

Annual Review

2009



network

building capacity









livelihood security knowledge sharing

ProAct
network



environmental partnerships
for community resilience

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ProAct Network's partners

- CARE International
- The COHAB Initiative – Co-Operation on Health and Biodiversity
- DWR – Disaster Waste Recovery
- Early Recovery Cluster
- IFRC – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- IOM – International Organisation for Migration
- ISDR – International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
- IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
- MSB – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
- NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council
- OodysS
- Praxis-UK
- RedR
- Shelter Centre
- WWF – World Wide Fund For Nature
- UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chairman's interview

ProAct Network believes in using environmental management to help people improve resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises. Is this approach to protecting vulnerable communities gaining wider recognition as a potentially powerful tool?

To an extent. In development and in conservation circles there's much more of an understanding of the importance of environmental resilience and how the environment can be managed to protect people. Within the disaster relief world, there's increasing lip-service paid to it, but it's not so clear whether that's being translated into a real change in approach at the field level.

When you're faced with something like a tsunami or earthquake, the focus is of course going to be immediately on saving lives and ensuring that people get medical care, shelter and food. The environment will always play a secondary role. However, if right from the beginning of an intervention in a disaster area there are people available who can focus primarily on humanitarian aid, but who also understand the broader environmental context, they can help ensure environmental factors are taken into consideration from day one. That is what will make a difference.

Local people tend to understand the importance of the environment because their livelihoods depend on it. At present, however, few international agencies come with the interdisciplinary approach that is vital to achieving more effective, holistic results in disaster relief and mitigation.

2009 was a tough year for many organisations – how has ProAct fared?

ProAct is growing from strength for strength. Yes, it has been a tough year – and things are always tough for young organisations – but over the past year it has really built on its reputation and is increasingly getting recognition as a small organisation able to deliver quality work. It has been attracting new funding streams and is now involved in a number of sizeable, multi-year projects, delivering where others may find it difficult to deliver. Perhaps partly because of its size, and the lack of overly bureaucratic structures, ProAct can really act rapidly and efficiently, even in difficult circumstances. It's beginning to develop quite a distinct role for itself which bridges the environmental and humanitarian worlds. In this it really is unique.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Jean-Paul Jeanrenaud'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Jean-Paul Jeanrenaud
Chairman
ProAct Network

“Local people tend to understand the importance of the environment because their livelihoods depend on it. At present, however, few international agencies come with the interdisciplinary approach that is vital to achieving more effective, holistic results in disaster relief and mitigation.”

The major challenge ProAct faces remains the same as last year: trying to establish a solid core funding basis for its work. At the moment it is largely dependent on financing from projects to cover overheads. Fortunately its streamlined size and structure mean overhead management costs are low, but core funding to help cover day-to-day operational needs would allow ProAct to put even more focus on delivering results in the field. That is what we want to do, that is how and where we want to make our presence felt.

What kinds of projects does ProAct do best?

One of ProAct's key strengths is its multidisciplinary approach. It is good at interventions which require input in a wide range of areas. A current project in Sudan is a good example, where ProAct is applying cutting edge technology and the latest satellite imagery interpretation techniques with 40 year old spatial information and four day old data from discussions with local communities. The purpose? To advise international humanitarian organisations on some of the most – and least – suitable areas for internally displaced people to return to. Knowledge, for example, of drought prone areas can help inform this process and reduce risks to returnee communities.

Environmental issues underpin many key aspects of disaster relief programmes and ProAct is able to provide support across a spectrum of activities. Most organisations are siloed into disaster relief, early recovery, development or conservation, but it's rare to find an organisation that will cover all those things. That is the special niche that ProAct fills. It has expertise in both humanitarian aid and environmental management and the ability to bring these two domains together.

Can you give two words that sum up ProAct's current institutional priorities?

'Strengthen' and 'diversify'. As well as working on its reputation and core funding, ProAct needs to expand its network of members, consultants and specialists, to add more people with different skill-sets who can be quickly mobilised for a broad range of projects. Last year, for example, we took on two new specialists at our head office, who have brought with them expertise and new thinking in dry-land ecology and land tenure in humanitarian contexts. The broader network must also continue to grow.

We already work with a range of UN and other humanitarian, disaster relief and environmental agencies, but we need to continue to diversify our network of donors and partners. ProAct could ultimately also take on more of a co-ordinating role between agencies. Our holistic, multidisciplinary approach shows we have a deep understanding of how these different areas are interlinked.

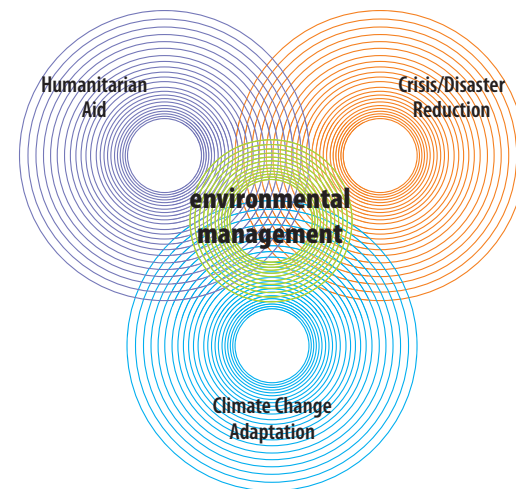
Many of ProAct's projects are currently Africa-based, but we intend to expand geographically in 2010 – we have the ability, contacts and experience to work in many different parts of the world. Among other things, this will ensure the quality of the technical support we are able to offer, as a result of working with and learning from other cultures.

Who we are and what we do

ProAct Network is a Swiss-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) which develops and supports environment-related projects to help vulnerable communities. We serve as a bridge between humanitarian and environmental actors, creating powerful synergies which strengthen the work of both.

Our work aims to **help vulnerable communities improve their resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises, through sustainable environmental management.**

ProAct works with a large network of experienced humanitarian and environmental professionals and through strategic partnerships with a range of international and local organisations. We have an in-depth understanding of the inter-relationships between climate change, disaster risk reduction, human displacement and environmental management.



Our programmes

- Environmental assessments, monitoring and evaluation.
- Development and support of environmental projects through community-based partnerships.
- Training and capacity building for national and international organisations.
- Policy research and development, including tools and guidance.
- Knowledge management.

ProAct's core values at work: Projects and activities

ProAct Network's core values for sustainable environmental management

- 7 — Community resilience relies on **livelihood security**
Protecting livelihoods in Sudan
- 12 — The needs of **the poor and most vulnerable communities** are a priority
Helping victims of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- 14 — Create and support **strategic institutional partnerships**
Integrating environmental issues into humanitarian operations
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Developing technical guidance and providing training for relief workers
- 20 — **Communicate, collaborate** and **co-ordinate with as many stakeholder groups as possible**
Assessing the environment at a proposed refugee camp in north-eastern Kenya
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Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction: ProAct pushes for ecosystem management to protect people
- 24 — Community involvement creates **community ownership**
Community-led solutions for environmental problems in Rwanda



Community resilience relies on **livelihood security**

Unless people can find sustainable ways of supporting themselves, vulnerable communities will eventually collapse or, at best, find themselves ever-dependent on external aid.

Most poor communities rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, which is why it's essential to make sure these assets are well-managed.

As well as helping people live in a more sustainable manner, ProAct helps them explore new, sustainable ways of working with the environment to use precious resources to their advantage while maintaining the valuable services that ecosystems provide.

We want to ensure that communities are secure in the knowledge that the resources and activities they depend on today won't vanish tomorrow.

Protecting livelihoods in Darfur

Natural conditions in the dusty, arid plains of Darfur have never made things easy for its inhabitants. But now, years of conflict, human displacement and unchecked and inappropriate use of many natural resources are also taking their toll.

Those displaced by conflict who are now returning to their homelands may discover that environmental conditions are very different from when they left. Deforestation, soil erosion and fertility loss, fires, floods, and recurrent drought are just some of the problems that have led to dramatic environmental degradation in certain areas, making it extremely difficult to farm land. What's more, a lot of people lost their tools or livestock as they fled. Many now have to find new ways of surviving.

ProAct Network is working with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to improve livelihood prospects for people in Darfur through projects designed to strengthen environmental management and knowledge.



Environmental conditions in Darfur make it very hard to farm land in certain areas.

Environmental and livelihood vulnerability mapping

ProAct is developing an Environmental and Livelihood Vulnerability Mapping tool for North and South Darfur.

The aim is to provide detailed environmental information on areas where people and their livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to natural hazards. This will allow the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Government of Sudan and other agencies involved in humanitarian operations to base decisions on more complete and reliable environmental data, much of which underpins livelihoods, security and overall peace in the region.

The end result will be an atlas featuring dozens of layers of information on climate, vegetation, infrastructure and natural resource-based livelihood activities, as well as people’s vulnerability to natural hazards such as droughts and floods.

ProAct is collating environmental data from sources such as satellite imagery, rainfall data, hydrogeological and land cover maps, as well as on-the-ground research. “We devoted a lot of time to listening to communities in the field to allow us to build an accurate picture of how vulnerable they are to hazards,” says ProAct’s Programme Officer Clara Ariza. “As well as helping us to understand the particular environmental problems they may be facing, we learn about their coping strategies. For example, some have a tradition of planning ahead for drought by holding back seeds, so that if a crop fails once, they still have a back-up. In other cases there may be a tradition of reciprocal inter-village co-operation; if one village is struggling its neighbour will help out. Some communities, however, have no coping strategies at all, which inevitably means they are going to be more severely impacted by natural hazards.”

As well as helping agencies and authorities evaluate potential risks or advantages associated with settlements in particular areas, the information can be used to identify

instances where communities could benefit from environment-related investments or interventions, such as programmes for reforestation or diversification of crops.

The framework that ProAct is developing also opens up exciting possibilities for additional layers of useful information, such as data

relating to more in-depth social and economic analyses, providing decision-makers with pertinent and accurate information that is essential for sound planning and action in Darfur.

Women and children in Darfur often have to travel for hours to find water and wood, reducing the time they can spend on education or other livelihood activities.



Planning for return — the environmental perspective

Many of those displaced by conflict in Darfur now need to resettle and, in some cases, find new ways to earn a living. The IOM has been evaluating return sites for these people and has called on ProAct to provide environmental expertise and support. Sound knowledge of environmental conditions at the sites is crucial to determining how successfully people will be able to rebuild their lives. These include factors such as water and food security — drought, for example, is a major problem in many areas — and the availability of fuelwood and construction materials.

The interplay between humans and their environment is also critical. Villagers need to know how to manage natural resources carefully and efficiently so that communities and people's livelihoods remain viable in the long run.

With this in mind, ProAct is helping to gather important information about environmental factors and is assisting returning communities to develop action plans to improve their livelihood prospects. This is being done

with an emphasis on allowing local people to lead the way. With some support from our experienced facilitators, they evaluate environmental problems, rank them in order of importance, identify solutions and

organise an action plan. "People are very eager to share their knowledge, explain the problems and explore solutions — the whole community comes together," says Clara Ariza. "We learned that some farmers lost all



ProAct relies on input from the whole community as we gather important information on the environment and livelihoods.

their tools and animals when they fled, so they simply don't have the means to farm anymore. For many, the only survival option they are left with is to cut wood and sell it in the local market. They don't want to have to do this – they know it is damaging and unsustainable in the long-term – but faced with either that or not being able to feed your children tonight, what would you do?"

Fortunately, these environmental action plans can lead to effective solutions. Simple measures such as the introduction of drought-resistant or higher performance seeds, for

example, can result in new sustainable livelihood activities.

ProAct has also been training IOM staff to undertake environmentally oriented assessments and to facilitate community participation in environmental action planning. As we cannot reach all of the return areas in Darfur, this is designed to enable IOM staff – who are better represented on the ground – to investigate conditions at return sites, evaluate hazards and kick-start projects and activities that could improve the livelihood prospects for selected communities.



Fuel wood extraction and charcoal making can place a heavy strain on natural resources. Carts on the way to Garwa, Darfur.

Example of some environmental factors that are taken into consideration in village surveys.

A7. Aggravating factors	Rating (H,M,L)	Environmental implications
Likelihood of natural disasters (e.g. drought, flooding)	H	The greater the likelihood of natural disasters, the more likely it is that the environment is stressed, at high risk or fragile
Lack of self-sufficiency of returnees (e.g. ability to generate incomes, access to land, ownership of land/other assets)	L	Returnees unable to live without assistance (in the short-term at least) are more likely to exploit local environmental resources as a livelihood option
Resilience of the environment to cope with the additional pressure of increased populations	M	The lower the environmental resilience, the lower the capacity to cope with increased population growth

H = high, M = medium, L = low



The needs of the poor and most vulnerable communities are a priority

ProAct Network prioritises helping those communities who need it most.

Our projects include work to assist people who have been uprooted by conflict, who are or may be victims of disasters and vulnerable and at-risk communities already suffering from the impact of poor management of natural resources.

Identifying the needs of affected and at-risk communities is itself a challenge, as is coming up with appropriate responses and solutions that begin to address people's immediate and longer term concerns. Achieving this takes time, patience and considerable skill if one is to develop a meaningful relationship with individuals and communities. At ProAct, we believe that this is time well spent.

Helping victims of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo

One of the richest countries on the African continent in terms of its biological diversity and mineral resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo unfortunately sees little positive benefit from this natural wealth. On the contrary, these riches have triggered and sustained decades of some of the worst conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, with tens of thousands of people killed and millions displaced from their homes, many on several occasions.

The eastern part of the country has suffered most from the periodic and protracted conflicts, particularly North and South Kivu, Katanga and Orientale provinces. In addition to considerable social upheaval, the environmental impacts of this displacement are also significant as displaced people commonly have no means of sustaining their lives or generating income other than relying on local natural resources.

Addressing the needs of people affected by conflict in this region is central to a programme being developed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). ProAct has been asked to work with UNEP to help develop and coordinate a field programme that addresses

priority energy, shelter and sanitation needs of the displaced and returning populations in a sustainable manner, and that builds institutional capacity in the region.

“As well as helping humanitarian agencies ensure they take an environmentally sound approach to their work, we also help displaced people better understand how they can help themselves,” says ProAct Director, David Stone. “For example, women tend to be responsible for gathering firewood — an activity which requires them to walk long distances in unsafe areas, putting them at high risk of attack. We encourage and help them explore alternative sources of fuel and energy-efficient stoves, thus reducing their need to venture beyond the relative safety of their communities, while also reducing damage to local forests.”

A first phase of the project was completed in 2009, including scoping missions to assess the situation on the ground and develop a programme. The full programme is expected to be launched in 2010, subject to availability of funds.



Production of fuel briquets at Kimumba village — an efficient and environmentally sound approach to providing fuel for cooking.



Create and support **strategic institutional partnerships**

ProAct Network believes that the complexity of humanitarian and environmental problems means good solutions can rarely be provided by a single sector or actor.

In humanitarian operations, issues such as security, health, shelter and the environment are intertwined and action requires a co-ordinated, all-encompassing approach. People with different functions and areas of expertise need to pull together to get the best results.

ProAct believes in forging ties between groups and organisations to create synergies which will benefit everyone.

Integrating environmental issues into humanitarian operations

The environment is a critical cross-cutting issue in humanitarian assistance. If environmental issues are not incorporated into humanitarian responses, these efforts not only risk being less effective but could also further harm the health and livelihoods of disaster survivors, and limit recovery prospects.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) “cluster approach” is a global mechanism designed to improve humanitarian action and address identified gaps in response. The aim is to do this through better co-ordination, leadership, accountability and more effective partnerships between governments, non-governmental, international and UN organisations.

Since its formation, ProAct has, with CARE International, played a supporting role to many of the IASC Cluster Working Groups, particularly Emergency Shelter (ESC), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Camp Co-ordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and Early Recovery (ER).

As a result of these interventions ProAct is now in a strong position to help ensure that environmental issues will be more consistently considered as a routine part of the response mechanism in new emergency and recovery programmes.

Shelter

In an emergency, many people are forced to rely on natural resources, such as shrubs, trees and foliage, to build shelters. This can often cause irreparable damage to the environment which, in turn, can have a lasting impact on existing communities who may rely on these resources for their livelihoods.

In an effort to ensure that these kinds of environmental considerations are routinely taken into account before and immediately after an emergency, ProAct and CARE International developed a series of resources to support the global Emergency Shelter Cluster and its lead agencies, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Federation of Red Cross and

Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). One project “Integrating Critical Environmental Issues into Emergency Shelter Cluster Activities” included the development of:

- an environmental policy paper, focussing on emergency shelter;

- a checklist of key issues to consider in relation to providing emergency shelter;
- an assessment of shelter materials; and
- a roster of environmental experts who are able to respond to shelter-related issues in an emergency situation.



The emergency phase of a humanitarian operation often places great stress on the environment as trees are cut for fuel and to make shelters, and foliage is collected for roofing.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

Emergency water, sanitation and hygiene issues are closely linked to environmental conditions in an emergency. Problems such as poorly designed waste disposal or water supply systems can pose serious health risks for disaster survivors and lead to unnecessary environmental damage.

Working with CARE International and the Global WASH Cluster, ProAct undertook a scoping study on "Integrating Environmental Issues into Emergency WASH Activities" which included reviews of existing environmental policies, legislation, guidelines, tools and training materials.

The study was able to identify gaps in current practices and resources and make

recommendations to address them. It revealed an overall absence of training tools, policies and guidelines for WASH environment-related issues in emergencies. It also identified a general lack of awareness regarding numerous key environmental considerations, such as how to avoid over-exploitation of water resources or effective strategies for safe disposal of human waste.

In 2009, ProAct made a series of recommendations for improved practices as well as guidelines and training modules to ensure that environmental considerations are better understood and acted upon. Among our next steps for 2010, we will be developing a position paper on integrating key environmental issues into WASH activities, as well as drawing up a series of technical briefs to cover some of the gaps identified.



Providing people with access to safe drinking water is often a challenge in emergency situations. Lac Vert IDP Camp, Democratic Republic of Congo.



Knowledge sharing is essential for capacity building

Knowledge is one of the few resources in our world that can never be depleted. On the contrary, the more it's applied, the more widespread and powerful it becomes.

ProAct puts knowledge sharing at the heart of all its work. Structured classroom training, on-the-job guidance and awareness raising activities all feature regularly in our projects.

We also publish key research tools as well as practical handbooks with technical advice on environmental management, as well as electronic training modules which are available free on our website.

Technical guides for relief workers

When a humanitarian crisis hits, relief workers may be confronted with environment-related issues that are new to them, such as how to identify and deal with hazardous waste or make sound choices about construction materials for shelters.

In an emergency, decisions need to be taken quickly and people may not have the experience or be able to access information quickly enough to act in the safest and most appropriate manner, nor are they likely to have the time to read through detailed technical manuals to find the most appropriate solution.

This is where concise, relevant guidance tools can help. In collaboration with the Shelter Centre and Disaster Waste Recovery, ProAct has started to develop a series of short, accessible technical guides and training modules to help advise workers in emergencies and similar situations. They are free, downloadable and offer essential information and practical advice for busy people who need the key facts – fast. Two initial titles have been prepared.

Building waste management in emergencies

After a disaster or conflict, the first priority is to meet the urgent survival needs of the affected population, including the provision of food, water, shelter and medical care. However, the management of waste generated during a disaster can also quickly become a major concern, adding to problems already faced by affected populations. It may pose significant challenges to relief, recovery and reconstruction operations. Debris needs to be removed from roads, homes and public facilities before survivors can begin to rebuild their lives. Left unmanaged, waste can hinder emergency operations and create additional public health and environmental risks. This guide outlines the basic principles of disaster waste management and provides practical examples for re-use and recycling of building waste.

Asbestos in emergencies

Asbestos has been widely used in the construction industry and can pose a particular threat following disasters where buildings have been damaged. Even brief exposure to asbestos can cause severe health problems. In certain parts of the world, awareness of asbestos and the associated health risks is low and specialist handling and disposal facilities may not be available. This guide provides practical advice for humanitarian workers confronted with asbestos in emergencies. It highlights key points to help minimise the risk associated with dealing with asbestos from damaged buildings and to avoid the future use of asbestos products for reconstruction.

The guides and accompanying training modules are available on <http://www.proactnetwork.org/proactwebsite/index.php/en/publications/toolsguidance>

ASBESTOS FACTS

- Naturally occurring rock-based fibrous material.
- High mechanical strength.
- Widely used worldwide for its heat resistance and insulating properties.
- All forms are carcinogenic.
- Some 100,000 people die from asbestos-related diseases each year.
- There is no acceptable safe exposure limit.
- Rescue/recovery workers are especially at risk.



Management of waste generated during a disaster can rapidly become a major concern and add to the problems faced by affected populations.

ProAct training

Waste management and asbestos

As well as its booklets and downloadable training modules for emergencies, ProAct also designs and delivers practical training courses. One such course was held in Jordan for staff from the MSB-Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and IFRC-International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. They included an exploration of the importance of disaster waste management, strategies for dealing with waste and finding alternative uses for it, as well as information on the best tools and resources for tackling problems related to waste.

Environmental Advisors

As part of its support to the Emergency Shelter Cluster, ProAct is building a global roster of environment experts who can be called in to assist with relief operations when a disaster strikes. ProAct is training people to serve as ‘Environment Advisors’ – people who can support emergency shelter operations by bringing and sharing their environmental awareness and knowledge.

Two key training events were held in 2009. One took place in Sri Lanka, with attendees from across the South Asia region and another in Honduras for the Central America/Caribbean region. The events were held in collaboration with RedR and World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US),

respectively. As a result of the workshops, the number of potential Shelter Cluster Environment Advisors has increased from 8 to 46 people, many of whom are multilingual and thus able to assist in a number of countries.

IF LEFT UNMANAGED, WASTE FROM A DISASTER CAN:

- hinder access, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities;
- encourage uncontrolled dumping;
- pose a public health risk; and
- damage the environment.

Extracts from ProAct’s Emergency Shelter Environmental Impact Assessment and Action Checklist used by Environment Advisors

<p>Has the community near the site been consulted about the site selection? <i>Consultation is an important way to avoid or limit conflict over the location of a shelter site. This conflict often revolves around access or control over natural resources.</i></p>	<p>If the answer is No: Communities near or surrounding the site should be involved in the site selection process.</p>
<p>Is the site located in an area subject to flooding? <i>Flooding can come from rivers/streams, lagoon overflow, heavy rains and poor drainage, or from sea waves, e.g., at high tide or during storms. Note that sites should have a slope of 2- 4 per cent to facilitate natural drainage.</i></p>	<p>If the answer is Yes: Flood-vulnerable sites should be avoided. When such sites must be used, then provisions for raising the ground level under structures, drainage systems and protective dikes are necessary. Such interventions may need to be removed during decommissioning. A local flood warning system should be established.</p>
<p>Do the physical and management plans for toilet and washing facilities incorporate procedures to: limit excessive water use; limit groundwater pollution; avoid waste water run-off; and provide for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of liquid waste? <i>For sites in areas with high groundwater levels, local infiltration of waste water and sewage may lead to groundwater pollution or to the creation of stagnant water pools. These outcomes are to be avoided because of their negative environmental and health impacts.</i></p>	<p>If the answer is No: A waste water management plan should be developed. The plan needs to provide for the collection of waste water and sewage at the site and later disposal in an environmentally sound manner. Sewage disposal may be complicated in areas with high groundwater. A single centralised disposal facility may be needed for several settlement sites in one area but should first should be approved by the appropriate government authority.</p>



Communicate, collaborate and co-ordinate with as many stakeholder groups as possible

Humanitarian and environmental issues concern individuals and groups across multiple sectors of society. Government authorities, landowners, private businesses, refugees, politicians, farmers, international agencies, local NGOs and other structures each has their own needs, interests, ideas and priorities.

ProAct Network always seeks to involve different stakeholders in its work. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives and roles, we are able to contribute to well-informed decisions and actions that deliver balanced, effective, long-lasting results, where and when they are most needed.

Assessing the environmental impacts of a proposed refugee camp in north-eastern Kenya

The Dadaab region of north-eastern Kenya is once again the scene of a growing humanitarian crisis. It currently hosts three refugee camps which have existed for more than 18 years, mainly housing people forced to flee the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Somalia. Designed for a total of 90,000 refugees, by end of 2009 the camps accommodated more than 300,000 people.

As if the trauma of conflict and displacement was not enough, refugees now find themselves living in dire conditions. The camps are congested to breaking point and there is a shortage of water, sanitation and health care facilities as well as a high risk of communicable diseases. As a result of nearly two decades of tremendous pressure on natural resources, the camps are also having a major impact on the environment. This is inevitably creating tension between the refugee and host communities as they compete for resources to survive.

Plans have been promoted for a new camp in the region, to ease congestion and to accommodate new arrivals. As part of the

preparation for any major new settlement – temporary or permanent – crucial environment-related factors need to be considered, for example: what kinds of materials are available and would be most suitable for building shelters and providing fuel? How much water will camp occupants need and where can it be found? How much waste will be generated and what is the best way of dealing with it? These kinds of needs have to be provided in a sustainable way, with minimal environmental damage.

At the request of UNHCR, CARE International and ProAct led a multi-agency team to conduct an environmental impact assessment mission in Dadaab, at the proposed site for the new camp. The assessment was carried out through a combination of desk research, on-site investigations and consultations with different stakeholder groups, including humanitarian agencies, refugee and host community leaders and Members of Parliament representing the camp area constituencies. “We made sure we involved representatives from all key sectors of the community as early on as possible,” says Grant Wroe-Street, ProAct’s Programme

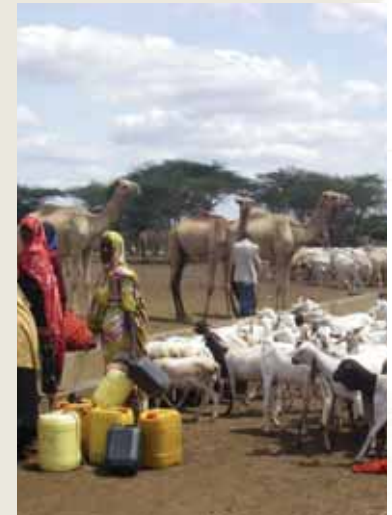
Officer. “As well as trying to seek solutions that will work for everyone, we need to ensure there is co-ordination between the different players and also that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to the environment.”

A wide range of recommendations were proposed on how environmental management in the Dadaab region could be significantly improved. Some examples were to:

- establish an Environmental Co-ordinator position within UNHCR to help establish and sustain stakeholder consultations and communications;
- develop an environmental action plan, based on stakeholder consultations and engagement;
- establish a baseline for consistent monitoring of environmental conditions and impact;
- take steps to prevent unregulated soil harvesting for brick-making and explore alternative construction methods such as rammed earth;
- clarify boundary demarcation of the camps to reduce the risk of tension between host communities and refugees;
- draw-up and implement a fuel management plan that includes the establishment of

dedicated fuelwood lots, the extension of fuel-efficient stove programmes, and the development of alternative energy supplies; and

- strengthen recycling strategies currently employed in Dadaab and apply them in the proposed new camp, if approved.



It is important for camps to set up a clear policy on livestock to avoid conflict with local populations over grazing land and to limit health risks to camp dwellers.



Healthy ecosystems contribute positively to community and environmental resilience

We tend to underestimate just how much healthy ecosystems can do for us.

As well as providing us with products essential to life and livelihoods – food, fuel, medicine and construction materials – ecosystems act as natural, dynamic barriers that can help protect people from natural hazards and the impacts of climate change. For example:

- forests can reduce the level of immediate rainfall run-off, help prevent soil erosion, help ensure slope stability, regulate stream flow and reduce the impacts of storm surges;
- wetlands and other ecosystems can also be managed to reduce the impact of floods and regulate water flow; and
- natural geological systems such as sedimentation and long-shore drift can be harnessed to facilitate the development of barrier islands, providing added protection to vulnerable coastal communities.

Sound environmental management can reduce the scale and occurrence of certain disasters. The destruction of certain ecosystems, such as floodplains and forests, is endangering those communities that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural hazards.

ProAct is actively pushing for more wide-scale and informed use and protection of ecosystems to strengthen community and environmental resilience.

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction: ProAct pushes for ecosystem management to protect people

The Global Platform is the main bi-annual forum on disaster risk reduction (DRR) bringing together heads of state, senior ministers, UN agencies, NGOs, scientific and technical experts, and others. Under its current slogan 'invest today for a safer tomorrow', the event focuses on the links between climate change adaptation, poverty and DRR. At the latest event, in June 2009, environmental

management for DRR featured on the agenda for the first time.

ProAct, one of the founding partner organisations of the ISDR Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) co-organised a joint PEDRR special event called "Investing in ecosystem management for sustainable livelihoods and

disaster reduction: Challenges and solutions".

"Managing ecosystems both for disaster risk reduction and strengthened livelihood-base of communities is a particularly attractive option as climate change poses ever-increasing risks to already poor and vulnerable regions," says ProAct's Programme Officer Nina Saalismaa. "There is never going to be enough money to build sea walls that will protect all vulnerable coastal communities – nor would such an undertaking be appropriate – so countries urgently need to look into more sustainable and cost-effective solutions. One solution that shows the greatest potential for multiple benefits is ecosystem management."



A coastal forest that has been partially destroyed by a storm surge can regenerate naturally, while a concrete sea wall will require costly repair work when broken.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2009 ISDR MEETING ARE OUTLINED BELOW.

1. It is important to identify quantifiable, **science-based evidence** that clearly demonstrates the benefits of ecosystems for disaster risk reduction.
2. There is a need to **engage with a range of development and humanitarian communities** working on issues such as DRR, climate change, sustainable development, poverty reduction and biodiversity, in order to engage more effectively with policy-makers.
3. **More effective communication** tools and strategies must be developed to raise public awareness and facilitate informed policy decisions.
4. We need to maximise the involvement of **local communities** in ecosystem management and DRR.
5. Ecosystems do provide an important opportunity for reducing risk but they may not be the only method for engagement. **Other approaches** should also be explored to maximise an effective DRR response.



Community involvement creates **community ownership**

ProAct is not in favour of 'quick-fix' jobs, where the solution to a problem lasts for only as long as the funding is available to patch it up.

We know that active community engagement and involvement is key to achieving lasting results. The more involved local people are from the start, the greater the chances of a project succeeding in the long-run.

When we leave a site, we want to do it knowing that we are no longer essential there and that the community sees that the good work has only just begun.

Community-led solutions for environmental problems in Rwanda

Rwanda currently hosts about 55,000 refugees, most of them from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most live in camps where conditions are precarious and resources under strain.

There are serious environment-related problems in and around the camps. Severe soil erosion is a major concern and there is a high risk of flooding and landslides. The camps are crowded and space limited, there are poor sanitation and waste disposal facilities and latrine blocks have to be moved frequently. Wood for fuel and shelter is provided from distant sites, broadening the environmental footprint of the humanitarian operation.

These problems not only make conditions unpleasant and unsafe for camp occupants, they are at risk of leaving a permanent scar on Rwanda's rich ecological heritage and could damage the livelihoods of the host community, at the risk of becoming a new source of conflict.

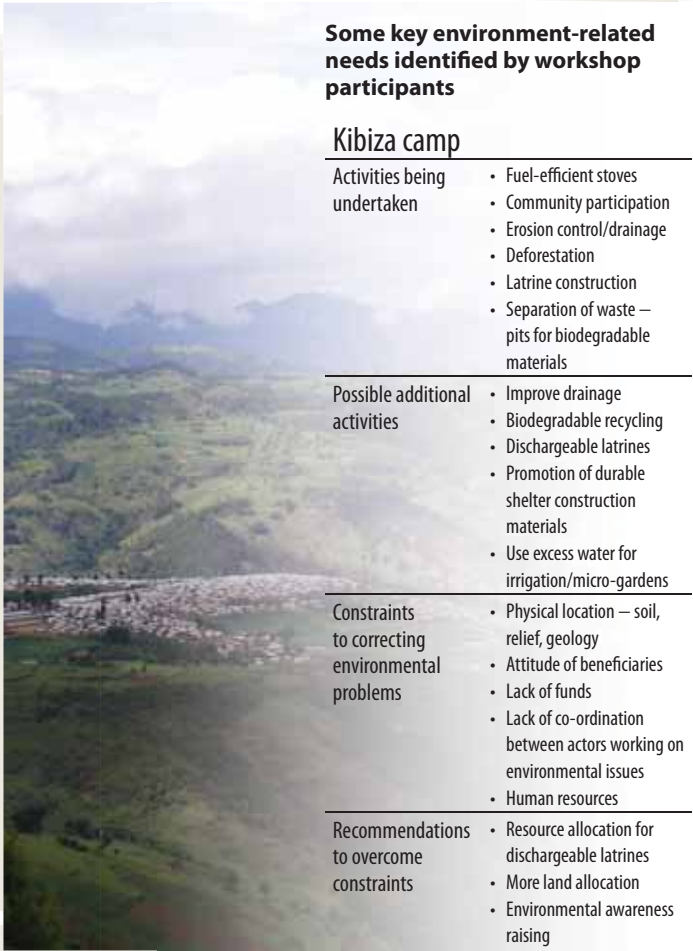
ProAct was called in to help kick-start efforts to improve the situation by bringing together people affected by the camps. It co-facilitated a five-day training programme organised by UNHCR and CARE International to examine some of the problems

and to begin planning remedial and preventative actions for these and other emerging challenges.

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds. They included refugees, representatives from national environmental groups, agency staff responsible for camp management, as well as local and national government authorities.

The workshop was highly interactive, participants willingly shared their experiences and challenges, learning from one another. The programme included a one-day visit to Kibiza refugee camp, enabling people to immediately put into practice some of the things they had learnt in the workshop.

Topics covered included: understanding the environmental impacts of humanitarian and refugee operations, exploring environmental challenges facing refugee operations in Rwanda, understanding environmental assessment tools and processes, identifying potential environmental management strategies, preparing community environmental action plans, identifying potential partners or donors for environmental activities, understanding UNHCR and government policies regarding environmental management.



Some key environment-related needs identified by workshop participants

Kibiza camp

Activities being undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel-efficient stoves • Community participation • Erosion control/drainage • Deforestation • Latrine construction • Separation of waste – pits for biodegradable materials
Possible additional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve drainage • Biodegradable recycling • Dischargeable latrines • Promotion of durable shelter construction materials • Use excess water for irrigation/micro-gardens
Constraints to correcting environmental problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical location – soil, relief, geology • Attitude of beneficiaries • Lack of funds • Lack of co-ordination between actors working on environmental issues • Human resources
Recommendations to overcome constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource allocation for dischargeable latrines • More land allocation • Environmental awareness raising

Income statement as at 31 December 2009

		CHF
Income	Project funding	867,779
	Other income	6,026
		<u>873,805</u>
Expenditure	Personnel costs	553,254
	Office and administration costs	45,901
	Professional fees	154,450
	Travel and representation	29,380
	Project costs	22,826
	Publications	18,567
	Communication	4,299
	Premises	37,416
	Financial costs	5,190
		<u>871,283</u>
	Result	Excess income over expenditure

Message from the Director

2009 was a watershed for ProAct, in many ways.

I say this because even though we are a relatively new organisation, in the past year it became clear that we embrace enormous experience in the fields of environmental management, humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. This is one of our greatest strengths, being able to draw on a wealth of institutional experience from around the world. The essential combination of practical and theoretical experience – knowing what might or may not work in certain situations – and our proven ability to transform and transfer such knowledge into practical action on the ground is something that cannot be acquired overnight. Just one of our core strengths is being able to deliver such assistance, where and when it is most needed.

That is what ProAct means to me as an individual. I see our role as being able to respond to many different and often competing needs, quickly, quietly and effectively. Partly on account of our size, we are able to respond to requests rapidly but, equally, we can remain flexible to the needs and demands of a situation. We are able to advise and support partner organisations on environment-related issues and then, when the time is right, step back as they continue with their work. People – especially those affected by conflict or disasters – are at the centre of what we do, so we have the experience of being able to work in difficult, challenging circumstances.

One of the key strengths of our organisation is our ability to span the divide between traditional environmental groups and the large humanitarian organisations. We have worked both sides of this divide, talk regularly with colleagues and partners from both sides, and strive to ensure that they too communicate and work more effectively together. That way everyone is a winner.

Watersheds, however, flow both ways and while I am confident of the added value which I know our work can bring, it has not always been easy to keep our support and standards at the level where we wish to see them, largely on account of funding uncertainties. This continues to detract from our moving forward, to developing a cohesive and comprehensive network of expertise and partnerships, and being able to provide the broad outreach and support that we want to achieve.

ProAct was far from being alone in this situation in 2009 and, again, I take pride in the fact that during uncertain times I had an absolutely solid team behind me in our office. This, together with the positive reactions and feedback I get from our partners – small and large – is very encouraging and it makes me all the more determined to continue to ensure that ProAct's work remains relevant and of high quality.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Stone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Director
ProAct Network

Our relevance shines out in the fact that even during some of the most difficult financial moments globally in 2009, ProAct was attracting new partners and new funding streams on multi-year projects. Such confidence is of course enormously gratifying and I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of our supporters, partners and work colleagues for their active support and encouragement in 2009.

ProAct will always be at a watershed, though increasingly I hope that this is a watershed where ecosystems are well managed from a disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and livelihoods perspective! 2010 will see important changes to our institutional structure including a diversification of our programmes to other parts of the world. In this we look forward to establishing new partnerships and to working with more and more communities in different settings and in different challenging environments.

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Caroline Wood – Web Master

Grant Wroe-Street – Head, Programme Coordination



In 2009, we would also like to acknowledge working with the following individuals in a professional capacity: Chris Taylor, Charles Kelly, John Carstensen, Josh Levene, Martin Bjerregaard and Paul Venton. We look forward to continued collaboration with these and other colleagues in 2010.

Website

As well as details of ProAct policies, projects and events, **www.proactnetwork.org** pulls together a range of tools and resources, including field guides for practitioners on environmental management in humanitarian operations, data collection toolkits and key research papers on issues related to the environment and resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises.

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