

# Editorial



The union of the engineering part of the former Programme and Technical Support Section with the Environment Unit in 1999 represented an important milestone in UNHCR's operations, both in Headquarters and at the field level. The combination of expertise and personal skills that constitute the resulting Engineering and Environmental Service Section (EESS) will undoubtedly provide a stronger basis from which environment-related concerns can continue to be addressed.

It is my goal, as the new Chief of EESS, to continue to further the excellent work that my colleagues have embarked on over the past years. Reflecting on the Section's work in 1999, a wide array of activities were initiated and successfully completed, including the mainstreaming of environmental concerns into UNHCR's operations through awareness raising, training and lobbying, by creating new and strengthening existing partnerships with implementing agencies, and by starting new initiatives that will only further strengthen UNHCR's position on environmental management on the ground. All of this in addition to the normal range of punctual missions providing technical support to the field.

These accomplishments have not come easily and it is due in large part to the vision, character and experience of past Special Co-ordinators on the Environment – Mr Watanabe, Mr Mori and Mr Kimura – as well as the generous support provided by a few donors, that has enabled this to bear fruition. More recently, the difficult transition of handling a new Section has been guided and managed by Mr Reinier Thiadens, who has managed to make this a natural, seamless passage. Mr Thiadens has recently been transferred to another section, but EESS will continue to build on the model work he has already outlined.

While recognizing that much has already been achieved, it would be wrong to be complacent on a job well done. This is not my intention. Facing reality, we know that environment-related concerns in refugee situations are not going to go away. We need to be ready and capable of controlling situations where we are already active, and to respond quickly and ably to emerging situations. I hope that I can count on your continued support in this quest and I look forward to working closely with you in the coming years.

*Aziz Ahamed  
Chief, Engineering &  
Environmental Services Section*

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# ENVIRONMENT IN BRIEF



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

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

UNHCR/C. Sattlberger

## UNHCR/UNEP Collaboration, Guinea

In July 1999, the UN Secretary General requested that the United Nations Environment Programme assess the environmental impact of refugees in Guinea. Draft observations and recommendations from a subsequent UNEP mission were discussed with UNHCR late January. The UNEP report can be found on [www.UNEP.org](http://www.UNEP.org).

## Uganda Workshop

Kampala, Uganda. A four-year BMZ-funded forestry and energy-saving project is coming to an end. A workshop held in Kampala discussed and recommended the way forward for environmental activities in Uganda. Lessons learned from the project will be shared with colleagues from the region.

## Assessment and Monitoring

HQ, Geneva. With partial funding from the French government, EESS is starting a new, three year initiative devoted to developing and testing methodologies for environmental assessment and monitoring techniques in the field. Initial work will focus on Guinea and Uganda. The project will involve a combination of desk research and field testing and is expected to produce a range of practical tools and guidelines for UNHCR staff and implementing partners.

## New Materials

- ⇒ Key Principles for Decision-making and Selected Lessons Learned are now available in French.
- ⇒ Don't forget to log in to the all new [EESS web site - www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org). The site will undergo further revision over the next few months to more fully reflect the broad range of activities undertaken by EESS.

## Feedback

We would like to know what you think of *Environmental News*. Please, if you have any comments, or if you would like to contribute to future editions, contact Jarl Krausing ([krausing@unhcr.org](mailto:krausing@unhcr.org)).

Uganda Workshop



Environmental As-

## Securing Livelihoods and Environmental Protection, Afghanistan

More than 20 years of war and uncontrolled resource exploitation have left Afghanistan's environment in a sorry state. Natural forests now cover less than 2 per cent of the country. Soil erosion, flash floods and landslides are more frequent and of greater intensity than before. People are noticing changes in the local rainfall pattern.

In a country where the environment is already under considerable pressure, the return of four million refugees from Iran and Pakistan has exacerbated existing problems by making the use of construction materials and fuel from forests even less sustainable. A further three million refugees remain outside the country, but can be expected to return in the coming years.

Working with the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan, and with funds from the Environmental Earmarked Funds, UNHCR is supporting protection and rehabilitation measures in returnee areas. Among the objectives of this work, which focuses mainly on Nangarhar and Kabul provinces, is to:

- establish 17 private tree nurseries;
- supply environmentally sound building materials to 620 households;
- introduce biogas technology for 45 pilot households;
- develop a waste management scheme that will contain a commercial composting scheme; and
- commence awareness raising activities with some 20,000 children in 20 primary schools.

In tackling these particular challenges, lessons from UNHCR's past experience will be taken into account, for example, the fact that rapid interventions based only on short-term, relief-oriented approaches may adversely affect people's longer-term capacity to cope with their situation as returnees. Local communities will also be supported to enable them to better deal with their own problems.

It is hoped that this approach, as well as the fact that beneficiary communities will contribute manpower, land and finances, as necessary, will help ensure sustainability of these initiatives and generate a positive sense of project ownership.

*Jarl Krausing*  
Associate Programme Officer  
(Environment)

## Skills for Life, Liberia

### A Country in Suspense

In a country that has been heavily impacted by a seven-year civil war that only ended in 1997, environmental consideration has not featured high on the agenda.

The 1990s will be remembered here as the years of civil war. Even today, some 90,000 refugees, mainly from Sierra Leone, remain in Liberia. Internal security problems have meant that many of these refugees have been forced to move from one site to another on more than one occasion, with

visible impacts on the environment.

Experience is showing that it is, however, prudent to pay attention to environmental management issues at the earliest possible moment in refugee operations. Liberia has much to gain from managing its natural resources, which represent one of the country's main sources of revenue. To date, however, virtually no support has been provided to environmental activities with refugee populations, but that is about to change.

### Catching the Momentum

During a decade of transience, practically no environmental work was attempted with refugee populations, as relief assistance focussed on life-saving priorities. Nonetheless, significant environmental damage was incurred as a result of forced and multiple movement. This was compounded during the years of conflict. According to refugees, even though some were aware that they should have left more trees standing, they were forced to cut everything in their immediate surroundings as it

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was too dangerous to venture far from camps due to rebel activity.

The current internal security situation in Liberia has provided an opportunity for BO Monrovia to launch an environmental project for refugees and communities in host areas – the *Refugee Environmental Action Programme*.

Designed and implemented by the Environmental Foundation for Africa, an important part of the project's philosophy is that skills learned by the refugees should be transferable to their home communities. In this instance, most of the refugees are from a rural agricultural background, and many continue to practice their traditional techniques in and around the camp areas – albeit in an environment of much higher population densities. Attitudes and ideas therefore need to be modified in the short term, but any skills learned should also be applicable for future application when these people return home. In this respect, refugee camps can act as learning centres, providing a great opportunity for efficiently educating many people.

practical schemes for environmental management are central to the Refugee Environmental Action Programme. Education, through community workshops and facilitated discussion, focuses on environmental issues such as the relationship between sanitation and water pollution, methods of erosion mitigation, the needs to properly dispose of waste, fuel conservation and similar activities. Links to protection and women and children's rights – core UNHCR policy issues – are central to the education sessions.

Specific activities being undertaken include the construction of 5,000 improved stoves by community members, and the raising, planting and care of 50,000 seedlings. Agricultural techniques are also being improved as current techniques are not suitable for the refugee camp environment. It is envisaged that at least 50 per cent of the targeted population will be encouraged to modify and improve their current agricultural practices.

## Approach

Environmental action in this region is important and a regional approach could be usefully followed as a planning concept. However, the situation varies from one country to another and depends very much on the level of access to refugees for monitoring, and the availability of locally competent implementing partners. Action taken needs to be manageable and modest – focussing on refugee and host community awareness and supporting their acknowledgement of the environment and how it affects their lives – and developing simple techniques to do something about it.

*Jonathan Andrews,  
Technical Co-ordinator, UNHCR  
BO Monrovia*

Developing educational and **Need for a Broader**

### Looking to the Future

The Refugee Environmental Action Programme builds on a community-based environmental initiative in Nimba county, east-central Liberia. By limiting environmental degradation, the programme will help create a more favourable acceptance of refugees in Liberia, which could be highly significant with regards to any future population movements within, or from outside, the country. The camps may also be viewed as potential learning centres where large groups of people can be educated in a way that will eventually benefit their own country, as it is expected that the refugees will one day return to Sierra Leone.



# ***Integrated Approaches for People and the Environment, Sudan***

Started in 1997, the Hawata Model Project is designed to demonstrate the benefits of integrating environmental management with social concerns in the Hawata settlement and adjoining village of Khalifa, eastern Sudan.

Project implementation is carried out by the Forest National Corporation, in association with the Commissioner for Refugees, Sudan. An evaluation of the project in 1999 brought to light many important lessons which, in addition to contributing to future implementation of this project in Sudan, may find relevance elsewhere.

## ***Delayed implementation can undermine the impact of a time-bound project***

Delays with project start-up or an interrupted cycle of implementation can cause serious disruption and delays to activities such as tree planting which are dependent on the weather.

## ***The purpose and intended management framework of the project must be clearly explained***

Intended participants and beneficiaries, as well as staff from UNHCR, implementing agencies, and the government, must be informed about the project from the outset. A response mechanism should be set up that enables input and feedback from refugees and local people to the Project Team, and *vice versa*.

## ***Project implementation should not be rushed***

As some of the techniques and practices being introduced might be new, a period of confidence building is essential between the Project Team and target audiences. Project Team members themselves must be familiar with the techniques being promoted. Such techniques should be thoroughly tested in each situation before being introduced to refugee or village groups.

## ***For lasting benefits, the mode of project implementation is possibly more important than the level of funds or time invested***

The implementing agency must be competent in all of the activities being suggested and must be well positioned to promote and replicate these activities. In circumstances where the selection of implementing agencies is limited, it is best not to attempt to introduce new ideas or techniques.

## ***Simple management techniques should not be overlooked***

Where solutions or improvements to projects are sought, there is often a tendency to overlook the obvious. Simple refinements can often be made to project activities in a cost-effective manner. Extension officers should pay attention to small details, such as loosening the soil around tree catchments and ensuring that roots are not exposed; better use of water and avoiding waste; and minor modifications to stoves that would

help retain heat.

## ***Environmental support should include as broad a range of the population as possible***

Environmental initiatives should preferably be targeted at multi-focus groups. Men and women, young and old, should be considered, with specific areas of intervention identified according to their needs/interests. In addition, attention should, whenever possible, focus on both refugee and local communities.

## ***Environmental support should also cater to different needs***

People have different needs. Women, for example, are the primary users of fuelwood and are also often responsible for planting and caring for trees. On the other hand, refugees may not be willing to participate in environmental activities outside the camps, but are willing to plant and maintain trees within the camps, often at great personal cost. Extension programmes should take these gender/interest based work differences into account.

## ***A reporting and monitoring format should be elaborated between partner organisations at the outset of the project***

A suitable reporting and monitoring

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toring procedure must be agreed between all parties from the beginning of the project. Work sheets should be prepared for Extension Officers, and enumerators trained to complete these correctly. Project managers should supervise this process to ensure that data are correctly entered.

### **More attention should be given to training suitable trainers and to follow-up and supervision of trainers**

Training of trainers should be encouraged and facilitated. This is not only a cost-effective means of reaching a large

proportion of the population, but is also an appropriate form of technical support for those interested in becoming more actively involved with the project. UNHCR and the implementing agency should occasionally identify interested candidates for training.

### **Look for unexpected spin-offs**

The enthusiasm for shade trees, live fences and fruit trees, as well as the construction of fuel-efficient stoves by refugees and rural Sudanese exceeded all expectations with the Hawata. There has been a significant change in the attitudes of the implementing agency and state authorities concerning extension, energy saving and community participation. They, as institutions or individuals, are now highly supportive of the activities they once opposed.

### **A favourable outcome**

In reviewing the Hawata project in 1999, the evaluation mission recommended the continuation of this project and extension to two additional sites in eastern Sudan - Mafaza and Shagarab II camps and adjacent villages.

Particular attention is now being given to strengthening the working capacity of the Project Team, reinforcing the messages and techniques being presented to the beneficiaries, and ensuring that equal and adequate support is given to refugees and villagers. These steps are viewed as essential if the project's messages are to be firmly transmitted and people enabled to practice the various methods and techniques for themselves.

**Valentine Ndibalema**  
*Environmental Co-ordinator, Sudan*  
**David Stone**  
*Environmental Consultant*

## **Environmental Training**

An exciting, new range of environmental training activities is underway, including efforts to integrate environmental considerations into UNHCR's programme training, and the continuation of Environmental Management Workshops.

### **Integrating Environmental Issues in Programme Training**

UNHCR's Programme Co-ordination Section is implementing a series of workshops on project preparation, which includes sessions on how to

mainstream policy priorities into operations. Part of this work is given to examining how policy priorities in relation to women, children and environment can be integrated into this process and, then, translated into action.

### **New Training Materials...**

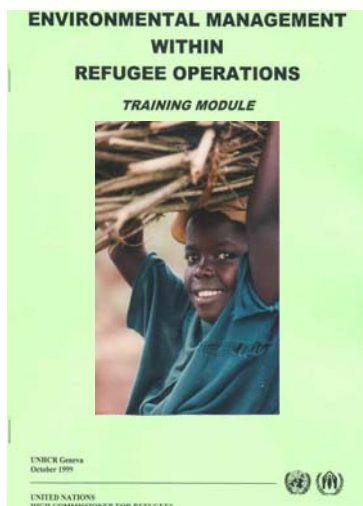
Building on the TSEMPRAA (Towards Sustainable Environmental Management Practices in Refugee-affected Areas) process - outlined in the last issue of *Environmental News* -

EESS continues to expand the range of training materials for use in the field.

The 85-page Self-training Module, developed around the TSEMPRAA experience, has now been substantially revised. This Module can be used in dedicated environmental training courses, but also contains a wealth of information that might be used to introduce environmental components to other UNHCR training activities.

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*Training Module*

**... and Workshops**

In November 1999, Johannesburg, South Africa, was the venue for an environmental management workshop covering UNHCR operations in Southern Africa. This was

followed by a similar event in Nairobi, Kenya, for UNHCR staff and implementing agencies from the Great Lakes region. Demand for attendance was again high (a total of 48 people attending), as was the quality of presentations and ensuing discussions. Lessons learned from the training sessions, with additional feedback from the workshops, including participants' own evaluations, are now being taken into account in preparing the next training workshops, scheduled to take place in West Africa in 2000.

Workshops are divided into formal presentations, plenary discussions, working group sessions, and various exercises including role play and case studies, covering aspects of physical planning, domestic

energy and natural resources,

environment assessment, environmental rehabilitation and community mobilization.

One of the key objectives of this training is to improve the ability of UNHCR and partner staff to incorporate and mainstream environmental concerns into planning, management and implementation of projects and activities in the field. Issues addressed cover the various phases of refugee operations, with particular emphasis on domestic energy and forestry, environmental integration into programme management, and environment and community mobilization.

**Morten Petersen**  
*Environmental Training Consultant*

## **Integrating Environmental Concerns with Operations, Albania**

At the end of May 1999, Albania was hosting 450,000 Kosovar refugees. Concerns for people's health and the environment arose almost from the beginning of the relief operations as it became clear that many aspects of basic infrastructure were insufficient or lacking: solid waste disposal facilities and sewage treatment plants, for example, had never been constructed in Albania. Instead, sewage and chemical wastes from factories were routinely dumped into rivers and the Adriatic Sea.

### **Rapid, Consolidated Response**

Situations such as this, together with the lack of centralized facilities, pose particular challenges for relief operators. In this instance, every camp and collective centre had to be serviced individually, whether it concerned water tankering or when making special arrangements for waste disposal.

Realizing these shortfalls and obstacles, UNHCR Tirana initiated an Infrastructure Unit at the onset of the operation. As a result, a consolidated ap-

proach was quickly adopted for technical issues relating to shelter, the provision of water, sanitation and the environment. As camp construction and the operation and maintenance of collective centres were a major activity at the time, the Unit optimized UNHCR's intervention and strengthened the organization's lead role in the overall operation.

Among the main responsibilities assumed by UNHCR at the time included:

- co-ordination of technical efforts of all parties within

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**Central Road and former Latrine Pit, Malteser Camp, Albania**

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- the various technical co-ordination meetings
- collation and dissemination of technical guidelines
- construction and operation of tented camps and collective centres
- early launch of the Refugee Affected Areas Rehabilitation programme.

### **Limiting the Damage**

Recognizing the need to quickly identify environment friendly solutions in and around the camps, UNHCR and other agencies pooled their efforts to

quickly produce guidelines on the construction of suitable sanitation facilities and on solid waste disposal. These were later supplemented with Environmental Guidelines on Camp Closure, the main message being that environmentally friendly closure and restitution of a camp is an integral part of the process of its construction and operation. Follow-up on the environmental closure of camps has been the first step of the rehabilitation process in Albania.

As Kosovar refugees started to return to their homes, UNHCR also initiated a Refugee Affected Areas Rehabilitation programme.

A special unit was given responsibility for assessing the impact of the refugees in Albania and to co-ordinating practical rehabilitation activities.

The initiatives taken in this instance demonstrate once again that even at the early, planning and implementation phases of refugee operations, the timely inclusion of social and environmental considerations, as well as an adaptive, co-ordinated approach to follow-up and management can pay dividends in the longer term. A basic requirement for the smooth running of the entire process is, as the case of Albania again demonstrated, the dynamic participation of government officials, UN agencies, donor organizations, non-governmental organizations and others. The lead role of UNHCR, with the firm foundation of previous experience, can play a decisive role in this process.

**Mohamad Mukalled**  
**Senior Water Development**  
**Officer, UNHCR Geneva**

## **Environmental Education in Refugee Situations**

Created in response to the growing realization that education should be an integral component of all environment-related projects, the Regional Refugee and Returnee Environmental Education Programme is a joint initiative of UNHCR and UNESCO PEER.

Started in 1996 as a pilot project in Kenyan refugee camps, the initiative has already developed

as a focal point for the development of environmental education in refugee-affected areas in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. In so doing, the programme has developed significant expertise in the development of both formal and non-formal education (community-based awareness raising). Pupil booklets and teacher guidelines have been published in English, French, Kigundi and Somali lan-

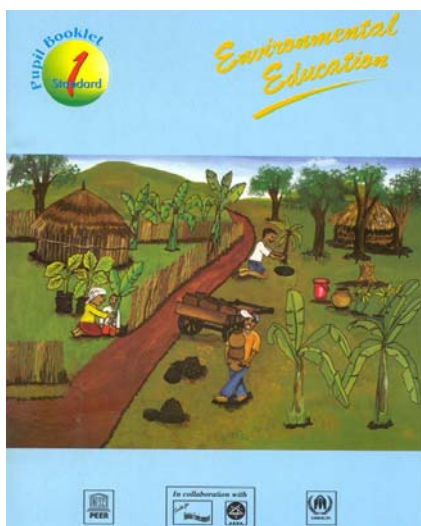
guages, while non-formal awareness-raising materials have also been produced.

### **Broadening the Approach**

Through the programme's work, it has become apparent that some important features of envi-

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Sample of Pupil's Booklet

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Environmental education projects transcend national boundaries, a feature which needs to be considered in developing and implementing this type of work. The following issues exemplify the regional nature of these projects.

**Formal environmental education is an essential component of an awareness raising programme**

Formal, particularly primary, education provides an excellent avenue for introducing environmental awareness. The school is a prominent focal point for the community and many of the school's activities extend beyond the confines of the school grounds, to the community.

**Environmental education projects should be proactive**

Environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources can be greatly facilitated where environmental awareness is promoted from the start-up of refugee camp facilities. This, in turn, is likely to

have many positive socio-economic implications. At present, environmental education is characteristically prioritized when refugee-affected areas have already experienced serious environmental degradation, and the themes of the project are therefore reactive. Significant costs and hardship could therefore be prevented if environmental education is considered as an integral component of an environmental management programme.

**Participatory project development is essential for sustainability**

Environmental education should be a lifelong process. For this to occur, it is vital that the beneficiaries of the project continue with environmental awareness raising activities. Women and children are considered particularly important groups, since they not only suffer disproportionately as a result of environmental degradation, but are also effective disseminators of environmental education messages.

**Regional programmes are likely to be more cost-effective**

Refugee camps in a given region are often composed of people of the same nationality. The development of a regional programme thus increases the effectiveness of all activities, since the beneficiaries share the same nationality and culture.

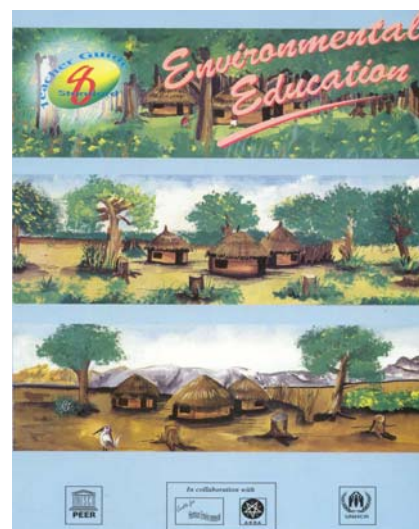
**Environmental education projects should not be confined to the refugee population**

Host communities of a refugee-affected area are directly af-

ected by refugees, since they share the same environment. It is fundamental in any awareness raising programme that local host communities are involved in the development of a project, and that they constitute a specific beneficiary group.

As the Refugee and Returnee Environmental Education Programme continues to develop environmental awareness raising projects throughout the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, it is also important that the issue of sustainability be kept in mind. To be effective, those responsible for the continuation of the training and promotion of the practices being introduced – the refugees themselves – will require support and advice throughout the duration of the project.

**Christopher Taylor**  
**RREEP Co-ordinator,**  
**UNESCO PEER, Nairobi**



Sample of Teacher's Booklet

# Key Environmental Publications Available in EESS

- *The following key publications on environment listed below are available for distribution. Kindly send your request indicating the number of copies required (MAX. 10), with your complete name and EESS will send the publications to you.*
- *Should you wish to have the full list of technical publications available in EESS, please make a request to 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 Depot) who will send the full list to you.*

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



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