The Women’s Refugee Commission’s
Fuel & Firewood Initiative

Opportunities for Cross-Application of Cooking Fuel Resources between Rural & Humanitarian Settings

USEA – SAWIE Exchange, May 14 2009
Women’s Refugee Commission

- Policy & advocacy NGO, founded 1989
- Focus: Improve lives & protect the rights of displaced women, children & young people
- Identify issues & gaps in humanitarian response
- Conduct field research
- Advocate for solutions & systemic change
Fuel & Firewood Initiative

- Women and girls are vulnerable to violence when collecting firewood
Fuel & Firewood Initiative

- Field work in Darfur, Nepal
- “Beyond Firewood” report & recommendations
Report Findings

• Food distributed by WFP must be cooked

• Multi-sectoral issue* – lack of communication

• Most fuel-related initiatives ad hoc

• No one agency responsible

• No systematic approach to ensure safe access to fuel
What is needed?

- Policy framework
  Improve coordination across sectors
- Funding
- New ideas
Fuel & Firewood Initiative: Components

- Co-chaired IASC Task Force SAFE
- Secretariat of technical network
- Ongoing work in field sites
IASC Task Force SAFE

• **IASC:** main UN/non-UN humanitarian coordination body, Geneva & NY based

• **Duration:** May 2007 – November 2008

• **Co-chairs:**
  - Women’s Commission (via InterAction);
  - UNHCR;
  - WFP

• **Purpose:**

  *Promote safe access to appropriate energy, via improved coordination. Focus on multi-sectoral nature of fuel in humanitarian settings.*
Multi-sectoral approach:

Task Force’s issue areas:

- Camp management
- Emergency shelter
- Environment
- Food/nutrition
- Health
- Information/education/communication
- Livelihoods
- Protection
Main Task Force Outputs
endorsed by IASC in November 08

• **Matrix** on cluster & agency roles and responsibilities for ensuring development of a coordinated, multi-sectoral fuel strategy: *who does what, when?*

• **Decision-tree diagrams** on factors affecting choice of fuel strategy: *addresses the fact that there is no “magic bullet” fuel solution*
www.fuelnetwork.org

- Home of International Network on Household Energy in Humanitarian Settings
- Information-sharing platform for fuels applicable to humanitarian settings
- Bridge communication gap between developers, practitioners
- Open to all
- Currently building online technical support capacity
Finding new ideas:

“Beyond Firewood” Conference

New Delhi, December 2008
Conference 2008, New Delhi

- Bring together developers, implementers and users of fuels and energy technologies, inc. from outside humanitarian system

- Create **evidence base** for fuel-related interventions
What the Conference Accomplished

- Created new linkages; new partnerships
- Brought new actors into humanitarian fold
- Opened eyes of humanitarians to potential new options for fuel response
Findings

- No magic bullet solutions...
  - *But* common concerns, challenges and solutions across diverse settings:
    - Regions
    - Types of populations
    - Phases of response

- Need *more* options
Common Concerns & Challenges:

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

- Engage beneficiaries in product and program design
- Do not “parachute” in new technologies
- Importance of internal *and* external monitoring & evaluation – key to sustainability; long-term donor support
Common Concerns & Challenges:

**LIVELIHOODS**
- Income-increasing and cost-decreasing
- Link with household-level livelihoods AND market development
- Other uses for wood besides fuel

**PROTECTION**
- Conflicts over wood scarcity not limited to humanitarian settings
Findings, continued

Communication & coordination are key:
- Context & user behavior imp’t to any designer: humanitarian focus on this is not unique
- Focus on these similarities to bridge “language” gaps

Multi-Sectoral Issue:
- No effective way of addressing any part of fuel response in isolation
Success Stories:

Making the link between humanitarian & development contexts

- Gaia Association (Ethiopia): ethanol and stove distribution
- Nepal: biogas for refugees and hosts
- Others?
Next Steps

- Continue to bridge gaps between policy-implementation; technical experts-humanitarians

- Conference presentations, report on www.fuelnetwork.org

- Building momentum from conference: Join & contribute to the Network!

- Dissemination & implementation of Task Force outputs
“Cooking fuel is much more than just the means to cook food. It lies at the heart of effective protection and assistance efforts.”