



Strengthening local community capacities

Success Story



Context

Kenya has been home to a vast number of Somali refugees for almost two decades. The main refugee camps are in Dadaab close to the Kenya/Somalia border. The three camps – IFO, Dagahaley and Hagadera – have been operating since 1995 and have a total population of around 260,443¹.

There had been a limited degree of structured camp management in Dadaab since 1995. In 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) designated the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as the Camp Management Agency. UNHCR and LWF requested the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which has expertise in building capacity on camp management and coordination, to provide training to all stakeholders. From 2008–2010, NRC implemented a camp management training programme with around 900 community leaders, LWF and aid agency staff, administration police and host community members receiving training in 2009 alone. Sida contributed to funding the project, which has now closed.

Challenge

In the protracted refugee setting of Dadaab, it is important to empower communities to take some responsibility for managing their own camps and reduce their dependency on external actors. The refugees should also understand the international standards of humanitarian assistance to which they are entitled.

Solution Overview

NRC's *Camp Management Capacity Building* project trained camp stakeholders in management and coordination and has encouraged aid recipients to play a more proactive role in interacting with aid agencies and take responsibility for themselves and others in the camp community.

At a Glance

Location: Dadaab refugee camps, NE Kenya.

Goal: To train a range of stakeholders in camp management and coordination.

Challenge: To empower local communities in a protracted refugee setting and reduce the sense of powerlessness and dependence.

Solution: Empower local communities through participatory training and coaching approach.

Results: Refugees have developed self-confidence and self-reliance, believing that they can organise themselves and their camps.

¹ UNHCR Kenya Population statistics 18 January 2010.

Specifically, NRC trained camp residents, particularly women, youth, groups with special need and minorities, in the modules that comprises its toolkit. These included:

1. **Roles and Responsibilities:** Explaining that camp coordination, administration and management are separate and key functions and underlining the importance of the roles and responsibilities of community representatives (particularly accountability).
2. **Community Participation:** Explaining the concepts of dependency and vulnerability and why participation is important.
3. **Protection:** Outlining the responsibilities of different actors through group work and case studies.
4. **Technical standards:** Providing an understanding of globally defined minimum standards for different sectors.
5. **Environment:** Focusing on links between refugees and the host community, which is very important in the Dadaab context due to increasing tensions between the two communities.

NRC's training is camp based and equips participants with the tools to manage camp activities on their own. Its approach is interactive, practical and participatory. NRC has developed a coaching methodology to ensure that participants receive support to use the knowledge gained through the training. Using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, NRC facilitates groups in which community members identify problems and solutions and then develop an action plan. In Dadaab, NRC has established 5 coaching groups in each camp, for food distribution, camp planning, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), coordination and roles and responsibilities

Benefits

As a result of the training for community representatives and the coaching methodology, refugees in the Dadaab camps are self-confident and feel self-reliant, able to organise themselves and their camps. For example, the roles and responsibilities coaching group in IFO camp developed a questionnaire and consulted camp residents about what they wanted from their leaders. It then developed Terms of Reference and a Code of Conduct for the community leaders and helped to organise elections to spread the message of achieving change through the “ballot box, not bullets”. The food distribution group identified a number of challenges with existing food distributions such as the recycling of entitlement cards, theft (because the food was not given out in proper measures), overcrowding at the entrance and exit of the distribution shed and the lack of disability access. The group then engaged with the food distribution agencies and the community and was able to solve 70% of the problems identified. The SGBV group, comprising men and women, has been able to raise awareness of sensitive problems such as domestic violence and female genital mutilation and reduce their incidence.

NRC also provided a Training of Trainers so that the refugees can continue to train others after the project's closure. In IFO camp, the coaching groups have set up a Refugee Coaching Network with the motto “Make it Better”. They have created a logo of a spider's web for this, symbolising the ability to provide for themselves (because a spider is able to catch its own food). They are eager to extend their experience and expertise to others but face two main challenges. The first is movement restrictions, which is why they would like to establish a website to reach out to those in the other Dadaab camps as well as refugees elsewhere. The second major challenge is the lack of funding (since they have no income-generating opportunities) to pay Network members and finance the development of the website.

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