

AIDE MEMOIRE

UNCRD WORKSHOP ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

15-16 MARCH 2013

DADAAB, NORTHERN KENYA

Introduction

The Dadaab refugee camps and the environs is naturally a semi-arid area that has increasingly undergone extensive environmental degradation since the early 1990s when the influx of Somali refugees into the area started. The carrying capacity of the camps has actually been surpassed five-folds while newly arriving refugee squat outside the camp. It is precisely the overpopulation that has mainly aggravated the impacts of the ecological footprints. The decline of carrying capacity specifically is due to drought coupled with collection of firewood and wood for construction of shelter which have had devastating effects on vegetation cover; over-stocking of domestic livestock; over-abstraction of ground-water; and lack of a proper solid waste management system and sanitation. In any case the overriding issue is that there has been ever growing competition over the scarce natural resources between the refugees and the host community as well as within each group to meet their needs. The end result has been not only further degradation but also fuelling of human conflict in Dadaab.

The Capacity Building Programme for Somali Refugees in Kenya Project has prioritized the need for environmental protection including addressing energy and waste management challenges. The strengthening of the capacity of local communities and refugees to protect the environment and vegetation has therefore been underscored.

There is in addition a special focus on environmental education for school age children to provide them with knowledge, strategies and skills first to become familiar with the important link between environmental protection and sustainable human development. Secondly to embrace the relevant values and a genuine concern for the environment and the motivation for its protection and improvement.

Environmental Education for School Age Children

The rationale is that children in areas like Dadaab not only hold the biggest stake in the future but will bear most consequences of the current environmental actions that are threatening to overstretch the resilience indigenous to these areas to an irreversible ecological collapse. Additionally, considering that children will inherit the responsibility of looking after the earth, this UNCRD project seeks to enhance, inspire and enable their involvement in understanding human environment interaction in meeting their needs. It also seeks to help them understand that there are limits to the ability especially of harsh environment like Dadaab to absorb impacts or meet the human needs. It is possible for them to appreciate all this if action is taken at an early school age when the prospects are good for instilling values and positive attitudes on environment.

Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop will be to provide 30 school age children with the knowledge and skills to enable them embrace values, attitudes and commitment to protect and improve their living environment. Specifically the workshop will

- Provide the school age children with a forum for sharing views, ideas, experiences and concerns about their living environment;
- Raise awareness among Dadaab children and instill a sense of responsibility for key environmental issues and challenges in Dadaab;
- Familiarize children in the Dadaab refugee camps with the broader issue of the link between environmental protection and sustainable human development in which conflict is a key factor;
- Help the school children in Dadaab embrace relevant values and genuine concern for the environment and the motivation to actively participate in its protection and improvement;
- Develop strategies and impart skills to be used by school age children to practically care and maintain their environment.

Proposed Methodology

An output-oriented participatory methodology will be used to train the school age children in Dadaab refugee camp and host community on environmental management and conflict prevention. Resource persons will prepare lectures on themes comprising environmental management and conflict resolution to be presented relying more on the interactive style of pedagogy. The participants will use practical group work to examine cases of environmental management, basic human security issues and linkages between environment and livelihood creation. Group work assignments will be presented in plenary session with a view to formulate strategies and recommendations on environmental management issues relevant to Dadaab.