

# WFP and Safe Access to Firewood

Protecting and Empowering Communities



*Fighting Hunger Worldwide*



**World Food Programme**

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A woman cooking, shortly following the earthquake in Haiti. Severe depletion of the forest due to charcoal production and firewood utilisation is causing soil erosion, limiting agricultural possibilities and increasing the risk of landslides and floods during storms and hurricanes.

## The Risks of Firewood Collection in Humanitarian Settings

The global environmental and protection concerns associated with cooking requirements in emergencies and in protracted crises are numerous:

- Women are often forced to travel long distances in search of firewood and grass in order to cook food for their families. They regularly confront the risk of attack and rape as they venture into unsafe territory. From the camps of displaced people in Sudan, to the Somali refugee camps in Kenya, women organize themselves to collect firewood in groups or at night in the hope of avoiding attack. In pastoralist Uganda, where attacks on women are part of the strategy to humiliate opposing tribes, women try to avoid repeating collection patterns to reduce their vulnerability.
- In places like northern Sri Lanka, access to firewood is hampered by the threat of landmines. Women and children are most at risk, as the main collectors of firewood for domestic cooking.
- The natural resources in many settings where refugees or displaced people live are often severely depleted, as even live trees are cut down for firewood, either to cook or to sell, since firewood remains one of the few sources of income in these constrained

circumstances. This environmental degradation can exacerbate conflict over increasingly scarce natural resources. Deforestation also leads to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and the acceleration of climate change impacts.

**‘Safe, fuel-efficient stoves enable women to be the frontline champions in the battle against climate change and hunger and empower communities with immediate, practical, adaptation solutions.’**

**WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran**

- In parts of Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo, children and their parents struggle to bring sticks of wood to school daily to meet the requirements of cooking school meals.
- After the earthquake, many Haitians lost their stoves and had no access to cooking fuel – and so burnt furniture and whatever could be found. Cooking and securing affordable fuel remain challenging in crowded camps, particularly in the rainy season.

## Fuel-Efficient Solutions

- Fuel-efficient stoves and alternative fuels – combined with support for livelihood opportunities that are not reliant on scarce natural resources – protect women from exposure to risks associated with firewood collection.
- Fuel-efficient stoves protect the environment by reducing the consumption of firewood. If used correctly and consistently, fuel-efficient stoves can lead to a 50 percent reduction of firewood needed for cooking.
- Fuel-efficient stoves lower the health risks that women and families experience with the traditional three-stone open fire, by reducing indoor air pollution in the form of unhealthy smoke and particle emissions.
- Non-wood forms of fuel (for example LPG, ethanol, and briquettes from organic matter) and regeneration of forests through tree planting contribute to recovery and resettlement after a prolonged crisis or protracted conflict.



## Positive results

- Reducing violence against women
- Creating alternative livelihoods for women
- Supporting families sending children to school
- Decreasing indoor air pollution, or unhealthy smoke and particle emissions
- Reducing environmental degradation which is both a cause and effect of climate change
- Identifying potential benefits from carbon credits
- Introducing innovative, more sustainable fuel technologies and reducing the dependency on unclean energy sources

## WFP's Strategy for SAFE

Partnering with FAO, UNHCR, the Women's Refugee Commission and others, WFP is taking forward the recommendations of the UN/NGO Task Force on Safe Access to Firewood and alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings (SAFE). A four-pronged strategy will allow WFP to:

- Reduce the vulnerability and frequency of exposure of women to risk through the major scaling up of dissemination of fuel-efficient stoves and alternative fuels.
- Explore energy technologies that can be effectively applied to address protection, livelihood and environmental needs.
- Promote the creation of livelihoods opportunities to reduce the reliance of women on the collection of firewood for income.
- Provide schools with fuel-efficient stoves to help ensure that the cost of cooking fuel is not an obstacle to school attendance.

(Left and above) Woman cooking with WFP-distributed *anagi* stove, in Sri Lanka. The *anagi* stove helps reduce the need to venture into heavily mined forests and bushes in search of firewood.

## Programmes

As a member of the UN Foundation-led Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, WFP is addressing the cooking needs of women and children in some of the most difficult places, such as Haiti and Darfur. WFP brings a vast experience working in remote, hard-to-reach places and a strong field presence to the Alliance.

SAFE programming is underway in North Darfur, Sudan, and in Karamoja, Uganda – with plans to expand to other parts of the country. Activities have been launched in Haiti and Sri Lanka, and will start in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya by the end of 2011. The SAFE activities often build on traditional WFP field operations such as food for work, food for training and school meals, with a view to strengthening food security. In Kabkabiya, a remote area in North Darfur where the erosion of natural resources is particularly dire and protection risks are high, WFP is supporting the production of briquettes made out of organic waste for cooking. Garbage collection and briquette-making involves hundreds of women. WFP beneficiaries are working closely with staff to improve the design of the briquette-making machines, and to select the most effective accompanying stove. The production of mud stoves is being supported in combination with food-for-work activities, such as gardening and tree planting.



With training in the construction of stoves in Karamoja, Uganda, women report a reduced need to collect firewood and that faster cooking time has allowed them to pursue other activities. Local youth groups trained in the construction of the stoves are now producing and selling stoves in local markets. In combination with the dissemination of stoves, WFP is implementing community projects such as the cultivation of crops (staples and vegetables), tree-planting (for wood and fruits) and rainwater harvesting.



**In 2010, WFP will feed around 100 million people. This includes some 12 million refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in 36 countries. Over the next two years, WFP will work with its partners to reach half of this population through the SAFE initiative, by targeting WFP beneficiary households and WFP-assisted schools.**

(Left) Woman working in a stove-production centre in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya.

(Above) Women collecting firewood to sell in North Darfur.