisation of these camps.

Decisions taken at this point in time are crucial with regards future management actions. They are not only important when it comes to safeguarding the environment but are vital to the security and safety of refugees. These are practical, even fundamental, points but are often overlooked or forgotten. This should not be the case. The welfare of refugees is closely intertwined with how we manage the environment within and around refugee camps and settlements.

While it is clear that we – UNHCR and our partners – have made considerable progress in this direction, we cannot become complacent. We need to become more proactive through direct actions and through strengthening links with key partners. We also need to draw refugees and local people more closely into our work, benefiting from the fact that such community-based approaches are already a fundamental part of our strategy for sound environmental management. Through such a concerted effort we can achieve a great deal, by helping minimise damage to the environment during refugee operations, fostering good will with governments and local people to help them cope with refugee influxes, and helping preserve the willingness of host countries to accept new refugee caseloads.

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Another area where I feel that our work on promoting sound management of natural resources is very important is in ensuring that a balanced view is given of the environmental impacts by refugees. Refugees alone are not the cause of environmental destruction. Of course they contribute to this, and the longer they are obliged to live in temporary conditions in a foreign land, the greater the likelihood that this will become more significant. Our job is to try and ensure that this does not happen. At the same time, we must ensure that refugees are not blamed for degradation for which they are not responsible.

In our work, we must ensure that we keep things simple, practical and relevant. We do not need high tech interventions when simple, practical assistance is the most appropriate for peoples' needs. We should recognise that the needs of a refugee and his/her family are very different from those of others. We must also focus on determining good and even bad practices with regards environmental management and ensure that lessons from these are reflected in our daily operations. These issues will be addressed in much more detail in an Environment Practitioner's Workshop that UNHCR is organizing with key implementing partners later this year.

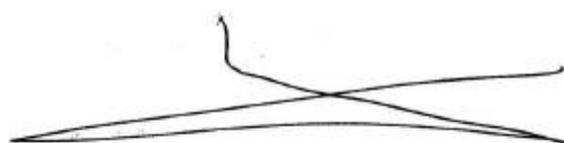
Translating these policies and notions into practice is, of course, the bottom line. I do not want to see good policies and recommendations lying idle on a bookshelf. There are endless opportunities for putting these words and ideas into practice. Once refugees are able to return to their homes, for example, they need to rebuild their lives and their livelihoods. Often this will involve agriculture and farming, both of which have considerable impacts on the environment. Here we have an ideal window of opportunity to develop meaningful and lasting solutions for former refugees – based on sound environmental management.

In addition to keeping things simple, relevant and practical, I think it is essential that we work towards empowering people so that they might reach a situation where they are better able to act for themselves. Where refugees are able to take decisions for themselves. Empowering people, rebuilding whole communities from the perspective of sound, and often collaborative, management of their environment is a major step towards achieving this goal.

Given the needs and range of possible interventions, it will of course sometimes be necessary to limit the extent of our interventions. Funding and manpower are likely to be obvious constraints at the field level. In such scenarios, it is often best to prioritise actions and support so that at least we can be confident that we are doing the best possible work with the resources available. In any case, one of our institutional goals should be that we do not work alone in this challenge but that we are able to effectively identify and work with other partners where their skills and experience are appropriate and where there is a distinct longer-term role for such interventions.

Linking with partners at the appropriate time is going to become more and more important. This should take effect from day one of an operation, where we could work with local conservation groups in taking basic preventive measures to protect the environment, and continue throughout the duration when we again identify and catalyse actions with more longer term partners in the development arena. This is how I see our experience, energy and funds being put to the best use, using the environment as a platform for bringing lasting solutions for refugee welfare.

Two-way partnerships are of course essential. In this respect, while donors are expressing their satisfaction with the way in which we address this issue, I think it is worth remembering that UNHCR too should be grateful to its donors for enabling us to take on this vital concern and start to link it with our global operations. I hope that this fruitful collaboration will continue on all sides and I look forward to seeing the fruition of this work on my forthcoming missions to the field.



Ruud Lubbers
High Commissioner



Working with Partners

UNHCR has a long, strong tradition of working with partner organisations in providing assistance to refugees and others of concern – and sees partnership as a strategy for ensuring “win-win” situations.

Win-wins are situations that benefit our partners through assignments that provide experience and visibility, as well as target beneficiaries, who gain from efficient and cost-effective programme delivery.

In promoting and ensuring sound environmental management throughout our operations, the Engineering and Environmental Services Section is able to draw on a great wealth of expertise from around the world, much of it through long-standing relationships with partner organisations.

One such partnership is that with UNESCO's Programme for Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction (PEER) which is developing an innovative programme on environmental education and awareness raising in many African countries. The services of PEER are available to all UNHCR offices interested in promoting these subjects.

Most of our work, however, is carried out with organisations on specific country-related projects. In **Tanzania**, for example, we are fortunate to draw on the expertise of CARE and in **Djibouti** with the Institut Supérieur d'Etudes et de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques. Other regular

partners in Africa are the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources in Zimbabwe and the Environmental Foundation of Africa, in West Africa.

In **Afghanistan**, we are working with the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation and in Mexico with PRONATURA.

Standby Agreements

To deal with shelter requirements, including water, sanitation and site-planning, EESS has a different form of partnership with several qualified agencies – standby agreements. In essence, these provide us with a strong external resource base – something it would be impossible for us to maintain ourselves – for the benefit of field operations.

To date, standby agreements have been concluded with RedR institutions in Australia and the United Kingdom and, most recently, with the Swiss Disaster Relief (SDR). These agreements are in addition to inter-agency technical co-operation/co-ordination structures with agencies too many to mention here.

From 2000 to April 2001, agreements with RedR and SDR resulted in the satisfactory deployment of 12 RedR engineers and 9 SDR engineers in sectors relating to water/sanitation, shelter and site-planning.

In forging relationships with our partners, we are looking for ways to learn from each other – both technically and operationally. We

are looking for synergy while committing ourselves to frankness, transparency and openness in an effort to complement each other's strengths. We hope that we are contributing to building expertise within these institutions, for the benefit of both of our operations. Increasingly, we shall be looking to outsource some of the administrative aspects of fielding appropriate expertise.

These new agreements do not mean, however, that we are diminishing the importance of a strong roster of individual consultants. Both tools complement each other in our ongoing efforts to provide maximum quality and cost-effectiveness when providing technical expertise.

While greatly appreciating the global validity of agreements with RedR, SDR and other similar organisations, EESS also intends to identify regional actors who, within their specific regions, can provide similar high-quality services in some or all of the above sectors.

Please let us know if you are interested in joining our growing team.

Aziz Ahamed
Chief, EESS

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Refugee Children Can Help Promote Environmental Management

Children are a vulnerable group when it comes to accessing natural resources. Yet, many of their actions can impact on the environment surrounding camps and settlements – a situation which can be reversed through improved information sharing and learning.

Habitat loss or degradation possibly affects children more than any other group. Long-term effects caused by environmental deterioration will be part of all children’s heritage, but immediate hardships are also experienced because of poor environmental management of their surroundings, including over-exploitation of certain resources. One of UNHCR’s goals is therefore to help refugee children, in particular, to better understand and appreciate the importance of maintaining a healthy environment.

At Risk

Children are vulnerable to attacks. Sometimes this might occur where water points are situated far away from the camp or have been established in unsafe places within the camp. Similarly, children who have to collect firewood in the bush are at particular risk of sexual violence, or of being kidnapped. Forced military recruitment, sex-slavery or forced marriage are just some of the destinies these children might face if abducted during the course of their daily duties. Risk factors such as these, both for children and women, must therefore be taken into consideration when planning camp layouts. In a refugee setting where long walk-

ing distances to natural resources are unavoidable, special security



Engaging Children in Environmental Management

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ **Children are a forceful resource in environmental management.** Benefit from their curiosity, energy and natural instincts when designing information packages and practical activities.
- ✓ **Consider children as amplifiers of environmental awareness raising.** Children are natural entry points to families: use this opportunity to transmit appropriate environmental messages and information.
- ✓ **Make “environment” fun.** Try to find entertaining ways to deliver messages; engage in as many practical activities as possible.
- ✓ **Engage children and youth in a range of activities.** Encourage children to come up with suggestions on how they would protect the environment. Learn from these.

measures and assistance to ensure that women and children have access to clean water, firewood, and similar resources should be implemented.

Missing out on Education

Some refugee children have to spend so much time collecting water and firewood that they miss out on education. But it is primarily through education that children can learn how to appreciate the importance and necessity of caring for natural resources and the environment.

Filling an important gap, UNHCR has implemented many environmental education initiatives, most of which are carried out in collaboration with UNESCO PEER. Illustrated manuals for teachers, and corresponding work books for primary school children explore a range of topics, including soil, fresh water, domestic energy and environmental health. Out-of-school activities such as eco-clubs and gardening activities help children put this learning into practice at an early age.

Children can be taught about health and hygiene issues, for example, through discussions about how they collect water. School gardens are very popular with children in many countries, and the fruits and vegetables they produce are a valuable contribution to the children’s diet. Tree planting by children introduces them to longer-term environmental caring and is undertaken in many camps.

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Transmitting appropriate environmental messages outside schools is also essential. Boys, who often look after livestock, should be shown where to graze their herds and where extra caution is needed to keep animals from designated areas, such as those set aside for natural regeneration. Children should also be made aware of the difference between collecting dead wood and cutting down live trees. Another problem in some refugee settlements is the depletion of wildlife, as it is children who often hunt birds and mammals. Finding alternative ways for refugees to supplement their food

rations in more environment-friendly ways is therefore important in most operations.

A Way Forward

Another benefit of environmental education is that children often pass on information to their parents. For this to work, educators must be capable of passing interesting and appropriate messages to youth – which can also help to bridge the gap between school activities and community-based activities. Environmental issues can be incorporated into different cultural activities such as plays, music and radio programmes.

Caring for the environment can also be used as an income-generating activity. If adolescents are given seeds to establish a tree nursery, the produce can later be sold. Such activities are particularly attractive as adolescent refugees often have little to occupy their time and will welcome constructive uses of their time.

Ms Tone Dalen
Associate Programme Officer
Office of the Senior Co-ordinator
for Refugee Children

Environmental Management in Djibouti

Background

The Republic of Djibouti is hosting 23,243 refugees in Holl Holl and Ali Adde camps, the southern districts of Ali-Sabieh. The refugees are mainly Somalis from the northern regions known as Somaliland. Pastoral nomads make up the majority of the caseload.

The Republic of Djibouti covers 23,000km² in the horn of Africa and shares borders with Eritrea in north, Ethiopia and Somalia in the south and the Red Sea to the east. It has a very arid climate with just 150mm of irregular rainfall each year. Temperatures vary from 30-40°C, with a peak of 50°C in summer, between June and September. At the same time, dry winds cause high evaporation (up to 200 mm per year) and soil erosion. Agricultural production represents just 4 per cent of the GNP. Scarcity of water and soil

are a natural restriction to the development of agriculture in Djibouti.

Establishing a small-scale, gender-sensitive, environment project

Refugees in Djibouti have serious problems with the harsh environment, which has a particularly negative impact on the most vul-

nerable group of refugees, women. Following discussions with many groups of stakeholders, the project started in 1999, with the Institut Supérieur d'Etudes et de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques (ISERST) as the implementing partner.

Training was the first task. Initially nine refugee women were shown how to construct mud stoves. They were also helped to start small gardens and learned how to plant and protect trees from livestock and other damage. Each of these initial trainees in turn trained another 50 women. Thus, within a short time, a refugee community with a nomadic background was actively planting trees, growing vegetables for their own use, and constructing mud stoves to save time and energy.



Gravity-fed terraces in Holl-Holl Camp

nerable group of refugees, women. In view of this, UNHCR set up a model project in Djibouti to help alleviate some of the most pressing

In addition to a range of non-formal environmental awareness raising

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activities, targeting refugee women and elders, children were involved in a formal environmental education programme in local schools. Environmental components were integrated into each subject area so that pupils developed a heightened awareness of environmental issues which, in turn, improved their behaviour attitude towards the use of natural resources. Environmental booklets developed by UNHCR and UNESCO PEER (see article on page 10) were printed in Somali for pupils and teachers. Some 2,500 pupils attended environmental education courses in 2000.

Visible Outcomes

In the project's first year, 1,500 trees were planted in the refugee camps with a survival rate of 80 per cent. Nine hundred mud stoves were constructed, of which 600 are still in use. The diet of the refugees has been enriched from the home gardens and the malnutrition rate has decreased sharply among the concerned communities. Women now fetch firewood once a week – as opposed to three times a week before the project. Refugee women also sell mud stoves to the local population for US\$1.7 per unit, providing an unforeseen income-generating activity for this community.

Bridging the communities

Given the success of the project to date, BO Djibouti has extended its activities to the local population and established an environmental task force in each refugee camp. The task forces include women and girls, members of the local population, refugees, teachers, pupils, youth, local authorities and project managers. While bringing representative members of the communities together, the task force also serves as a useful monitoring tool, enabling beneficiaries and managers to discuss common issues such as progress and constraints to successful implementation.

Abdou Mahaman Dango
Environmental Focal Point,
Djibouti

Some Lessons Learned in Dadaab

Background

UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) recently commissioned an independent evaluation of a free firewood distribution programme in Dadaab camps, eastern Kenya. Previously known as the "Energy Management and Environmental Rehabilitation Project", the initiative was launched in 1997. Initial aims were to protect women and children from sexual violence related to firewood collection, and reduce environmental degradation in the camp surroundings, through free firewood distribution.

These objectives were initially to be reached through a number of initiatives including wood for work schemes, targeted awareness raising campaigns, and the promotion of a sustainable firewood harvest that would facilitate natural regeneration.

The evaluation was commissioned to primarily:

- assess the impact of the firewood project in addressing the problem of sexual violence in the Dadaab area;
- assess the environmental and economic consequences of the project, as well as its impact on social relations between and within refugee and local populations;
- assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the project;
- make recommendations concerning the future of the project and the establishment of firewood distribution projects elsewhere where women are at risk of sexual violence.

Most, if not all of these issues have been subject to extensive debate since the project was first conceptualised. Some of the main evalua-

tion findings are outlined below. The full report will shortly be available online at the EPAU site on www.unhcr.org

Project Goals and Objectives

The evaluation indicates that the distribution of firewood is not easily justified strictly on environmental grounds. Similarly, no analysis was done prior to project start-up that would indicate that firewood provision was necessary to avert local conflicts and tensions.

Identifying the project as an environmental initiative resulted in its classification within UNHCR as an environmental rehabilitation and energy management project, and the selection of GTZ as implementing agency. This resulted in confusion about the kinds of indicators that needed to be monitored, and

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how project success should be judged.

Environmental rehabilitation remains an important activity for UNHCR to carry out in Dadaab, but this should continue to be the focus of the RESCUE project, and not the Firewood Project. There are insufficient grounds for continuing to focus on firewood supply as an environmental rehabilitation and energy-management exercise. Financial resources allocated to this project should therefore be reallocated towards its primary social and protection objectives – the reduction of rape – and the project classified and managed within UNHCR as a community services/protection initiative.

Logistical Emphasis of the Project

Firewood is the only locally purchased commodity distributed to the Dadaab refugees. In a resource-poor area such as this, it was inevitable that local contracting for the collection and transport of wood would become a highly politicised and complex logistical exercise. As a consequence of the time and resources spent mediating local interests and stakeholders, the project has not really been envisioned and managed by UNHCR and GTZ as primarily a social and community initiative. In this respect also, the mix of objectives have not helped project implementers understand the priorities among its goals and objectives, or how they should monitor and measure project success.

Stakeholder Consultation

The evaluation judged that the outcomes of a Project Design Workshop in January 1998, remain

relevant and appropriate. This participatory meeting advocated wood-for-work and wood to vulnerable persons as the primary foci for firewood distribution, as well as the development of the project on a trial basis to permit time for its impacts to be measured and adjustments made.

This said, however, the evaluation noted that the cautious and sustainable approach which emerged from the workshop was quickly eroded, and replaced by ever-increasing demands on the part of UNHCR staff, refugees and local contractors for larger proportions of free firewood supply, as “the solution” to rape. Instead of fostering community involvement, initiative and shared responsibility in the problem of rape, it has re-enforced the notion that firewood supply and sexual violence are problems UNHCR can solve alone. A revitalised participatory and co-operative approach is needed to address issues of rape in and around Dadaab refugee camps.

Baseline Data Collection and Monitoring

While much recognition was given to the importance of baseline data and monitoring, particularly in the Design Workshop and early project documents, baseline studies were carried out too late to affect the project design and mode of operation. Insufficient monitoring was also done with respect to the objectives of the project, and about the mechanisms through which they were intended to operate.

The recommendation of the baseline study, that the logistics of firewood supply/distribution and monitoring of its impacts be carried out by separate implementing agencies, was not followed – to the detriment of monitoring.

Impact of the Project on the Frequency of Reported Rape

The evaluation cautions against a widely expressed view that the Firewood Project has been highly successful in reducing the incidence of reported rape of women and girls while collecting firewood. This conclusion is generally based on the decrease in reported rapes following the first firewood distribution – late July 1998.

An attempt was made to examine the differences in the frequency of firewood-related rape observable between periods when households were fully supplied with firewood and periods when they were not. Such an analysis demonstrates a decrease of 45 per cent in firewood collection rapes during periods of full firewood coverage. However, these periods also see an increase (of 78-113 per cent) in rapes in other locations and contexts. It is therefore difficult to conclude that firewood provision is a wholly successful rape prevention strategy. Findings suggest that firewood collection provides a convenient context or location for rape, but should not be viewed as its “cause”.

Better Targeting of the Project

The “life-line” distribution model – where the amount of wood distributed is determined by household size – employed by the project does not adequately address the needs of women most at risk of rape related to their firewood collection. The analysis carried out by the evaluators (as well as other independent consultants and other organisations) highlighted the

(Continued on page 8)

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need to properly assess the differential risk factors facing refugee women and girls. These findings are consistent with UNHCR official guidelines which draw attention to the particular vulnerabilities of unaccompanied minors, women-headed households and other vulnerable segments of the refugee population, and the need for special measures to protect them.



Firewood collection

An understanding that “firewood gathering in the bush” provides an opportunity for rape to be perpetrated, but is not the “cause” of rape (as demonstrated by the evaluation findings) suggests that the project should have been structured towards better targeted and co-ordinated initiatives to reduce the rape of refugee women in Dadaab by identifying and assisting those most at risk *wherever* such incidents occur.

Cost-effectiveness of the Project

The evaluation has demonstrated that the firewood project is very costly relative to the proportion of firewood consumption supplied – about 11 per cent of household firewood consumption since July 1998 – and the cost of meeting

other basic refugee needs. Sixty-eight per cent of rapes continue to be perpetrated while women are collecting firewood, despite the existence of the firewood project.

Future Directions

Given the high cost of an agency-run firewood supply programme, the possibility of assisting more women to buy wood on the market while allowing market forces to take care of increasing the supply has been insufficiently considered. The provision of wood purchase tokens to vulnerable women and a wider application of small-scale income generation opportunities for women who currently have no choice but to collect firewood for sale, both go in this direction.

Broader wood-for-work opportunities for women who do not collect for sale but cannot meet all their firewood needs through purchasing it, would further reduce firewood collection trips by women and girls.

Strategies Addressing Rape In Broader Context

While the project has reduced the incidence of rape during periods when households are fully stocked with firewood, the evaluation found a concomitant increase in non-firewood related rape during the same period. This implies a strategy that focuses on the broader context of rape, violence, and insecurity of women and girls, rather than simply addressing one location and opportunity for rape. It implies particularly, a focus on increased security within and around the camps, as well as on the identification and bringing to justice of perpetrators of rape. Such a focus requires greater efforts and resources be directed at increasing community awareness and responsibility for the security of women and girls. Savings from a

reduction in firewood procurement should be channelled to these activities.

Need for Longer Term Approaches

No long-term and sustainable solution to the problems of rape and other forms of violence in the area will be possible without a serious challenge to the cultural characteristics and practices that perpetuate them. Firewood distribution has been justified as a technical fix, but cannot be effective without committed work by and within the refugee community to change its behaviours in the face of the elevated risks to its most vulnerable members.

While the evaluation has been critical of the current design and implementation of the Firewood Project in Dadaab, the primary objective it was intended to address – the rape of women and girls – continues to be a concern and problem that needs to be addressed. Given the limited resources available to UNHCR, a primary concern of the evaluation was that the results were not used as a justification simply for cuts to the current budget for Dadaab. Rather, these resources should be used to maximise the benefits related to prevention of rape and the protection of refugee women and girls. After a necessary review of the design of the current project, resources currently allocated to the project should be retained as a basis for improved and better co-ordinated programming directed at rape prevention and reduction.

**Compiled from
an Evaluation Report
by CASA, Canada**

Environmental Coordinators Meet

An environmental brainstorming meeting was organised by EESS at the Regional Service Centre (RSC), Nairobi, on 8 February 2001. Participants included programme staff and environmental coordinators/focal points from ten countries – Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. EESS, the RSC and UNESCO PEER were also represented.

The main purpose of the meeting was to address organisational questions of environmental policy, implementation and co-ordination. Specific objectives of the meeting were:

- **Familiarisation:** to learn about EESS (in particular the environmental management services it provides), the RSC and the types of support offered by each to country programmes;
 - **Exchange:** to share information and experiences on environmental issues, both between countries and between programme staff and environmental specialists present at the meeting; and
 - **Needs Assessment:** to identify any needs, suggestions or recommendations from country programmes for better implementation of UNHCR's environmental policy.
- The meeting yielded an open and frank discussion on a broad range of issues. While a full account of the meeting can be obtained (please request from krausing@unhcr.org) the main suggestions emerging from the meeting – which EESS will now address – were the needs to:
- promote stronger environmental networking and improve communications between countries;
 - provide a back-stopping service "on demand" for country programmes;
 - revise certain sectoral environmental guidelines and pro-

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Reader's Corner



*Mr. Bushra El-Amin
Mohamad Ali, Sudan*

Congratulation for the impressive and informative "Environment in UNHCR" journal. I really enjoyed reading in one sitting all the articles in the Vol. 5 number 2 issue.

From the first lines written by Ms. Ogata, I felt interested, sensing that it was expressing my feelings. As you know, I have been working in the Sudanese refugee programme for the last 19 years, addressing issues of agriculture (self-sufficiency) and environment – especially the impact of illicit cutting of trees by refugees to cover needs for wood for domestic fuel and other needs. I fought to make the environmental message clear and considered. This is really what your journal has accomplished.

The articles inside were diversified and gave global examples, where lessons are clearly understood. This approach helps all stakeholders related to refugee issues use the solutions to overcome the degradation of the environment – and to help refugees benefit from a better livelihood in the most cost-effective way.

The article on training really touched the key factor behind all causes, effects and solutions. People in different categories of communities need specific and balanced doses of training, so the ideas you mentioned are terrific.

But I did miss hearing any voices of asylum or from donor countries. They have to have a chance to express their views and suggestions on how to sustain the safe and dignified well-being of refugees. So please do your best to make this true!

***Bushra El-Amin Mohamad Ali
Advisor on Environment
Commissioner for Refugees***

(Continued from "Environmental Coordinators meet" page 9)

- duce additional new guidelines;
- continue useful training programmes – directly at the regional level and, where possible, in support of national/local environmental management workshops;
- provide practical and technical assistance in specific activities – especially project identification and development, assessment and monitoring, and training;
- assist with mainstreaming environmental issues into other sectors;
- co-ordinate regional strategies

to provide a comprehensive overview of environmental issues and concerns ; and

- continue to organise meetings such as this to help maintain an effective network of communications and information sharing.

Bringing Environmental Education to the Fore – Networking in Africa

Examining the Past

A two-day workshop in Nairobi (6-7 February) focused on the application of environmental education (EE) in refugee situations. The event was attended by UNHCR and implementing partner staff from ten countries in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and West Africa.

The workshop, the first of its kind, was in response to the growing recognition of the importance of EE in re-



Participants in the Nairobi Environmental Education Workshop

s o u r c e / environmental management in refugee situations. Working in collaboration with UNESCO PEER¹, EESS supports the Refugee and Returnee Environmental Education Programme (RREEP), based in Nairobi. Since this initiative began in 1996, the Programme has assisted a number of Branch Offices in the development of EE projects – both school-based and non-formal/community-based.

The main workshop objective was information sharing about country experiences in implementing EE projects. Staff from six countries presented overviews of respective projects. Lessons learned and possible solutions to problems were identified through lively discussions.

UNHCR staff included those from countries (including Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi) which are introducing EE in their country programmes.

As a result of the workshop, new initiatives are being planned in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia – while many existing ones will be strengthened.

Workshop proceedings are available on request from EESS. UNHCR offices considering incorporating EE into programme activities are invited to contact EESS for further information (stone@unhcr.org). This includes the range of assistance and services provided both by EESS and the Refugee and Returnee Environmental Education Programme of UNESCO PEER.

New Initiatives

EESS, in collaboration with the

RREEP, is currently working on a number of projects to improve the quality of EE in refugee situations. These include:

Monitoring and Evaluating Environmental Education

In December 1999, EESS organised a small, informal working session on the development of indicators as a monitoring tool for environmental projects. The event was attended by the

(Continued on page 11)

¹Programme of Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction

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RREEP Co-ordinator, as the identification of indicators for monitoring EE was one of the issues discussed in detail. In response to the need to assist UNHCR in monitoring the progress of EE projects, RREEP has developed a handbook designed to assist UNHCR, its implementing partners, and UNESCO PEER in monitoring formal EE projects. The handbook not only includes the instruments for monitoring (questionnaires, observation guides and the like), but also spreadsheets into which data are recorded. The handbook is currently being tested in Djibouti but it is envisaged that it will be further piloted in other countries before being published. A similar handbook for non-formal EE projects will be developed shortly.

Since the application of indicators is required by UNHCR's Operational Management System

(OMS), the RREEP and EESS is currently working on streamlining the key indicators emerging from the OMS handbook, with a view to integrating the monitoring of EE into UNHCR's standard reporting procedures.

Focal Point Handbook

The application of EE as a tool for environmental management is relatively new to UNHCR. The RREEP and EESS are therefore developing an introductory handbook on EE for intended users – staff in both UNHCR and its implementing partners. The handbook describes the ways in which EE can be applied and the range of techniques/approaches involved. It is hoped that the handbook will help Branch Offices decide how they can apply EE in their programmes. The draft handbook is about to be reviewed in a number of countries prior to publication.

Future Directions

In collaboration with the RREEP, EESS is working on a number of EE projects to broaden the range of its services/resources to Branch Offices. These include:

- an environmental science module for primary schools;
- an environmental awareness-raising package for use in emergency phases;
- a series of games with EE themes;
- a distance education teacher-training module for EE; and
- an extra-curricular Environmental Club package.

EESS and UNESCO PEER invite inputs, comments and relevant experiences from field offices on these projects.

Chris Taylor
Co-ordinator, RREEP

Permaculture in Refugee Settings

What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems that provide food, energy and shelter and fulfil other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. It is an old concept, rooted in traditional, indigenous knowledge.

While it deals with soil, plants, animals, water, buildings and infrastructure at one level, it is really about the relationships that can be created between these elements by the specific ways in which they are placed in the landscape.

Refugee camps tend to be designed as an assemblage of isolated elements such as roads, schools, hospitals or water supply systems – whereas permaculture would integrate all of these elements carefully from the start.

UNHCR, through the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), a Zimbabwe-based non-governmental organisation, is developing and promoting permaculture designs in and around the Tongogara refugee settlement, Chipinge, in the eastern part of Zimbabwe. Started in 2000, the project follows the emphasis in UNHCR's 1996 *Environmental Guidelines* on food

security, environmental security, enterprise development and social stabilisation.

From an initial, tailored, training programme, refugees and local farmers are learning about the philosophy of permaculture and its approach to land use, and have begun to develop their own land designs for sustainable human environments. Interest was so high that within three months of the training programmes all participants were practicing permaculture within the camp. Each garden has a different design, adapted for soil and water con-

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ervation and nutrient concentration and the entire camp has been transformed into a green area with vegetables and herbs, especially lavender, lemon grass and marigolds. As well as meeting their vegetable needs throughout the year, some participants have been able to sell vegetables to neighbouring communities and in Harare.

Seeing is Believing

Income-generating activities derived from the project include soap-making, bee-keeping, jam-making and organic cotton growing. One refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo has even set up a soap-making business – making a monthly profit of more than Z \$3,500 (US\$70). Five people are employed part-time to press oil, manufacture the soap and sell the products in Chipinge.

As a result of this initiative, many *Jatropha* trees are being planted in and around homesteads in an attempt to get more oil and hence more soap for sale. While project participants derive oil from the *Jatropha*, it is also suitable for hedgerows around gardens or fields. The oil can also be used as a fuel, in the same way as paraffin. In the long term, the tree's medicinal properties will be explored.

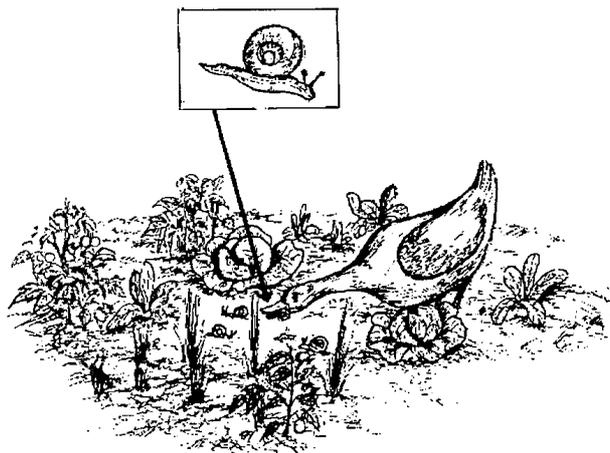
The presence of small animals is an integral part of permaculture design, providing manure for composting and helping to control vegetation and pests. One refugee from Burundi who started rearing ducks, dug a pond inside his gar-

den. Since then, the ducks are reported to be producing twice as many eggs as before. They also help to control garden pests.

Follow-up assessments show that more than 70 per cent of the participants now practice energy-saving techniques such as pre-soaking beans, removing fuel during simmering, preparing ingredients in advance and keeping pots blackened.

Sharing Information

To disseminate project outcomes, two project newsletters have been produced with articles in the local vernacular, English, Shona, Swahili and French. All of the stories were written by refugees and farmers. A project video summarising the process of participatory



Ducks as slug removers

planning and training is currently being edited. A permaculture refugee manual has also been produced and is available for further information.

Look-and-learn tours were organised to the Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre and Anna Brazier Forestry Garden in Harare to help participants appreciate the benefits of permaculture – both to the environment and human livelihoods.

Progress and Challenges

At the beginning of the project, most refugees and farmers depended heavily on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Now, however, as “permaculturalists”, they have slowly switched to organic fertilizers and natural pest management.

Apart from a few constraints, the project has been a resounding success. Despite the short time it has been operating, and the disturbances caused by cyclone Eline, the project has contributed a great deal to sustainable management of natural resources in the refugee settlement and surrounding areas. In less than a year, project participants’ livelihood options have been diversified and strengthened. The project has also increased people’s capabilities to envision strategies for securing the livelihoods of themselves and their families.

One key challenge is to improve the system for catering for new arrivals. Lack of proper early training and awareness raising on permaculture specifically, and environmental management in general, can suddenly reverse the gains already made by longer-staying refugees. The eagerness of the newcomers to embark on permaculture designs in their gardens well before they are trained, however, clearly demonstrates their commitment to fend for themselves.

Owen Shumba
Permaculture Project Coordinator, SAFIRE

ENVIRONMENT

IN BRIEF



« *Safeguarding the environment is one of the foundations of peace and security* »

**Kofi A. Annan,
Secretary-General
of the United Nations**

☞ The next **Regional Environmental Management Training Workshops** for UNHCR and implementing partner staff are being prepared. The first of these is likely to cover the Horn of Africa, while the venue for subsequent workshops is still being examined. For more information, please contact krausing@unhcr.org

☞ Building on the success of the first phase of a project in **Afghanistan** aimed at raising awareness of environmental issues and introducing innovative techniques for saving domestic energy, EESS has agreed the continuation of this project – with the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation. New activities being introduced include the use of micro-hydro plants to provide returnee groups with electricity. More details are available from M. Masoom Stanekzai, Managing Director, AREA (area@pes.comsats.net.pk)

☞ **Raising awareness of environmental issues** at the earliest possible stage of a refugee operation is essential. To assist with this, EESS and UNESCO PEER are devel-

oping a series of non-formal environmental awareness-raising materials. These will be tested in various countries and situations before being finalised and issued. For more information, contact Chris.Taylor@unesco.unon.org

☞ **New Guideline:** In collaboration with CARE, EESS is developing a Handbook for Promoting Sound Agricultural Practices in Refugee Operations. Expected late 2001, the Handbook will document best practices and provide guidance on how to promote and practise sound natural resource management in sectors most relevant to our work.

☞ **Just Published:** Together with the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources, Zimbabwe, EESS has just published *Permaculture in Refugee Situations: A Refugee Handbook for Sustainable Land Management*. Copies can be obtained from EESS.

☞ **Promote Your Work:** To draw attention to the experiences – good and bad – stemming from environment-

related projects and activities, EESS is producing an informal series of Briefing Papers. The first issue describes the approaches taken to developing and implementing Model Projects in Sudan, and the results of this work so far. Forthcoming Papers deal with environmental management in Djibouti and environmental education. For more information, please contact stone@unhcr.org

☞ **Practitioners Workshop 2001:** To facilitate and promote exchange of information and best practices learned from field experiences, EESS is convening a workshop in October 2001 to bring together some of its key implementing partners and staff from the field. More details of the workshop are available from EESS: please contact stone@unhcr.org

☞ **Feedback Please:** We are always interested in receiving your comments on *Environment in UNHCR*, as well as contributions to future editions. Thank you.

Key Environmental Publications

- The following key environment publications are available upon request. (As some of our publications are currently under revision, only one copy of each publication will be available).

TITLE	YEAR	LANGUAGE
ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES	1996	ENGLISH
PRINCIPES DIRECTEURS EN MATIÈRE D'ENVIRONNEMENT	1996	FRENCH
DIRECTIVAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE	1996	SPANISH
UNHCR ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES: DOMESTIC ENERGY IN REFUGEE SITUATIONS	1998	ENGLISH
UNHCR ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES: FORESTRY IN REFUGEE SITUATIONS	1998	ENGLISH
UNHCR ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES: LIVESTOCK IN REFUGEE SITUATIONS	1998	ENGLISH
ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLIER PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES	1997	ENGLISH
REFUGEE OPERATIONS & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT - SELECTED LESSONS LEARNED	1998	ENGLISH
OPÉRATIONS D'AIDE AUX RÉFUGIÉS & GESTION DE L'ENVIRON. – QUELQUES LEÇONS APPRISSES	1998	FRENCH
REFUGEE OPERATIONS & ENVIRON. MANAGT-KEY PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION-MAKING	1998	ENGLISH
OPÉR. D'AIDE AUX RÉF. & GESTION DE L'ENVIRON. – PRINCIPES CLÉS POUR LA PRISE DE DÉCISION	1998	FRENCH
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT WITHIN REFUGEE OPERATIONS - TRAINING MODULE	1999	ENGLISH
EVALUATION OF ENERGY SAVING OPTIONS FOR REFUGEES: SOLAR COOKER, ETHIOPIA	1998	ENGLISH
EVALUATION OF ENERGY SAVING OPTIONS FOR REFUGEES: GRASS BURNING STOVE, TANZANIA	1998	ENGLISH
EVALUATION OF ENERGY SAVING OPTIONS FOR REFUGEES: GRASS BURNING STOVE, UGANDA	1998	ENGLISH

- Should you wish to receive the full list of technical publications available in EESS, please request this from Evelyne Raisin (E-mail: raisin@unhcr.org – Fax 00 41 22 739 7371 – Tel 00 41 22 739 8553 or mail: UNHCR/ EESS-TS01, Case Postale 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Dépôt).

Contact us:

« ENVIRONMENT IN UNHCR » – formerly the EESS ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSLETTER – is issued twice a year. French and Spanish versions are also available.

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