



Experience by Agency For Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD)

In Yumbe (East Africa/Uganda)

Because of a significant growth of the refugee population in Yumbe, the demand for natural resources has drastically increased. The high consumption led to substantial scarcity and increased difficulties to collect firewood. Refugees had to fall back on bush burning to gain access to wood resources. This resulted in an accelerated environmental degradation and in conflicts with the host communities.

AFARD trained youth groups in tree nursery and assisted the communities in planting fast-growing tree species.

IMPACT

- Creation of income opportunities for youth in an environmentally sustainable business
- Less exposure of women to risks during firewood collection

Experience description

The unsustainable strain on natural resources that followed the growth of the refugee population has forced refugees to walk increasingly long distances to collect firewood. This posed a risk especially to women of getting abused along the way. Because of the steady advance of environmental degradation, AFARD promoted tree planting. Instead of just distributing tree seedlings, AFARD trained young people to raise tree seedlings themselves. Over 41,000 tree seedlings were bought and distributed to both refugees and host communities. The youth groups then assisted in nursery management, increasing tree survival rates. Local environment committees were formed and raised awareness among communities for environmental conservation. The youth nursery entrepreneurs even expanded their green business beyond the scope of the project.



Other characteristics



FURTHER IMPACTS

- Skill transfer to young generations for self-employment
- Reduction of conflicts related to bush burning
- Contribution to UNHCR environmental efforts



CHALLENGES

- Refugees were reluctant to timber tree planting that takes long to harvest and requires large land areas
- Drought affected tree survival and growth



LESSONS LEARNED

- Training in nursery management is more sustainable than handing out tree seedlings
- Tree nursery is an overlooked but highly profitable business
- Integrating environmental concerns and humanitarian aid increases conservation