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“Can agroecological farming feed the world?
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

Building the evidence base for gender responsive circular economy innovations for food and energy security of refugee and host communities in East Africa

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Abstract

At Tropentag 2020, an international consortium reported on the development and implementation of a gender responsive circular economy concept for both refugee and host communities in six refugee settlements in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. In this paper, the same international consortium returns to present the progress made and the early stages in the building of an evidence base for gender responsive circular economy solutions for refugee settlements in East Africa. While the technical interventions – home gardens, agroforestry, fuel briquettes and improved stoves – are now in operation, with early indicators showing positive impacts from the home gardens, the social and environmental challenges at the macro scale are increasing across the region. In just the last two years, the forcible displacement crisis in East Africa has further escalated, pushing the number of refugees up from 3.2 million to 5 million, with the recent conflict in Ethiopia adding substantially to these numbers. For example, in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda the displacement figures now stand respectively as 0.5 million, 5.1 million and 1.5 million people. These rapid changes are only accelerating the competition over resources such as firewood, fertile land and water and increasing this risk of social tension between refugees and their surrounding host communities. In response to these challenges, using local partners and a participatory approach, a training manual in home garden, agroforestry and energy technologies has been developed and used for the ‘training of trainers’ and the subsequent delivery of training to over 1,360 beneficiaries from both host and refugee communities. This has included the implementation of over 700 home gardens, with fruit and multipurpose trees also planted in each garden. In this paper, the progress and challenges from the project are discussed. The early evidence of the impacts from the project is presented and then in conclusion the future directions that the project participants wish to proceed with are given.

Keywords: Circular economy, East Africa, gender, refugees, resource recovery and reuse