

SUDAN: FLOODS

5 November 1999

appeal no. 21/99

situation report no. 2

period covered: 4 August - 5 October 1999

Since the launch of the Appeal on 25 August, an ongoing series of floods have worsened the situation in specific areas of Sudan. The Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), supported by the Federation and with the limited resources available, has mounted an effective response to provide assistance to the victims. Further support is required to assist those affected by the most recent flooding.

The context

Unusually early and heavy rains in late July and early August caused severe flash floods in a number of states in Sudan. On 2 August, the rains in Khartoum state caused extensive damage in Umbada province (west Omdurman) destroying thousands of houses. Reports from the River Nile, North Kordofan, Gezira, Sinnar, Kassala and North Kordofan states also indicated significant damage to a number of areas, and consequent homelessness and lack of shelter for hundreds of families.

Many of those affected not only lost their homes and livelihoods, but were also exposed to the elements and water borne diseases. High numbers of diarrhoea cases were observed which, in conjunction with the usual peak of malaria, stretched the capacity of the health care system.

With the initial high risk of flooding over, the main concern focused on health care and extending protection to the homeless, especially with the approach of winter.

Latest events

In Gezira state flash floods at the end of August hit six villages close to the border of Sinnar state severely affecting houses, dispensary's, and health centres. Furthermore, four camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were partially damaged, leading to sanitary problems and a deteriorating health status.

A flash flood on 29 August damaged 15 villages in the Al Sukr locality, Singa town, and Sinnar state. In the four accessible villages, 230 houses were destroyed. In two other villages an outbreak of diarrhoea affected 1,144 people with 67 deaths.

The most disastrous event struck the town of Dongola, Northern state. Torrential rains in early September caused the Nile to break through flood defences at Sheikh Sherif (some 10 km south of Dongola town in Northern state). Despite the recently improved flood defences, the combination of very high waters and strong winds overwhelmed the flood barriers, eventually swamping the town of Dongola and the surrounding area.

The damage caused to the town has been substantial: 6,000 houses, 44 governmental units, 5 schools, 6 mosques, and one large and 30 small agricultural projects were lost. Important infrastructure assets were destroyed including health units and electrical and water supplies. Some people who were made homeless received plastic sheeting or tarpaulins, but for many the approaching winter is still a threat. Schooling was interrupted and many classrooms were allocated for housing. Due to the flooding of the sewerage system, contaminated water caused a considerable rise in diarrhoea cases.

As late as 1 October, heavy rains struck Jabalin province in the White Nile state. In a population of 28,000 people, 4,663 lost their homes.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

SRCS State Branch offices in all states affected by floods have mobilised over 3,500 volunteers to assist the people made homeless in distributing the limited supplies available. Health centres and clinics run by the Society have extended the services but are now facing a shortage of necessary drugs.

The team responsible for co-ordination at HQ has collected information from the State Branches and prepared distribution plans accordingly. Due to the focus on responding to the immediate needs as well as dealing with ongoing projects, reporting on actions taken has been delayed. The President and the Secretary General of the SRCS have participated in visits to the affected areas and, together with IFRC representatives and SRCS State Branches, assessments have been carried out in all states to determine the impact of the disaster and how SRCS can contribute to mitigate the effects of the floods.

The Operation •

Although the initial response was timely and effective thanks to the availability of in-country stockpiles of non-food items, the ongoing assistance has been hampered by a lack of cash contributions and the time factor in clearing imported goods into Sudan. Only the air freighted goods financed by the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and British Red Cross made it possible for the SRCS to provide timely assistance.

Following the severe flash floods in Umbada province, Khartoum state, the SRCS branch distributed blankets and plastic jerrycans to 3,910 affected families in two localities: Al Bugaa and Al Amir. The relief team also pumped away stagnant water and sprayed against mosquitoes. In total, 85 volunteers were engaged in the disaster response, co-ordinating activities with the local committees in the area and the State Ministry of Health (SMOH).

In the River Nile state, 2,100 blankets and 2,100 plastic jerrycans were distributed in early August, followed by drugs for the treatment of diarrhoea and malaria donated by UNICEF and directed to three affected areas. The medicines are expected to cover the needs for three months.

In Gezira state, 150 volunteers were mobilised in early September, distributing blankets, plastic jerrycans and essential drugs. Later in September, after yet more flooding, drugs from NEHK and cholera kits were made available to the IDP camps and Al Managil Civil Hospital, operated by the SRCS. The equivalent of USD 800 was made available from local SRCS funds to allow for the additional purchase of drugs.

To assist victims of the disaster at Dongola in the Northern state, the SRCS headquarters immediately sent locally procured medicines and a water tanker on loan from the Khartoum state water project. The

ICRC put another water tanker (and later a second truck) at the disposal of the Northern State Branch and also donated 2,000 plastic sheets, 2,500 blankets, 550 kitchen sets and 1,500 jerrycans to the National Society. On 3 October, 200 tents and 3,000 blankets arrived from the Red Crescent Society of the UAE by air directly to Dongola. The SRCS at Dongola was quickly reinforced by Federation logistics staff only days after the disaster, which included a field vehicle with mobile HF radio from Khartoum and experienced volunteers from Khartoum State Branch. The Society has played a major role in assisting and co-ordinating the disaster response to the victims in Dongola. The Branch office has also facilitated various missions to Dongola including ECHO, Spanish Red Cross, and UN/INGO assessment teams.

SRCS/IFRC •

The Sudan Delegation is assisting the SRCS in co-ordinating international assistance and liaising with the Secretariat and the Regional Delegation in Nairobi. A special effort is being made to enhance the SRCS logistics and reporting capacity.

Constraints and successes •

The major problem encountered has been the lack of in-country supplies for a fast and adequate response. The limited stock available was soon exhausted and donated blankets and tarpaulins have not yet arrived. An initial budget of CHF 414,710 was approved on 14 September, and later a verbal approval for an additional budget came through, but this has yet to be formalised. Subsequently, local and international orders for much needed relief items have had to wait.

Reporting is an acknowledged weakness, and there are plans for a training session to be carried out in mid-November involving the senior staff of all branches involved in the project.

Volunteers mobilisation has been a success, and in spite of limited resources, the SRCS branches have played a significant role in the assistance to the victims especially as there has been very little input from other sources. The important role of the SRCS is underlined by the fact that UNICEF, INGOs, and State Government bodies have decided to channel their assistance through the Society.

Outstanding needs

Blankets, tarpaulins/plastic sheeting, essential drugs (for diarrhoea and malaria) and sprayers, pumps, and chemicals remain outstanding needs. Blankets and tarpaulins are due to arrive within the month and funds will soon be available for the procurement of other items, including drugs and chemicals, to prevent the further spread of malaria.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The SRCS and the Federation are participating in all co-ordination meetings initiated by the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) and/or the UN (UNDMT/UNDP and UNICEF). Information obtained through SRCS State Branches is being shared with other humanitarian organisations. The SRCS, as a member of the Higher Council of Civil Defence, is taking part in assessment missions and meetings. Interventions in Khartoum and Dongola have been well covered by the media, newspapers and television. The SRCS has also video recorded several events in the field, some of it being offered and accepted by the broadcasters.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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