



SUDAN MONTHLY UPDATE December 2005

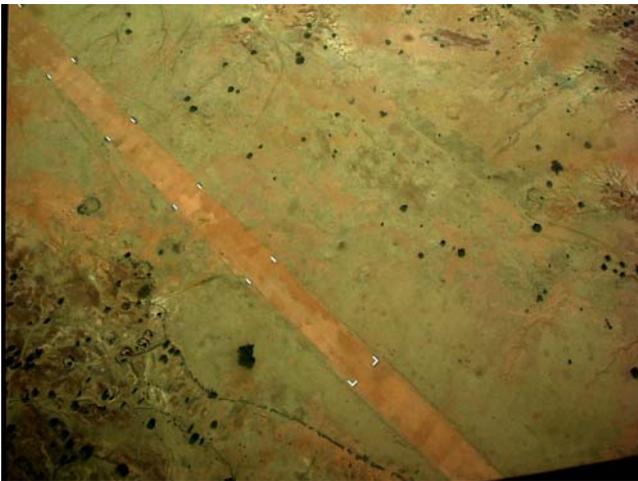
Darfur Humanitarian Programs Creating Good Will in Eastern Chad

Although much of the attention has been focused on the Darfur humanitarian crisis, 200,000 refugees from Sudan now reside in 12 refugee camps within a 60-mile strip of Chad's eastern border with Sudan. Like their kinfolk in Darfur, these refugees depend on the international community for all their basic necessities, including food, water, shelter, health and nutrition services, and security. The host communities initially warmly received the refugees, but competition for water, pastoral land, and firewood has begun to upset the precarious equilibrium between the local population and their natural resources.



Chadian women benefit from USAID-supported food-for-work programs in Farchana, Chad. Photo by USAID/Stan Stalla

In early 2005, the UN began assisting the local population in Chad most affected by the influx of Sudanese refugees, supported by USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/DCHA). Through USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) grants to NGOs, Chadians, often for the first time, began



Airstrip built through USAID-supported WFP food-for-work program. Photo by USAID/Stan Stalla

receiving basic health and education services. The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) also set aside emergency food aid resources—supported by USAID—to undertake short-term, food-for-work activities. Through a community-based selection process, the most vulnerable Chadians began receiving food rations in exchange for their labor. In one food-for-work activity, Chadians built a new airstrip outside of Farchana town. With the new airstrip, the humanitarian community will be able to effectively meet the needs of refugees, formerly isolated by floods, when the rainy season returns next May. In addition, hundreds of the most vulnerable households in Farchana have received food

rations through USAID-supported initiatives.

Non-Darfur Sudan Humanitarian Programs

USAID/DCHA Visits Nasir Town

On November 21, in the first visit of a U.S. Government (USG) official in more than a decade, the USAID/DCHA Sudan Deputy Team Leader traveled to the garrison town of Nasir, in eastern Upper Nile State, Southern Sudan. Nasir, a small densely-populated town on the Sobat River, served as a British administrative center prior to Sudan's independence in 1956. Old and abandoned government offices line the riverbank and fill the town center, and residences and shops are built of mud and sticks with thatched roofs. The town, however, has fallen into disrepair over the years. The riverbank has eroded and sections of the old main street and several buildings have collapsed into the river. Since independence, nearly all the edifices from the colonial era have begun to crumble and are in extremely poor condition.

With no potable water in Nasir, people drink directly from the river. The only available healthcare in the area is provided by a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinic, which only treats patients with visceral leishmaniasis. More than 2,000 students, many of whom walk for hours everyday from surrounding villages, attend classes in Nasir's overcrowded and poorly built classrooms, many of which have walls made of sorghum stalks. Twenty-one young teachers have returned from more than a decade in Ethiopia, where they were educated in refugee camps, and are teaching as volunteers in the town's primary schools. Because they teach in English, they receive no salaries. Currently, only teachers who conduct classes in Arabic receive support from Khartoum.

The Sobat River is the main trade artery of eastern Upper Nile, providing a vital link to Juba, Malakal, and Kosti, as well as eastward to the Gambela Region of Ethiopia during the high water season from June to November. In mid-November, several large steamers arrived from Malakal, carrying both cargo and several hundred internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning from the north. According to the USAID/DCHA Deputy Team Leader, loading and unloading cargo in Nasir is complicated by the lack of a dock on the riverbank. Despite these challenges, the town's market area was packed with petty traders.

Upon arriving in Nasir, the USAID/DCHA representative was welcomed at the airplane landing strip by a large crowd of singing school children. He then proceeded to a courtesy meeting with the northern Sudanese officers overseeing military operations and security in the town. In addition, the USAID/DCHA Deputy held subsequent meetings with the Southern Sudanese acting commissioner, department heads, women, and youth leaders to discuss primary needs in the area. According to local residents, the most urgent needs include a wall to stop further collapse of the river bank, reconstruction of primary schools in the area, potable water, training and income generating activities for war-affected youth, road construction to connect Nasir to other cities in the region, and extended medical services.

In conjunction with implementing partners, USAID plans to increase essential services to Nasir town and surrounding villages in the coming months.