

Youth Empowerment Centres

Livelihoods – Self-reliance

In order to enhance refugees' self-reliance and employment opportunities, UNHCR established Youth Empowerment Centres where training in various issues is conducted.



UNHCR/F. Courbet

Background

Among the 220,000 refugees living in the three Dadaab camps, where most of the population is Somali, there are 45,000 residents between the ages of 15 and 24. These young people have lived most of their lives in the camps. With no possibility to leave the camp, they face a lack of employment opportunities as well as a lack of access to programmes and activities to develop their skills and talents. Moreover, the harsh conditions in the camp expose them to risks such as exploitation, SGBV and drug abuse. Girls who are not enrolled in school run the risk of being married off at an early age to support their families. Providing these youths with education, skills and extra-curricular activities and education will ensure a better future for them.

Location Ifo Camp, Daadab - Kenya

Duration 12 Months

Population Groups Refugees

Actors UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council



Description

Built on the successful experience of the Norwegian Refugee Council in managing youth centres in Dadaab town and Hagadera camp, UNHCR established Youth Empowerment Centres (YEP) in Ifo camp. With these centres, UNHCR seeks to increase employment opportunities for young refugee men and women on an equal basis and protect them from the risks they face in the camp. Ultimately, this will increase refugees' self-reliance and enhance their social integration.

The centres provide training in life skills to further refugees' integration and participation in the community, and training in functional literacy, computer literacy and professional skills to increase refugees' chances of finding apprenticeships or paid jobs. They also provide business skills training to encourage the development of income-generation activities. Equal representation of men and women is encouraged amongst the programme's participants as well as teachers, trainees, and management staff.

- 4 YEP centres were established and 700 students enrolled in their programmes. The 700 YEP students sit an exam and those who pass it receive a certificate, which is recognized by the GOK Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT)
- NRC provides a start-up kit to the YEP graduates at the end of the training and link them with job markets. NRC also has a follow up programme with YEP graduates during the first phase of employment or entrepreneurship
- A survey made in November 2011 shows 56% of the youth graduated from YEP centres actively involved in organized youth group activities, such as small business and contracts
- 19% of YEP graduated got employment and 10% have been integrated into the formal education system

Constraints

The lack of sufficient resources limits the number of persons benefiting from the centres' activities.

Steps to Implementation

- Construction of Youth Centres
- Hold consultations with the community to identify the areas in which training is most needed
- Work jointly with the community in the design of training programmes
- Select and train teachers (community members where possible)
- Conduct and monitor training programmes

Impact and Results

- Throughout the first year of operations, 120 youths (70% female) participated in functional literacy, life skills, business skills and professional skills trainings
- The programme improved participants' employment and livelihoods prospects

Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

The psychological state of a person affects the ability to interact with his/her environment. Persons who participate in training programmes feel somehow empowered and, as their perception of self-worth is enhanced, their ability to properly integrate with the community is improved.

Further Information

There are also other Youth Centres in the camps: one in Hagadera, which is functioning as an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) centre, managed by DRC and a youth umbrella group; and another one in Ifo, established by CARE and supported by ADEO.

