

ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES OF CAMP PHASE-OUT AND CLOSURE

A COMPENDIUM OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM AFRICA



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ACRONYMS

CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CCC	Camp Closure Committee
CCCM	Camp Co-ordination and Camp Management Cluster
CEAP	Community Environmental Action Plan
CEMP	Community Environmental Management Plan
CMA	Camp Management Agency
FNC	Forest National Corporation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NFI	non-food item
NGO	non-governmental organisation
QIP	Quick Impact Project
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

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This Compendium of Best Practice is based on the outcomes of a workshop held at the Hilton Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya from 4-6 December 2007. The workshop was organised by UNHCR, in collaboration with two of its main implementing partners on environmental management, CARE International and IUCN–International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Thirty seven participants attended the meeting, sharing their professional experiences from Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

The organisers would like to extend their thanks to all participants for their contributions and comments which have contributed towards the development of this compendium.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The process of phasing-out activities and closing a camp for displaced people, where responsibilities are clearly transferred from one agency or authority to another, is a momentous – and often fraught – process in the life cycle of camp. It is a time of great change, and one of uncertainty for many people.

The moment a camp closes effectively marks the end of a time when a host country and many host communities have graciously offered asylum and assistance to other people in need – refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). As such, it is also a time for the international community to express its thanks and gratitude to the host nation for honouring its international responsibilities, a gesture it can do through ensuring responsible clean-up and accompanied rehabilitation.

Far too often, however, camp phase-out and closure has been poorly planned and effected, if at all. There are some instances where humanitarian organisations may have been taken by surprise by the sudden return of refugees or, more commonly, IDPs. More often, however, the lack of co-ordination and information sharing between agencies, authorities and community members has meant that this is a last minute process, requiring sudden attention and action. Many examples are still found today where former camps were completely abandoned with no consideration given to clean'up, safety or rehabilitation.

This Compendium of experience – based on input from a representative selection of African experiences – draws together for the first time collected experiences on camp phase-out and closure from a particular point of view – the environment. This is not a random act.

Environmental issues constantly come to the fore in refugee and IDP operations and the environmental footprint left by humanitarian responses in most cases is quite specific. UNHCR is aware of this and, as “environment” is one of its policy priorities, the organisation seeks to take note of this and to improve its planning and responses, in this very specific case at a time when a camp may be gearing up towards closure.

Addressing significant environmental damage that may have accrued during the lifespan of a camp – both within the immediate environs as well as the broader landscape of a camp – is a necessary prelude to closing a camp and handing back responsibility to host authorities and communities. UNHCR and its partners have increasingly been engaging in this activity in recent years and it is hoped that the current Compendium of experiences will take this further and help ensure more consistent and responsible approaches to camp phaseout and closure in future.

Participants from eight African countries, as well as many international advisors and agencies have provided input to this Compendium. The main recurring issues and lessons learned from experiences on the continent are explored in more detail below. Some key, recurring issues merit special attention, including:

1. **Ownership of the camp closure process** – A lack of ownership and leadership by government and international agencies often contributes to many downstream problems of engagement, responsibility transfer and engagement in longer term development. It can also be seen as a missed opportunity for engaging in, supporting and developing national development plans.
2. **Environment and camp closure have not been seen as priorities** – Despite being a stated policy priority for UNHCR, support for environment-related interventions has been on the wane in recent years. Camp closure is probably among the lowest priority considerations in general, and from an environmental perspective in particular.
3. **Involvement of development agencies** – There are still few, if any, good examples of where development organisations (either from among the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) or the international NGO community) have proactively engaged in the camp closure process, in particular the full development sequence of activities. Part of this has in the past been the different “language” use by organizations, but this is today seen as less of an obstacle. Funding opportunities and interests seem to be a major current barrier to positive engagement at this time.
4. **Local authority and community participation** – Despite the rhetoric, there is still far too little positive and meaningful community partnership in the closure process, particularly with local authorities and host communities.
5. **Mainstreaming of environment** – The environment – and by inference links with human livelihood security – is clearly not a consistent consideration in camp management, despite many positive efforts by UNHCR, certain governments and many of UNHCR’s consistent programme partners. Policies, however, are not being translated into practice. Funding cuts often target environmental programmes early on. The actual body of environmental expertise on the ground in Africa – which hosts more displaced people than any other continent – is now dismally low and incapable of providing the required services when and where they are most needed.
6. **Lack of on-the-ground capacity** – Far too little effort has been invested over the years by UNHCR and partner organisations in creating a strong and experienced body of environmental expertise in refugee hosting and refugee producing countries.
7. **Clear roles and responsibilities** – Host governments, donors – and host communities to some extent – often have big expectations from UNHCR when an opportunity arises for camp closure. These expectations, however, are often poorly expressed at the outset, which leads to frustration, suspicion and unnecessary delays in programming and implementation. Refugees and IDPs as well as host community members are often those who suffer in the long-term.
8. **Capacity and Resources** – There is a general lack of capacity to fulfil and effectively carry out the many required, and diverse, roles and responsibilities of these processes. Resources are often extremely limited at this stage of the camp life cycle, which is unfortunate and unjust in many ways, especially as this is a vital springboard for the resuscitation of host communities’ livelihoods.

Recommendations for UNHCR

1. The environmental and infrastructure aspects of camp closure and phase-out should be incorporated into UNHCR's programming tools, guidelines/instructions and future training on camp planning and establishment.
2. Environmental management issues should be more actively and constantly mainstreamed into all phases of camp management – Emergency, Care and Maintenance and Voluntary repatriation.
3. Environmental considerations should be recognised as a core concern by the Camp Co-ordination and Camp Management Cluster (or its future equivalent).
4. UNHCR should develop a framework outlining the respective responsibilities of UNHCR, government and CMAs during camp closure and phase-out.
5. The role of UNHCR with regards environmental and infrastructure rehabilitation should be given special attention in UNHCR's guidelines and training.
6. UNHCR should ensure that a funding mechanism is created that supports environmental concerns during camp closure, and more crucially, for successful rehabilitation.
7. Rehabilitation may not allow a site to be restored to its former status: this may not even be the requirement of government or host community. All efforts should, however, be made to ensure that all major environmental concerns are addressed.
8. UNHCR should engage specialist agencies to guide the environmental rehabilitation process, basing such work to the degree possible on local community participation.
9. Environmental rehabilitation and other restoration work done in a camp/settlement, including infrastructure repair, should conform with and support the national development plan for that region.
10. A training module should be created for camp closure and phase-out, with a view to ensuring capacity building among existing and new UNHCR/CMA staff, and local government, where relevant.
11. A final audit should be completed on every camp that is closed, before responsibility is finally transferred back to the host government and community.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE SITUATION

No one can predict how long a camp established for refugees or IDPs might exist. Some might be vacated within a period of weeks or months. Others may still be there four or five decades after they were first constructed. Few, if any, situations are the same in this context, which poses a considerable problem for planners and decision-makers.

Recent years have fortunately seen a slight decrease in large-scale forced displacement across borders, but there now seems to be a growing tendency for internal displacement, particularly in Africa. This has significant impacts in the way that humanitarian organisations plan and implement response programmes. It has particular relevance to the whole issue of camp planning and management, including the latter stages of such operations when camp closure might take place.

“Camp phase-out” relates to a series of activities that may take place in the lead up to a camp actually closing, and primarily relates to the withdrawal of humanitarian assistance from a former camp location. Refugee and IDP camps are often located in relatively fragile environments, semi-arid or arid regions, or in close proximity to areas of high concentrations of biological diversity, such as national parks. As a result of the often sudden displacement of people, the carrying capacity of the local natural resource base is often overwhelmed by population increases (e.g. an influx of displaced persons) which typically results in considerable environmental degradation. This, in turn, negatively impacts the local, host populations, many who are typically heavily dependent upon the local natural resource base for their livelihoods.

Definitions

Camp phase-out relates to activities that may take place in the lead up to a camp actually closing, and primarily relates to the withdrawal of humanitarian assistance from a former camp location

Camp closure refers to those activities involved in removing the official status that recognised a particular area as a ‘camp’.

In recognition of the importance of encouraging refugee-hosting nations to continue to uphold the right to asylum, and to acknowledge the contributions that host communities provide to displaced persons in times of need, UNHCR and the broader humanitarian community considers environmental restoration and rehabilitation to be a key feature of refugee and IDP operations. To this end, UNHCR has developed guidelines for environmental activities during camp phase-out and closure. It is at the latter end of operations, however, where weaknesses have been identified in the response from humanitarian agencies, when a camp is scheduled for closure and where host communities and local authorities often face a considerable challenge of dealing with environmental issues, without the support of international funding and technical support.

1.2 A RESPONSE

While camp closure is an integral part of the whole camp management cycle, it has generally been widely overlooked in practical and planning terms. Few examples exist of responsible camp closure – where this has been carefully planned well in advance, where full consultations have taken place and where resources have been identified and made available for the ensuing handover of responsibilities.

In an attempt to address and rectify this situation, UNHCR hosted a regional African workshop on the theme of Camp Phase-out and Closure, drawing on experiences from several countries which either had been or are in the process of closing camps for refugees or IDPs. The workshop, held in Nairobi from 4-6 December 2007, brought together 37 participants working in 8 African countries to share their knowledge and experiences on this subject.



Photo: The process of closing a camp normally generates a considerable amount of non-biodegradable waste which needs to be collected, sorted and disposed of properly. Salala Camp, Liberia.

The workshop had the following objectives:

- share information on issues relating to camp closure, hand-over and environmental rehabilitation with practitioners from other countries, using experiences from refugee and IDP situations;
- review key issues and emerging challenges and see how they might be addressed;
- develop action points and recommendations for future reference and use;
- discuss an appropriate learning network among participants from the region; and
- determine how findings could be used to influence policy and programme decisions by UNHCR and Camp Management Agencies, in particular.

The workshop was an open forum for participants from selected countries to share experiences in relation to camp closure and rehabilitation, primarily from an environmental perspective. Key issues and lessons learned were discussed through specific presentations and commissioned case studies. Gaps and opportunities in this increasingly important area of work were analysed.

This Compendium records the main findings and recommendations from the workshop, organised around the four key aspects of camp closure:

- planning;
- implementation;
- environmental rehabilitation; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

1.3 BASIC OBJECTIVES OF CAMP CLOSURE

The basic objectives of closing a camp in a responsible manner are to:

- remove immediate and obvious hazards from the area;
- compensate the host communities in particular, in some appropriate manner;
- repair – to the extent possible – any serious level of environmental degradation that may have taken place; and
- leave the site in a state that would allow local people to engage directly in subsequent activities, for example agriculture if that was the land's former use.

In order to facilitate a broad understanding of some likely requirements and steps that might be possible, or required, in the process of camp closure, a number of broad and overarching objectives might be considered:

- a) develop and put in place an appropriate and responsive awareness raising and communication outreach programme;
- b) establish durable solutions for residual caseloads;
- c) create a timely, consultation-based mechanism for the handover of infrastructure and existing services to local government authorities and communities;
- d) make sure that all implementing partners and authorities are consulted and aware of what is taking place, with the view to determining their possible interest of remaining *in-situ* once the camp has been closed;
- e) plan and implement basic rehabilitation of former camp-sites – camp clean-up and environmental rehabilitation as well as possible rehabilitation of certain infrastructure, where a request has been registered for their continued use;
- f) plan and implement secondary rehabilitation of former camp-sites – a move towards development that should ideally include an aspect of livelihood security for local communities; and
- g) hand-over management of the former camp-site to local authorities or some similar form of leadership.



Photo: Timely and well co-ordinated clean-up mechanisms remove obstacles and hazards from a site. Lac Vert, DRC.

Each of the following sections will consider key issues – from an environmental point of view – highlight examples of success in previous refugee or IDP operations, and end with some lessons learned in this process. The latter represent field-based experiences from UNHCR and implementing partner staff that have been involved in camp closure.

This Compendium should be read and used in conjunction with a “Guideline on Camp Phase-out and Closure”, being prepared by the global Camp Co-ordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster.

1.4 GENERIC LESSONS LEARNED

Camp closure is of course not a new notion, but it must be recognised that this has not been addressed in a consistent or co-ordinated manner in what is probably the majority of cases to date. Some of the most frequently identified weaknesses which need to be addressed include:

- **Lack of proper planning and strategy** – including a lack of understanding of responsibilities, available resources, assets and facilities and funding requirements;
- **Need for sustained advocacy and awareness raising** – especially in the context of partnerships with communities and other stakeholders;
- **Failure to address community ownership** – which includes clarification on land and structural ownership, access rights and resources;

- **Lack of capacity** – at all levels, from community to government, and in many aspects, including for example the fact that left over equipment/infrastructure may not be compatible with local capacities;
- **Repatriation** – particularly in relation to linking this with camp closure and the safety of returnees; and
- **Timing** – seasonal and cultural considerations are often not taken into consideration and people are not consulted early on with regards decisions being taken.



Photo: Former camps from the Great Lakes crisis in the mid-1990s with remaining abandoned infrastructure still in place in 2007.

There are, however, some positive lessons also to be learned from recent experiences in particular, some of which are examined in the following sections.

2. PHASE 1 PLANNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Camp closure is a symbolic moment when a humanitarian programme, that may have run for years or decades and provided essential support to thousands or tens of thousands of people, is finally scheduled to come to an end. It is also a time of uncertainty for many people, for example in terms of what is intended for the former camp area. Host communities too may be uncertain as to what this means for them, if humanitarian assistance is being withdrawn or scaled down once refugees or IDPs have departed. In the build up to closing a camp it is often uncertain whether some people may opt not to leave: particular attention needs to be given to this issue, as some vulnerable individuals or families might require special assistance or continued protection.

From a donor or camp management perspective, camp closure should not be seen as a stand-alone entity but as a continuation and adaptation of prior camp activities. It is not, and should not be seen as, a snap decision taken by any one authority. For this reason, in addition to the amount of thought, planning and participation required for a successful camp closure programme, it is crucial to start planning and defining the camp closure programme from the earliest possible moment.

2.2 KEY ISSUES RELATING TO CAMP CLOSURE

When should a camp closure plan be developed?

Ideally, a basic camp closure plan should be developed at the onset of a refugee/IDP operation. By incorporating some basic camp closure considerations in the planning stage of camp establishment – with an emphasis on the location of infrastructure such as latrines and waste pits and possible re-use of certain buildings and services – the physical act of camp closure can be made considerably easier. Early agreement of issues such as ownership of infrastructure, a decision on rehabilitation of the site or, in some cases, compensation to land-owners is also strongly advised.

A simple strategy developed at the outset of camp establishment is often sufficient foundation for an eventual camp closure plan. In this context, it is suggested that the Camp Management Agency (CMA) – where such a structure exists – works with UNHCR and/or IOM¹ and local or regional governmental bodies to establish such a strategy, in consultation with key local stakeholders. This strategy then serves as a framework from which camp-specific closure plans can gradually be developed, as the situation evolves. It is nonetheless important that all key actors are aware of this strategy, given that the situation may change dramatically and that a camp may exist for far longer – or for less time – than anticipated.

¹ Recognition is given to the lead, tasked roles of UNHCR and IOM in responding to conflict and disasters, respectively.

Additional points which also need to be considered are that:

- given that there is often considerable staff turn-over within field operations, the existence and knowledge of a camp closure strategy becomes all the more important from an institutional memory point of view;
- working towards the formulation of a camp closure plan – which is likely to be a lengthy process – helps to ensure that, when the time for camp closure comes, all agencies, governments, local and refugee/IDP communities understand their respective roles and responsibilities, in addition to the implications of camp closure to each group; and
- the early formulation of a camp closure plan also facilitates the identification of likely funding requirements for its implementation. It is important to note that if funding for the environmental aspects of camp closure is not earmarked, then those activities will likely be impossible to implement.

Mainstream environmental concerns into camp management

Environmental concerns should be incorporated into the broader aspects of camp management during all phases of operation. A strong environmental component in camp management from the outset will help mitigate the environmental impact of the camp, and result in less drastic environmental rehabilitation needs, once a camp closes.

Ideally, a specialist environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) should be appointed to work on the environmental management aspects of camp management. Where this is not possible, the CMA may consider hiring an environmental expert to provide technical advice and help build capacity on appropriate environmental management and the development of community environmental action plans (CEAPs).

The CMA should also ensure that environmental issues are raised at inter-agency camp management meetings, and encourage all partners to plan interventions that take environmental issues into account. Additionally, the CMA should encourage and support the introduction of environmental education and environmental awareness-raising activities in the camps.

Early Consideration of Education

The provision of environmental education and environmental awareness-raising opportunities was fully supported during the life span of IDP camps in Liberia. Environmental actors felt that this significantly reduced the degree of environmental degradation in many camps and further eased the duration and costs of environmental rehabilitation.

Engage government and private landlords in planning for camp closure

While it is acknowledged that host governments differ in their willingness to participate in camp management, it is important that every effort is made to establish good working relations with the host government – both locally and nationally – from the moment when a camp is planned and established. This should ideally extend to their participation in planning for camp closure. The same applies to situations where private landlords have provided land for the establishment of camps.



Photo: Community stakeholder consultations are an essential starting point for camp phase out and closure.

The establishment of such relationships should not only smooth the planning for camp closure – as local governments can provide assistance in identifying local durable solutions and assist with identifying infrastructure for handover, for example – but they will also help ensure that national laws are adhered to and that plans for rehabilitation reflect and complement local socio-economic goals and development plans.

The timely involvement of the government in refugee/IDP operations should encourage it to be more willing to accept to take the lead in the process of camp closure. An exception to this, however, is in situations where the interests of the host government are in contrast with those of the affected population. In such situations, the needs of the displaced population must take precedence.

Planning for camp closure should be a multi-sectoral and all-inclusive process

The involvement of all stakeholders, local government, implementing partners and UN agencies should assist in the development of an equitable and participative camp closure plan. For the purposes of this document, the term Camp Closure Committee (CCC) will be used to describe this mechanism.

The establishment of a CCC should occur as soon as planning for camp closure has been initiated. The CCC is not only vital in terms of planning camp closure, but it also provides a forum where stakeholders can express concerns, understand the problems facing other groups, develop mutually agreeable local solutions – if relevant – and create agreements (e.g. for the handover of infrastructure or the provision of services from UN agencies and its partners to remaining displaced persons).

Timely, Open and Transparent Dialogue

Establishing and sustaining dialogue between humanitarian actors and government bodies and private landlords can greatly facilitate planning for camp closure. Engendering a sense of ownership of the process of the IDP operations from the outset will help ensure the positive co-operation and involvement of government and landlords.

The CCC can also serve as a platform for conflict resolution, participatory planning, the development of a sense of local ownership of the closure process, and also serve as a means of information dissemination to stakeholder groups. Essentially, this should encourage local and displaced person community participation in the implementation of camp clean-up and closure and subsequent rehabilitation. It is essential that the roles and responsibilities of each group is clearly defined and agreed upon.

It is strongly advised that development-oriented agencies and donors are encouraged to participate in this process, as they will be expected to participate in the rehabilitation phase.

Establish the time of camp closure

Deciding on a date for camp closure depends on the existence and strength of a number of *push* and *pull* factors, i.e. factors that may either encourage displaced persons to leave a camp or help them decide to remain.

Identifying the most appropriate date for camp closure is likely to be more complex in refugee, rather than IDP, situations since there is likely to be a higher level of conflict between push and pull factors, such as harvest or planting seasons, the ending of the school year, rainfall patterns, the state or preparedness of infrastructure and services in the areas of return, and so forth. It is important, however, that environmental considerations should be considered in planning for closure.

A number of – sometimes conflicting – issues may help determine the appropriate season or date of camp closure. To address these, it is important to:

- ensure that return is planned before the beginning of the planting season, preferably during the harvesting season when food prices will be relatively lower in the area of return;
- ensure that return is planned after the conclusion of the school academic year or, in the case of repatriated refugees, before the beginning of the next academic year;
- plan closure after a mass vaccination programmes has been completed, to cater for those who might require booster inoculations some time after the initial dose;
- plan the return before the rainy season in order to make transportation possible; and
- plan closure following the end of a rainy season, which makes shelter demolition easier.

Camp Closure Committee

Establishing a Camp Closure and Phase-out Committee greatly facilitated a participatory framework for effective planning of camp closure in Lango, northern Uganda. The role of the Committee included:

- identifying the best time for camp closure;
- creating an inventory of infrastructure for hand-over;
- organising assessments;
- formulating local durable solutions;
- sensitising and motivating local communities; and
- formulating and implementing camp clean-up and rehabilitation.

Be Prepared!

Agencies need to recognise that there may be certain times that are better for people to return than others, for example, when grass for thatching is available. Some members of a family may also return – at least initially – to check the situation at first hand and then eventually start planting. Once everything is in place other family members might then follow.

Agencies should also be aware of the potential risks of distributing food and non-food items (NFIs) too early as this might lead to a sudden, uncoordinated rush from the camp. It may even involve people selling their rations, which could leave them in a vulnerable situation.

Experience from IDP operations, in particular, has shown that a considerable proportion of the camp population may chose to leave *en-masse*, suddenly and with little or no notice. Events such as this can seriously interfere with plans for rehabilitation, the planned hand-over of facilities and resources, and so forth.

Each camp situation has unique characteristics that influence planning for closure

While a strategy for camp closure may exist at the national level – and possibly even at a regional level – it must be acknowledged that each camp will have some characteristics that make it unique, in terms of planning for camp closure. Guidelines for camp closure are considered to be an important contribution to the strengthening of camp closure procedures, but CMAs are likely to be forced to modify such strategies and guidelines in

order to tailor camp closure plans for any one camp. In order to help the CMAs to adapt existing guidelines and plans, it is important that environmental specialists, logisticians and infrastructure and development specialists contribute to the formulation of a camp closure plan.

A number of lessons of issues and activities that did not work in relation to planning for camp closure can be noted. These include the following.

- **No proper planning** – not observing standards at the planning stage; limited consultation; poor preparation for handover of infrastructure; little thought given to the development of an exit strategy.
- **Government not owning the process** – lack of leadership and ownership from the government.
- **Environment and camp closure not a priority** – the environment is often not treated as a priority within UNHCR, although it is touted as such; UNHCR often does not have sufficient financial and human resources dedicated to planning and implementing environmental activities; camp closure is in many cases not a priority for governments.
- **Involvement of development agencies** – UNHCR does not bring on board UN development agencies well in advance to engage in the process.
- **Community participation** – limited community participation in planning and implementation; refugees and IDPs are never fully involved in planning or undertaking restoration.
- **Mainstreaming of environment** – mainstreaming is commonly referred to in all phases of camp management, but is rarely taken on board or adhered to.
- **Clear roles and responsibilities** – often big expectations exist on the part of government and UNHCR; no clear roles between government and UNHCR in camp closure and environmental rehabilitation.
- **Capacity and Resources** – lack of capacity to carry out roles and responsibilities; inadequate resources.

Lessons learned: Planning for camp closure

- ✓ Each camp is unique and thus the adherence to generic plans for camp closure is in appropriate.
- ✓ Camp phase out and closure should be a government-led initiative.
- ✓ Harnessing community level leadership is essential to effective planning
- ✓ The camp phase out committees proved to be a useful mechanism for participatory planning
- ✓ The input from a professional environmental specialist throughout the process of phase down, closure and rehabilitation was vital
- ✓ Engaging government bodies from the onset of the IDP crisis, and sustaining these relationships greatly facilitated camp closure and rehabilitation
- ✓ The camp closure planning workshop provided a useful forum for sharing the concerns and needs of all stakeholders
- ✓ The introduction of exotic plant / tree species must be carefully considered before implementation
- ✓ Agreements with landlords for the use of land for the establishment of camps should be created at the outset and relationships should be maintained throughout the life-span of a camp
- ✓ Environmental awareness-raising is a low-cost intervention that can assist in mitigating negative environmental impacts of camp establishment
- ✓ Establishing a cluster approach to camp closure and rehabilitation can be effective,

3. PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

While thorough and participatory planning should facilitate efficient camp closure, there are likely to be a number of obstacles faced during the actual implementation of a camp closure process.

Implementation of camp closure may involve camp consolidation activities. This and other related acts in some cases are likely to involve many actors and agencies – volrep teams, protection teams, local authorities... – each having their own priorities. It is essential that all agencies understand the priorities and roles of the others and that, as a team, a camp is closed in an efficient and timely manner. From an environmental point of view, the main objective of camp closure is to make the camp area safe from all sorts of physical and biological threats.

3.2 IMPLEMENTING CAMP CLOSURE PLANS

Essential data required for effective camp closure

UNHCR and its government counterpart, as well as key implementing partners are likely to have a considerable amount of data that will support the planning and implementation of camp closure. It may, however, still be necessary for the CMA to undertake a number of specific and additional data collection exercises. These may include:

- An inventory of infrastructure for future-use or demolition which will assist in identifying those infrastructures that will continue to be used and handed over, any rehabilitation needs of infrastructure that will continue to be used, training needs for continued use and labour requirements (for buildings earmarked for demolition), or for services and their maintenance, such as water pumping stations, schools or clinics.
- Detailed camp layout maps should identify key features of the camp and show a record of the road network, and former and present infrastructures, including burial sites, water points, latrines and any other potential hazards.
- Environmental assessments should try and determine the former situation and address the current environmental status of the camp and its environs, and reflect the impact of the camp – the displaced community as well as the humanitarian agencies on the local environment.
- CEAPs, which should be initiated during the duration of the camp, should be reviewed during the implementation of camp closure, if not before. These approaches provide an opportunity to develop a participatory plan for the environment, and should guide the planning for rehabilitation.

Such additional reviews should be co-ordinated as closely as possible to avoid multiple or repeat visits and discussions with the same stakeholder groups and individuals.

3.3 CAMP CLEAN-UP

While not exhaustive, camp clean-up activities should include:

- making safe open wells, sewage systems, latrines and waste pits;
- rehabilitation of infrastructure to prevent future pollution and potential danger;
- beginning preliminary anti-erosion measures and gulley repair, if needed;
- collection and removal of any chemicals or medical waste that may require specialist disposal;
- recycling of materials, e.g. building materials and latrine slabs;
- encouraging local community initiatives for recycling tins and metal;
- systematic demolition of shelters;
- demarcation of burial sites;
- soil aeration and sorting of bio- and non-biodegradable materials;
- encouraging the adoption of environmentally-friendly practices through environmental awareness-raising, e.g. fuel-efficient stoves; and
- reconditioning roads that may have been damaged by heavy goods traffic.



Photo: A rapid assessment can be carried out once a camp has been vacated in order to determine approximate needs in terms of human resources and materials required for clean up and rehabilitation.

Sourcing of labour for camp clean-up

Wherever possible, refugee or IDP labour should be used for some of the activities relating to camp clean-up, for example the demolition of shelters, back filling of latrines or demarcating burial sites. Compensation for such work is likely to be an issue raised: good examples exist where the performance of these tasks has been successfully linked to the provision of non-food items, which may be replicated or altered to suit other situations.

Some aspects of camp clean-up may require the hiring of specialist companies. This may include the collection and disposal of medical waste and the decommissioning of latrine blocks.

If necessary, additional labour can be sought from the local communities. A number of options for payment for this labour may include

- cash for work;
- food for work;
- vouchers for work, which might relate to seeds or livestock purchase; and/or
- NFIs, which could include tree seedlings, for example, for work.

Organising camp clean-up

The CMA should assume full responsibility for arranging the necessary logistics required for camp clean-up activities, and play a pivotal role in monitoring. Aspects to be monitored include:

- identification of tasks and labour required for their completion;
- payment modalities for labour mechanisms;
- organisation of labour;
- provision of tools and personal protective equipment;
- ensuring adherence to time frames for the completion of tasks;
- hiring of specialist companies, where relevant; and
- overall monitoring and evaluation.

Hiring environmental specialists

Where an environmental specialist is not part of a CMA team, it is useful to hire an environmental specialist to assist in the camp clean-up process and, ideally, during the planning for camp closure phase. Alternatively, an environmental NGO could be hired to assist the CMA with initial preparation, consultation, planning and even implementation, in association with local stakeholders and authorities. Previous experience suggests that the hiring of an environmental specialist at such times has greatly eased, improved and strengthened the camp closure process, including relations with local authorities and host communities as well as guiding the implementation. Also for some operations a physical planner might be required to guide the rehabilitation of infrastructures.

3.4 INFRASTRUCTURE HAND-OVER

Handing over infrastructure

An important aspect of camp clean-up is the hand-over of existing infrastructure to local authorities and communities. The inventory list of infrastructure should include the state of repair and condition of buildings and services (including basic spare parts), and the identification of training required to ensure the continued use of certain services such as schools, clinics and water pumping and distribution services.

It is suggested that the identification of infrastructure for hand-over is presented in the format of an agreement between the agencies responsible for the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure, and the local authorities to which the infrastructure is to be handed over.

During the camp clean-up phase, infrastructure for hand-over should be repaired and made serviceable, and training in maintenance should be provided.

Timely Environmental Interventions

An environmental specialist was hired (through CARE International) to provide technical guidance on the environmental aspects of planning for camp closure in northern Uganda and eastern DRC. This consultancy-based work continued through the subsequent phases of camp closure and was to have had a positive impact for the environment as well as host communities.

Experience suggests that the handover of infrastructure (and the former camp-site) should be marked by a formal occasion, in order to make it explicitly clear when the responsibility for infrastructure becomes that of the local authorities. This could include the use of a formal certificate to the municipal or village leader, as a token of respect and gratitude.

Demarcating burial sites

The formal demarcation of burial sites is essential before a camp is closed, not only from an environmental protection point of view, but also from one of human respect for the deceased (and their family members). The CMA should ensure that burial sites will continue to be respected by private landlords (where relevant) and that they are explicitly demarcated.

Lesson learned: Implementing camp closure

- ✓ Involving local government already in the planning exercise in camp closure has facilitated handover, protected permanent structure from looting, and improved planning for future uses – however concerning the latter an implementation gap was observed.
- ✓ Frequent coordination meeting and task force delegation in the process of camp consolidation and closure have contributed to close camps efficiently and in time.
- ✓ Need to take seasonal timing into account. Rain slowed down mobilization of construction materials and shelter construction. Mud brick can be damaged by rain too.
- ✓ Planning camp consolidation towards the start of peak season of repatriation helps in saving financial and environmental resources as most opt to repatriate than to be relocated to another camp (10 poles vs 60 poles for construction)
- ✓ Camp clean up should be done as refugees repatriate and should not be left until closure. In the case of consolidation, the closed camp should be cleaned immediately after the movement is completed.
- ✓ Conflict resolution meetings between refugees and local communities can increase mutual understanding as well as improved community based natural resource management.
- ✓ Need to respect grave yards during camp clean up (see also UNHCR guidelines).
- ✓ Use of mud bricks in shelter construction contributes in saving trees and reducing environmental impacts.
- ✓ The need to share information with all stakeholders is critical
- ✓ Local governments need to be involved and updated during the process
- ✓ Local communities play a vital role in planning for closure / rehabilitation

4. PHASE 3 REHABILITATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The rehabilitation phase of the camp closure process is one in which efforts are made to either return the former camp area – the physical surface area of the camp as well as surrounding impacted areas – to at least some of its former environmental state, or to provide environmental management plans that assist in the land being used for an alternative purpose. The latter usually follows a direct request from the landlord or land owner(s).

Interventions at this stage are longer-term than the initial camp clean-up and many involve activities such as re-forestation, water-catchment rehabilitation, repair of gulley erosion, agroforestry and so forth. In theory, the completion of the rehabilitation phase should mark the stage at which development-oriented agencies take over activities, although the precise timing at which this handover occurs seems to vary considerably.

4.2 REHABILITATING REFUGEE/IDP-HOSTING AREAS

How long does the rehabilitation phase last?

Estimating the duration of the rehabilitation phase is problematic, since each former refugee or IDP-affected area differs in nature – its former use, the climate, the degree and expanse to which it was impacted – as may the rehabilitation plan itself. It is useful to consider the rehabilitation phase as the period in which humanitarian agencies continue to support activities in the former refugee/IDP-affected area.

Experience in eastern Sudan indicates that UNHCR continues to be involved in the rehabilitation phase five years (at the time of writing) after camp closure. There is however, likely to be a period of transition, where development-oriented agencies contribute funding and/or expertise to selected activities during this period of rehabilitation.

The spatial extent of rehabilitation

While camp clean-up is concerned with the physical confines of a camp, environmental rehabilitation extends to what may be considered to be the “environmental footprint” of the former camp, i.e. the refugee/IDP-affected area.² It would be expected, for instance, that the existence of a camp (possibly for a number of years) will have negatively impacted upon the environment surrounding the camp. Such activities that may have had a negative effect include:

- the collection of fuelwood;
- the use of wood for construction and for charcoal making;

² By inference, the environmental impacts of humanitarian organisations and government agencies are included here



Photo: Transforming a former camp back to productive land is a welcome move by host communities.

- the hunting and gathering of natural resources;
- the collection and use of local water sources for domestic purposes as well as for livestock; and
- agriculture.

Rehabilitation activities should therefore consider the broader environment and its resources. This is considered vital, since it is likely that most local communities are heavily dependent upon the local natural resource base for their livelihoods. The environment is therefore a valuable commodity, and one which must be rehabilitated in order to recompense local communities for its utilisation by refugees/IDPs. All rehabilitation activities should benefit local communities through supporting their livelihoods.

Combining Activities for Greater Success

From 1998 to 2006 a total of around 16 million tree seedlings were planted in Mtabila and Muyovosi camps and surrounding communities, and in Kibondo and Ngara districts, Tanzania. Generally firewood consumption is higher in camps located within or around forest areas. Through the use and promotion of improved stoves at for instance Mtabila camp, consumption dropped from 1.62kg/person/day in 1999 to 1.1kg/person/day in 2007.

Typical rehabilitation activities

While rehabilitation activities will differ, as a function of the particular ecosystem(s) where a camp may have been located, local population characteristics, the involvement of local authorities and so forth, the following list includes the type of activities that one may expect to consider as part of an environment-related rehabilitation plan:

- reforestation;
- gully erosion repair;
- road repair;
- watershed rehabilitation;
- building infrastructure;
- supporting income-generating initiatives;
- land tenure and access and users rights, where relevant;
- improving water and sanitation facilities and services;
- environmental education and awareness-raising;
- community outreach services in terms of sanitation, health and education; and
- school/health centre construction and provision of essential furnishings and materials.

This list is far from exhaustive, but perhaps most importantly it serves to highlight the range of specialist skills that are required for formulating a core rehabilitation team.

The role of UNHCR in the rehabilitation of former refugee/IDP-affected areas

The rehabilitation phase of a refugee or IDP operation is the link between humanitarian assistance and that of development. The role of UNHCR, at this time, is to facilitate initial rehabilitation activities and to identify additional partners for the longer-term rehabilitation process. Broadly speaking, UNHCR's roles during this phase include:

- assisting local communities and authorities with land-use planning;
- attracting additional funding/partners;
- advocacy; and
- establishing a framework through which projects can be developed, funded and managed.

The role of community participation in rehabilitation planning and implementation

It is essential that the development of rehabilitation plans for refugee or IDP-affected areas originate from the local communities. In order to ensure this, UNHCR strongly advocates for the adoption of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches. Examples of this approach include the development of CEAPs and Community Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs), both of which have many similar attributes. Guidelines supporting the implementation of this type of planning have been formulated by UNHCR and CARE International and are available on www.unhcr.org.

The creation of such plans should be considered as part of an ongoing process, subject to frequent revisions, rather than a discrete activity with a fixed time limit attached to it. Communities should be encouraged to lead the process, in terms of both determining and achieving its aims, objectives, activities as well as the monitoring process. It is likely that it will take some time before the fruits of such planning become evident, but the capacity building aspects of the approach will strengthen the communities' willingness to contribute to the process of rehabilitation.

Engage, Consult, Develop, Deliver...

An increasing body of experience supports the community-based approach advocated for environmental interventions in refugee and IDP situations. Engaging community members and other key stakeholders on an even footing in the planning, implementation and management of environment-related activities is proving to be ever more effective and appealing to many communities and countries.

A range of skills are likely to be required for planning an effective rehabilitation programme, which is likely to necessitate the creation of a team of specialists that may include:

- a co-ordinator;
- a facilitator; livelihood specialist; physical planner;
- an agriculturist, forester and environmental management expert; and
- a land rights/use expert.

Lesson learned: Rehabilitation

- ✓ In circumstances where displaced persons elect to remain, the issue of land tenure must be addressed
- ✓ Community Environmental Action Plans are an important bridge between rehabilitation and longer-term development
- ✓ Quick Impact Projects should be introduced at the same time (or before) longer-term development oriented activities
- ✓ Agro-forestry activities have directly led to a reduction in poverty (although more land should be available to increase the number of participating families)
- ✓ Practitioners in the field of camp closure and environmental rehabilitation can learn a lot from each other (field visits)
- ✓ Training on how to do the cleaning of the camp closure is important
- ✓ Recycling scrap metal resulted in economic benefits
- ✓ Backfilling huge gullies and rehabilitate them takes longer than just one year – need to start earlier
- ✓ Environmental education/awareness should be practical and adaptive
- ✓ Rehabilitate a limited number of facilities in densely populated camps – responsibility falls back on UNHCR as regards its further maintenance
- ✓ Shelter demolition should be conducted by trained crew with recycling in mind
- ✓ Relief agencies should adopt “environmental footprint” approach – e.g. WFP oil cans corrode easily and people throw them; are UNHCR plastic sheets bio-degradable?
- ✓ Important that clean-up is done before vegetation starts regrowing (e.g. rainy season)
- ✓ Resilience of tropical landscape is weakened by exotic (invasive) species
- ✓ “Rehabilitation costs could be greatly reduced when environmental considerations are integrated in camp operations from the onset”

5. PHASE 4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is important to establish a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) culture for people to understand the need for carrying out monitoring and evaluation and establish a common understanding on what it entails. Despite the importance of both of these related activities, far too little attention is given to them in practice. Possible reasons for this range from a poor appreciation of what these approaches might provide to effective programme implementation and management to a fear of being scrutinised from the outside or by one's supervisors. Nonetheless, M&E is a standard, required aspect of most environment-related initiatives supported by UNHCR.

Some progress has been recorded in recent years, but fair to say that this has occurred more at a local, ground and project level than at an institutional level. Through CEMPs and CEAPs, for example, refugee- and IDP-hosting communities have identified for themselves existing resources, challenges, solutions and required actions – by different stakeholders, including themselves, – to improve their situation. Such consultative, joint planning and monitoring ensures clear sharing of responsibilities and creates greater ownership and consequently sustainability. In the long-term, it thus ensures a shift from donor dependency towards resilient livelihoods.

5.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN PRACTISE

Overcoming the cloud cast by M&E

Starting a M&E process in many contexts can be a difficult and challenging time. Experience from eastern Sudan and other countries where CEAPs were being instigated certified this, but at the same time showed some way in which to move forward.

At one level, a Steering Committee of the key agencies – in this case the Forest National Corporation (FNC), state ministries, UNHCR and representatives from selective camps and communities – met four times a year. The Steering Committee agreed on programme targets and activities based on the camp-specific CEAPs, as well as timelines for deliverables.

In the case of Sudan, the community was then encouraged to keep records on what they had achieved. This implied that communities knew how much money had been budgeted, which gave them more insight into the whole process which, in turn, led to greater accountability on their part.

Learning from and within the community

An important, and essential, component of local capacity building in the current context is to help communities and other structures to be able to understand experience and build on their own experiences – good and bad. In this context, and as part of programme

management, having a local focal point residing within or in constant communication with that group is well advised.

Be ready to adjust

Important factors for development and success are:

- regular adjustment of project activities based on feedback and evaluation;
- feedback put into future years' activities;
- teasing out of information relevant to different groups and application of this information;
- full involvement of community to develop local monitoring tools;
- include not only quantitative indicators (e.g. number of seedlings) but also and more important perhaps, qualitative indicators such as change in community behaviour towards environmental friendly activities; and
- keeping the selection of indicators simple and appropriate so that communities can help monitoring and understand the results.

Lessons Learned

- Regular adjustment is required to projects and programmes.
- Use lessons learned as part of the feedback loop for planning next year's activities.
- Different levels of information are relevant to different groups.
- The full involvement of a community is required to develop local monitoring tools through, for example, the establishment of a CEAP/CEMP.
- Include not only quantitative indicators (e.g. number of seedlings) but also qualitative indicators (e.g. change in community behaviour towards environmental friendly activities).
- Indicators should not be complex so that the communities can help monitor and better understand the results
- Determine the actual community – refugees/IDPs and local – needs.
- Determine the trend of project activities.