



# Environment in UNHCR

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## focus on Development...

**I**n a plenary presentation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, UNHCR highlighted the inextricable links between refugees and the environment, urging governments to see refugees not as a threat, but as "agents of development".

Outlining the relationship between refugees and development, Ms Bemma Donkoh, UNHCR Regional

Representative in Pretoria, said, "Lack of development contributes, to varying degrees and in various ways, to refugee outflows. The prospect of development makes return to one's country of origin more attractive – basic development initiatives can anchor that return in a climate of hope."

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## FEEDBACK PLEASE

We are always interested in receiving your comments on **Environment in UNHCR**. While primarily focussing on environment-related issues in UNHCR's programmes, we are also interested in receiving articles from other agencies. Thank you.

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## NEWS TO & FROM THE FIELD

### Environmental Indicators A Monitoring Tool Whose Time has Come

**A**s UNHCR increasingly focuses on environmental impacts in refugee and returnee situations, a clear need has arisen for a system to measure the effectiveness of its environmental support programmes. In response, the Engineering and Environmental Services Section (EESS) has identified a series of environmental indicators to provide the basis for systematic data gathering, analysis, monitoring and evaluation.

The objectives of the initiative are two-fold: (a) to determine the progress of environment-related activities supported by UNHCR, and (b) to introduce a standardised system of monitoring and evaluation for environmental activities.

### What is an Indicator?

An indicator is a measurable sign of change towards the achievement of results. Two levels are recognised in UNHCR's Operational Management System, 2001: "Impact" and "Performance". Impact Indicators, set at the objective level, are signs of behavioural change in and impact on beneficiaries and their welfare, systems, institutions or proc-



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## NEWS TO & FROM THE FIELD (CONTD)

Performance Indicators, which are set at the output level measure performance towards the achievement of planned outputs, can be quantified and/or qualified and may be revised within a foreseen timeframe.

In order to assist field operations in implementing a systematic monitoring process, a ‘Score Card’ System has been developed. Each Score Card includes several key components such as a rationale and objectives, which help in understanding the background and importance behind a given indicator. Key issues to be considered in connection with the implementation of each indicator are given and suggestions on recording and data management are included. Suggestions for interpreting Score Card results are provided to ensure a clear and standardised understanding of the final results.

### HOW TO INTERPRET SCORE CARDS

Score Cards are made up of various elements, the main components being:

**A1, B2...**

Indicator reference

**Rationale and Objectives**

Justification

**Guidelines**

Key issues to consider for each indicator

**Methods to be Applied**

How to record and manage data

**Data Interpretation**

Suggested means of examining data

**Data Analysis**

Scores can be quantitative and qualitative

### Where are Indicators Applicable?

Environmental concerns related to refugee influxes are increasingly becoming part of the political agenda. The sudden arrival of large numbers of people in host countries and the lengthy periods that they are sometimes obliged to spend there, has given rise to concerns over the capacity of local environments to withstand the increased pressures placed upon natural resources. Particular

attention therefore needs to be given to monitoring local environmental conditions where refugees are present so that steps can be taken to ensure that environmental support work is carried out in the most effective means possible.

The Score Cards are designed to assist with response, planning and implementation of UNHCR-supported environmental activities. The long-term monitoring of indicators will allow UNHCR to demonstrate strengths and weaknesses to concerned agencies and partners, as well as identify areas requiring further input and attention. As a result, UNHCR will be in a much better position to maximise the benefits of its human and financial resources in the field.

### Who is Involved?

The Score Cards are purposely designed to be applicable to a wide range of users. The simple and straightforward data collection and analysis methods outlined for each indicator are designed to be easily understood and used by non-technical staff as well as environmental specialists. Pilot tests have shown that, with some training, staff from UNHCR and Implementing Partners can easily adapt the monitoring framework to their working environment and train refugee leaders in proper data collection methodologies. Efforts have also been made to ensure that the Score Card conforms to the technical knowledge and capacities of all interested users.

Within UNHCR, the Score Card methodology is intended to facilitate three levels of users: field officers responsible for day-to-day execution and monitoring of environmental projects implementation; managers; and headquarters staff interested in individual camp or settlement scores and overall country programme performance.

Similarly, results from improved environmental monitoring will benefit stakeholders involved in the management of natural resources including implementing partners, host gov-

### WHY USE INDICATORS?

There is a clear need for a simple, yet comprehensive, system of monitoring and evaluating environment-related interventions in refugee-related operations. The collection of performance indicator data can help explain project results and understand those factors which influence project impacts and performance.

The indicator framework developed by EESS will therefore serve to enhance ongoing project and programme management through the analysis of emerging environmental programme trends and influence the design of new activities. Ultimately, systematically collected and analysed indicators will enable UNHCR to report more convincingly to governments and donors both on project performance (efficiency) and programme impact (effectiveness).

ernments and local communities.

### How can you Participate?

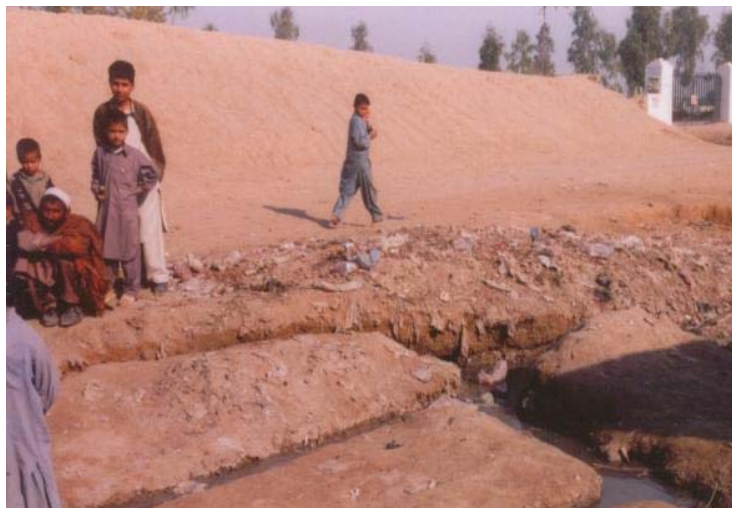
Having tested this approach in several field situations, EESS is currently seeking to expand the scope of this initiative from traditional environmental activities – such as those in the sectors of forestry, land use and domestic energy – to a wide range of environment-related indicators. A User Guide is available, giving worked examples for all 16 programme sectors, from procurement to agriculture and community services to livestock. To find out more, please contact [stone@unhcr.org](mailto:stone@unhcr.org).

## ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION IN DADAAB REFUGEE CAMPS, KENYA

Environmental Sanitation activities in Dadaab, Kenya are overseen by the Water and Environmental Sanitation (WatESan) sector of the CARE Kenya Refugee Assistance Project. WatESan's vision is the "use of service delivery mechanisms, techniques and installations that promote the primary health of refugees while being sensitive to the health of the environment. The end result would be a healthy environment, sustainable services and improved livelihood... in Dadaab in the short-term and at home over the long-term".

Sanitation activities include the promotion of proper hygiene practices and health education in the camps. Of special interest is the Refuse Recycling with Income Generation (RRIG) activity. Centred on the promotion of income generation activities, which

target recycling and reuse of waste, it is pegged on a simple concept: waste as a resource in the wrong place, and may be defined as a gainful activity whose purpose is to clean up the environment by reducing, re-using or recycling waste while generating income to sustain the process and supplement livelihoods.



Community involvement in camp cleanliness could benefit other situations such as former camps in Pakistan. Photo: Urs Bloesch

RRIG differs from the 3-R – Reduce, Re-use, Recycle – notion, which stops at mopping up the environment, and income-generating activities *per se*, whose goal is profitable income.

Currently the RRIG activities carried out in the Dadaab refugee camps include:

1. **Plastics industry:** polymats – made from recycled polyethylene (mainly plastic bags) waste – are woven by women groups and sold as latrine screens. Similar materials are used to make mats, baskets and caps.
2. **Paper from waste:** Paper repulping to make other paper products.
3. **Tap stand nursery:** optimisation of scarce water resources using spillage water at tap stands to set up tree nurseries and grow fruit trees and vegetables, some of which are sold or used to supplement the food basket.

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## Focus on Development...

Donkoh cautioned that "the tragedy of forced human displacement must not be compounded by further damage inflicted on the environment of those countries that so generously give a home to refugees" and pointed out that "environmental management is therefore a policy priority at UNHCR and is relevant in all phases of our work, from emergencies to restoring the environment when a camp or settlement is closed".

The refugee agency's activities, she added, are largely community-based, benefiting not only refugees and returnees, but also local people living close to camps and settlements. They are geared towards developing and enabling a sustainable livelihood for those with whom UNHCR works.

Debunking the myth that refugees are a burden to host countries and the international community, Donkoh said, "We need to see refugees not simply as the beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, but as potential contributors to sustainable development – both in their countries of asylum and upon their return home."

"Peace building, conflict prevention, and sustainable development in countries such as Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Angola, Sri Lanka, to name a few, will not be possible without the engagement of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons returning home. Their productive capacities and human capital are crucial."



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4. **Latrine woodlots:** planting woodlots of 20-30 fast-growing trees around existing and back-filled family latrines. Trees are irrigated with wastewater from the latrine slabs (which double as showers) as well as kitchen waste.

Overall the RRIg:

- a) is a cost-effective and sustainable manner of cleaning up/ managing the environment.
- b) introduces value to waste, making waste collection and disposal a deliberate and attractive option.
- c) saves on the extraction of non-renewable resource from the environment and restores certain needed balance.
- d) coalesces litter from a broad area to single units in specific locations and makes the terminal disposal process easier.

Parvin Wanjala  
Environmental Sanitation Officer,

## Raising Community Environmental Awareness, Sudan

2002 marked the official implementation of a community environmental awareness-raising project that began in Sudan in 1999.

Development of this initiative stems from the initiation in the late 1990s of a series of Environmental Demonstration Projects in selected camps and villages in this region. Environmental education, through non-formal approaches, was one of the activities requested by beneficiaries from early discussions.

As in previous years, this is being conducted through a materials development Task Force, comprising all major stakeholders. To date, the project has developed two sets of environmental awareness-raising materials, one of which has been de-

Dadaab

signed for display in public areas (schools and clinics, for instance), the other having been prepared for use by community animators. The latter series of posters, along with a narrative input from the community animator, depicts many graphic images of a village that is experiencing environmental degradation.

The narrative description of the story, used in combination with the posters are intended to generate discussion / reflection on how people regard the local environment – in this case refugees and local community groups – and promote discussion of the problems, good points and what action might be needed, taken and by whom.

The materials are accompanied by the resource manual for community animators (available in Arabic and English), and a training of community animators' manual (available in English only). For more information, please contact Valentine Ndibalema

## ...AND FINALLY

**Improved Planning:** To guide future decisions relating to the selection of sites for camps, their physical development and future management, EESS is developing a new guideline, **Environmental Considerations in the Life Cycle of Refugee Camps**. Currently being reviewed by technical experts, the guideline is expected to be completed by end-December.

Interested in environmental management issues in refugee situations? If so, please read the latest **Refugees** magazine (Number 127) - *The Environment, A Critical Time*. Editor Ray Wilkinson takes an in-depth look at some of the past and current initiatives to manage natural resources in refugee operations, describing many successful, and some less worthy, initiatives.

As part of the Framework Project for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in Refugee Operations, EESS and the University of East Anglia have developed a draft handbook on "**Participatory methods for Environmental Management in Refugee Camps and Settlements**".

Having completed a first phase of work in Uganda

and on the basis of a desk review, a second field study is now underway in Ethiopia to test and verify the approaches proposed. The final handbook is expected early 2003.

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) has just completed the first phase of a review of needs and steps to be taken to **rehabilitate former refugee areas** in two states in Pakistan. The findings are expected to lead to longer plan of action for implementation in the North-West Frontier and Balochistan states in 2003.

UNHCR, through the Africa Bureau and EESS is leading an **inter-agency mission for rehabilitation of refugee-affected areas in eastern Sudan**. With the pending closure of more than 20 camps in this region, the mission examined four main sectors: Environment, Health, Education and Water and Sanitation. The mission comprised of specialists from the Government of Sudan, World Food Programme, UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organisation, GOAL, IUCN, as well as representatives from local government and communities.