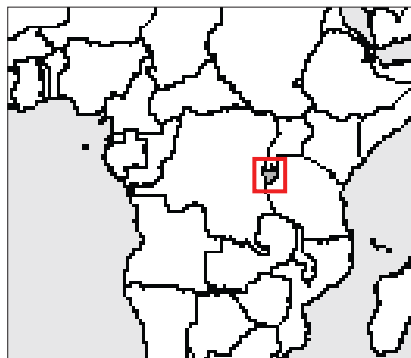


Case 1 Burundi

The potential of the camp management agency

Keywords

- Community Participation
- Coordination
- Handover to national authorities
- Environment
- Host Community



Displacement Data

Country: Burundi

Cause of displacement: Congolese conflict

Conflict date: Ongoing since mid-1990s with peak influx in 2004

Number of Refugees: 22,000 in Camps / 35,000 total (At time of handover in 2011)

Project Locations: Ruyigi, Gasorwe, Musasa

Burundi Camp Management Responsibilities

- Environmental monitoring
- Coordination
- Infrastructure management
- Information dissemination
- Service monitoring
- Advocacy



Bwagiriza Refugee Camp / George Swinimer

Context

This case study from the refugee camps in Burundi (2006-2011) covers the period when there was a dedicated international NGO Camp Manager and the subsequent handover of camp management responsibilities to national authorities. The NGO was initially appointed Camp Manager in 2006; its responsibilities included service provision responsibilities in Education, Shelter, and Distribution. Although not typical for a refugee operation, Camp Coordinator (lead agency), Camp Administrator (national authorities), and Camp Manager (NGO) titles were assigned to the relevant organizations. However, initially roles, responsibilities and accountability were not clearly determined. A CCCM training was conducted in order to develop some clarity, and resulted in the formulation and signing of a written agreement clearly stipulating which agency was responsible for which activities. The document served as a useful reference that led to a productive and amicable relationship among the different actors until 2011 when the NGO handed over camp management responsibilities to national authorities.

The case study focuses on four specific themes that provide lessons regarding: environmental challenges, increasing community participation, involving host communities and handing over camp management activities to national authorities.

Environment

The environment is an extremely important, yet often neglected, aspect of managing a camp throughout its life-cycle. As it is a cross-sectorial issue, part of the challenge is that it is not clear which actor is ultimately responsible and accountable for monitoring and advocating for environmental issues. Consequently, they 'fall through the cracks'. The Burundi refugee camps suffered in this regard as environmental aspects were not fully considered until several years after the establishment of the camps.

This changed in 2007, when the government of Burundi specifically requested the camp management agency to reduce or find alternatives to the quantity of cooking firewood distributed for use by camp populations, as well as opening erosion ravines affecting host communities. Subsequently the camp management agency initiated a wider range of environmental activities.

Actions Taken

- **A Professional Environmental Assessment** was conducted to propose possible solutions



Erosion Gulleys / George Swinimer

- **Testing of briquettes** (wood chips/ rice husks/manure) as an alternative energy source
- **Year-long sensitization campaign** on better wood storage, utilization and cooking techniques
- **Distribution of improved fuel efficient stoves**
- **Setup of environmental and host community committees**
- **Erosion gully** mitigating measures put into place
- **Tree-planting** initiatives undertaken with camp and host communities

Challenges

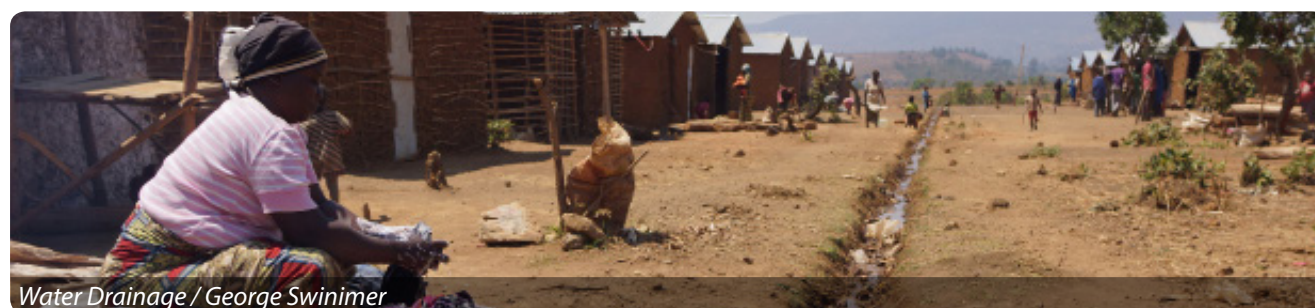
- **Extremely low overall tree survival rates**, approximately 5% in camps; 10% in the host community.
- **Non-compliance with briquette use** as they were not suitable for humid environments; cost of briquettes not sustainable in long term.
- **Gully slowed but not halted** despite significant investment.
- **Beneficiaries were clearing slopes for cultivation** and camp security was unwilling to tackle the issue.

Successes

- **Cooking firewood distribution and consumption reduced** by one-third.
- **Forum for regular dialogue on environmental issues** took place between host camp communities through new committees.
- **Environmental conservation pursued in new camps** through erosion mitigation measures and conducting Rapid Environmental Assessments.
- **High survival rate of trees** within school compounds due to direct supervision of teaching staff.

Lessons

- **Environmental issues need to be incorporated into camp management programming as early as possible within the camp management life cycle.**
When funding is tight, monitoring should continue to the extent possible, highlighting the potential long term risks and costs of inaction.
- **Establish who is responsible for monitoring and advocating for environmental issues in writing** to ensure they are not neglected.
- **Form a Host Community Committee with environmental conservation and awareness specifically in its ToRs at the onset, or as soon as possible after a camp's establishment.**
- **Tree-planting efforts need to be considered as a managed, multi-year maintenance project** to ensure its success and to avoid wasting resources; simply distributing trees, even with small incentives, is not sufficient.
- **Erosion mitigation measures need to be put in place during a camp's establishment**, particularly those located on plateaus; the challenges of dealing with erosion ravines at a later date can become exponentially more expensive and complex.
- **Conduct a Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) with photographs before camp construction, or as soon as possible** to establish an environmental baseline for future reference.



Water Drainage / George Swinimer

Increasing Community Participation

After an assessment in 2008, donors insisted that beneficiary participation, as a fundamental pillar of Camp Management, needed to be significantly increased within the Burundi camps. It was stressed that the committees should meet more regularly and be more representative. After extensive consultations with partners and beneficiaries the camp management team piloted a series of participatory activities within one camp.

Actions Taken

- **Development of a representative and harmonized committee system** Consisting of 12 sector committees, each with a male and female member responsible for a specific geographical location (block) in the camp, and guided by a specific partner agency. In this manner, representatives could meet to identify gaps in services, provide recommendations, and advocate for solutions.

Participatory shelter construction

Previously, shelters were constructed

by carpenters and handed over to new camp arrivals. This was changed to a new system where all shelters were built with the active participation of beneficiaries.

Volunteer Food/NFI unloading

A rotating system of volunteers to unload food and NFIs for distributions was suggested, though categorically refused by the beneficiary population.

Challenges

Inconsistency of Sector Committee meetings: The participation, involvement and success of each committee depended on how active the guiding partner agency was.

Low female participation in committees: Despite the election of 50% female representatives, the actual participation of women was considerably lower; domestic responsibilities was the most cited reason.

General participation challenges: It proved difficult to encourage the beneficiary population to actively take part in the participatory activities. Many were not accustomed to participating, and others expected remuneration in

return. New arrivals, often keen to participate initially, were frequently discouraged from doing so by established residents.

Non-compliance with volunteer unloading: Despite months of dialogue, the initiative for a rotating system of volunteers to unload and distribute food/NFIs was categorically refused.

Successes

Adoption of the committee system throughout all camps

Although some committees functioned better than others, an effective and coherent framework for beneficiaries to influence program development, as well as raise and resolve challenges, was established.

Participatory shelter construction

Although it faced initial resistance, the system eventually proved successful and was adopted in other camps. In later years, all shelter construction/maintenance was done by beneficiaries with carpenters acting in an advisory and support role.

Lessons

- **Record results/decisions of Sector Committee meetings**
While clear minutes were recorded and disseminated for 'Camp Management' meetings, this was much less consistent for Sector Committee meetings, and was particularly partner dependent. Ideally, a partner (normally the camp management partner) should collect, synthesize and disseminate three to five key points from each sector meeting in order to keep all stakeholders up to speed on specific concerns.
- **Take advantage of the 'window of opportunity' at the beginning of a new camp**
As with most humanitarian projects, it is recommended to get beneficiaries accustomed to participating at the start of a project.
- **Keep committee systems as simple as possible**
Simple systems make it more likely that the general beneficiary population will understand how it works and actively participate.
- **Earmark specific funds that can be used for committee projects**
If possible, arrange for small budgets, monitored by linked partners that could be used by individual committees to design small projects to improve camp conditions. Not only does this motivate and empower committees, but it also allows beneficiaries to have a chance to improve and influence camp life through their own initiatives.
- **Standardize material support provided to committees**
As different partners were linked with different committees, each used different means to encourage beneficiaries to actively participate. This tended to create a culture where representatives preferred to work in committees where they would receive the most benefits, rather than where they could make the most impact.



Firewood Distribution / George Swinimer

Developing Linkages with the Host Community

In the Burundian context, standards and quality of life in the host community were generally lower than those attained by camp-based beneficiaries. This was particularly evident during distributions, when refugees would 'hire' host residents to transport food. Similarly, during construction, the host community could be seen mud-plastering shelters. While the immediate host community had access to the camp health facilities from an early stage, their specific and targeted inclusion in programming only began several years later, following recommendations of a participatory Joint Assessment Mission, and advocacy from the camp management agency.

Actions Taken

- **Monthly 'Mixed Committee' meetings** with partners and camp representatives
- **Increased access to camp resources** including camp libraries and sports pitches, as well as reserving 10% of nursery schools for the host community
- **Allowing access to camp employment opportunities** such as teachers, security guards, carpenters and general laborers
- **Water points constructed in the host community**
- **Joint camp / host community tree seedling distributions**



Host community interactions / George Swinimer

Successes

All the initiatives were well received by the host community, in particular access to nursery schools and employment opportunities.

Challenges

Resistance from some beneficiaries. Some camp beneficiaries viewed members of the host community working in the camp as 'taking' positions that could be theirs.

Lessons

- **Plan for Host Community inclusion at the opening of a new camp**
Host community initiatives provide a forum for dialogue, break down barriers, provide better equity and should be initiated as early as possible in a camp's life-cycle. At a minimum, a regular forum for discussion and conflict resolution should be established from the onset.
- **Encourage joint income generating activities with camp beneficiaries and members of the host community**
Projects that specifically provide beneficiaries with appropriate livelihood skills.

Handover of Camp Management to Government Authorities

After seven years of Burundi operations, and a yearlong evaluation, the camp management agency decided that emergency operations were effectively over and it was time to transfer camp management operations (including service provision) to other actors. This decision was presented to the lead agency a year and a half before the

anticipated handover. The lead agency subsequently decided to hand over camp management responsibilities to the national authorities, while assigning the camp management agency's additional services to three different NGOs. The camp management agency was left to define which program activities were considered camp management specific, considering several of the program's staff had responsibilities which overlapped with camp management and service provision activities.

Actions Taken

Defining the exact activities and responsibilities to be handed over

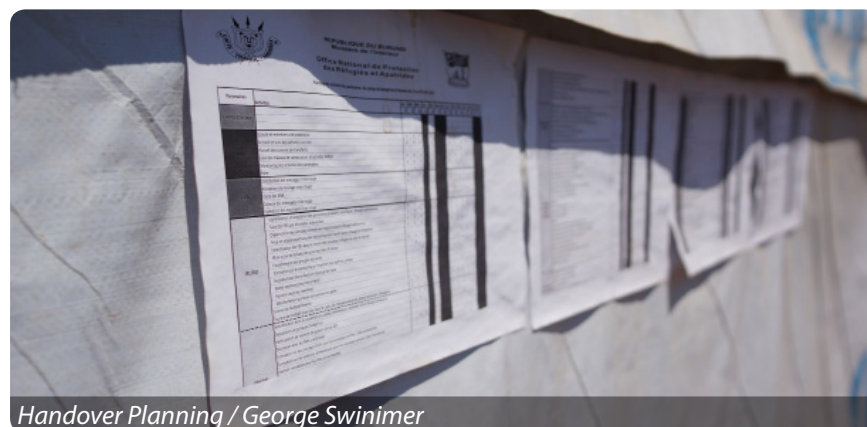
Handing over the camp management program was not a simple matter of cutting it into four pieces, as there was considerable overlap between program activities.

Creating a detailed handover checklist with each partner

This document served as the blueprint for the handover process, covering issues relating to human resources, transfer of materials and infrastructure, observation missions and documentation.

Drafting handover documents for each partner/activity

These highlighted key challenges and lessons learnt, and provided references to all relevant tools and documentation.



Handover Planning / George Swinimer

Providing technical support during an overlap period

Although not used considerably by partners, senior camp management agency staff remained available for consultation by partners after the completion of the handovers.

Challenges

Reduced monitoring capacity: Each camp originally had six staff (doubling as distribution staff) that monitored service provision, conducted assessments, and attended committee meetings. After handover this was reduced to two.

Perceived lack of new innovations: Several partners cited that new innovations were lacking two years after handover.

Limited funding to retain experienced staff: More attractive NGO remuneration packages could lure away more experienced camp management staff from the national authorities.

Lack of clear distinction between camp administration / camp man-

agement components: The original handover was designed to keep the camp administration and camp management components of national authorities distinct and separate (different reporting lines, offices, visibility etc.) in order to allow the camp management side to remain neutral and autonomous and comfortably challenge the gaps in the camp administration performance. Two years after handover, this distinction did not appear evident to partners and beneficiaries.

Slow approval time for the camp management handover model: Delays in approving the model and staff recruitment meant there was less time for training, mentoring and coaching than originally envisioned.

Successes

The handover process was well received by beneficiaries, partners and government authorities and deemed highly successful, both at the end of the transition period and after an evaluation

mission conducted two years later. Contributing factors included:

- **Dedicated support / exit coordinator:** Having a staff member with the dedicated responsibility to design, implement and monitor the process over the course of one year.
- **Sufficient timing:** Exit and handover was identified over two years before the event allowing sufficient time to transfer knowledge, build capacity and ensure a smooth transition.
- **Dedication, motivation and ownership of government authorities:** national authorities were very open and willing to learn and supported a transparent recruitment process for new staff.
- **Retention of original camp management staff:** Approximately 50% of the original camp management team was rehired by national authorities, providing experience and institutional memory to ensure continuity.

Lessons

- **Commence the handover process as early as possible**
Work on this should ideally commence the year before the actual handover. Better still, note down best practices and key recommendations on a yearly basis, so that these can be compiled and reviewed in the final year.
- **For complex handovers, assign a dedicated Handover Coordinator during the exit year**
Oversee the handover process to ensure a smooth transition while maintaining institutional/project memory.
- **Establish a clear Handover Plan signed by all stakeholders**
This should include clear goals and measurable criteria, specific timelines and consultations with the beneficiary population for a successful handover.
- **Advocate for the maintaining and hiring of experienced camp staff**
Using a transparent recruitment process in order to ensure the most competent staff are hired and institutional memory is maintained.
- **Successful handover of camp management to national authorities will be context specific**
A cost benefit analysis weighing pros and cons and identifying possible risks should be conducted before any decision is made.



View from the rearview mirror / George Swinimer



The overall goal of the CCCM Cluster is to improve living conditions of displaced persons. It does this by facilitating the effective provision of protection and services in camps and camp-like settings, advocating for durable solutions and ensuring organized closure and phase-out of camps.