

SUDAN: INFLUX OF ERITREAN REFUGEES

*21 September,
2000*

*appeal no. 12/2000; Programme extension until December 31, 2000
situation report no. 3
period covered: 11 August - 15 September, 2000*

The operation is running smoothly and the majority of needs have been covered with timely contributions from ECHO and the various Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. Efficient co-ordination between the government and the various aid organisations working in Kassala has made it possible to fulfil the Federation's initial objective of support to the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in effectively delivering assistance to the Eritrean refugees.

The context

Renewed warfare between Eritrea and Ethiopia over disputed border areas broke out in southern areas of Eritrea, following incursions by Ethiopia, on May 12, 2000. The conflict prompted a mass exodus of the Eritrean civilian population from affected areas as well as provoking the flight of populations north of the war zone who also evacuated their homes. Hundreds of thousands of Eritreans became internally displaced and significant numbers from the western areas around Tessaney fled across the border into eastern Sudan, south and east of the town of Kassala. Initially, around 12,000 Eritreans had crossed into the Sudan beginning on May 18, mainly from the Tessaney area, however as the conflict zone spread deeper into Eritrean territory fresh waves of refugees entered the Sudan from other areas including Barentu, Galooj and Terbeliya. By mid-June when a ceasefire (brokered by Algeria acting under the auspices of the OAU) came into force, some 92,000 Eritreans had entered the Sudan.

Eritrean refugees entering the Sudan came into the country through seven points running from north to south along the border east of Kassala and settled into four camps. Two camps, Gulsa and Laffah were located around 20 kms southeast of Kassala on the north and south banks of the Gash river. The other two camps, Gergaf and Shagarab lay a further 100 kms south of Kassala to the east of Khashm El Girba town. The camp at Gergaf was moved to Shagarab in mid-June.

Latest events

Following negotiations between the Sudanese and Eritrean Governments a UNHCR-facilitated programme of voluntary repatriation commenced on July 25, resulting during the month of August in the return of some 23,000 Eritreans. Most of these repatriates are farmers from the camps at Laffa and Shagarab who are able to plant their fields before the end of the rains. However, despite information campaigns involving the Eritrean authorities, the Sudanese Commission on Refugees (CoR) and UNHCR, the majority of refugees have so far been reluctant to return for the following reasons:

- Many Eritreans believe that despite the ceasefire the conflict is not yet over. They point to the propaganda war between Eritrea and Ethiopia as an indication that it may recommence after the end of the rains. During September these fears increased resulting in a small but steady trickle back into the camps.
- Most young men, eligible for military service, are afraid to return because they fear conscription.
- While the farmers have an economic incentive to return in order to plant before the season ends, much of the refugee urban trading population believe they have nothing to return to as reports indicate that most towns in Eritrea occupied by the Ethiopian army were looted. Additionally, the nomadic refugee population may well remain on the Sudanese side of the border while grazing is available during the rains.

The table below gives the peak camp population statistics on July 1 (when UNHCR and CoR stopped the registration process) and the repatriations for each camp. These figures are those officially registered and it is likely that they overstate the actual number of refugees, especially as there was a steady number of people recrossing the border in the early days. UNHCR intends to carry out a recount in Shagarab when the existing three camps there are consolidated.

CAMP	POPULATION AT 1/7/00	REPATRIATIONS AS AT 07/09/00	CURRENT POPULATION
Gulsa	31,306	3,899	27,407
Laffah	38,122	6,028	32,094
Shagarab	22,744	13,175	9,569
TOTAL:	92,172	23,102	69,070

With an expected caseload of not less than 60,000 by the end of September, the need for an extension of SRCS assistance to the refugees is beyond doubt, even if the repatriation program continues more successfully than during the last two weeks. With the currently fragile political situation, the SRCS has prepared contingency plans for a sudden new influx.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The SRCS was the first agency to deploy staff at the entry points following the initial influx. SRCS volunteers since then have assisted CoR and UNHCR with the distribution of non-food items and agencies such as WFP, GOAL and International Islamic Relief (IIR) in the distribution of their relief commodities and shelter construction.

Although the SRCS was able to provide material and human resources covering a broad range of relief activities in the camp, its primary role over the course of the emergency has been to provide health care within the camps and a referral system for patients needing care at either the SRCS hospital at

Wad Sherife or the Ministry of Health hospital in Kassala. During August-September, SRCS has been running one clinic in Laffah and two clinics - one including an inpatient ward - in Gulsa camp. At the peak of the emergency SRCS deployed some 400 volunteers within the camps. Most of these were recruited from within the refugee community itself. Presently an average of 150 volunteers are available on a daily basis.

The International Federation has continued to support the operation in a number of ways. The Relief Delegate, seconded by British Red Cross in early June, returned for a second month from mid-August to mid-September to follow up progress and to assist the branch in implementing the shelter programme. The Relief Delegate's role was furthermore to support and advise the SRCS State Branch with regard to the Federation input to the operation. This includes reporting requirements. Additionally a telecommunications expert from the Federation's Regional Delegation in Nairobi undertook a mission in Kassala to install radio equipment.

The ICRC has been assisting the operation with water delivery and distribution up to the end of August.

Outstanding needs

There is still a need for shelter material since the refugees are allowed to keep what they have received when returning home. Blankets, jerrycans, mosquito nets and other non-food items are required for SRCS' contingency planning.

Storage capacity available at the branch consists of two Rubb Halls and was adequate for the quantity of supplies stored and distributed for this particular operation. Warehousing and other logistics systems including medical logistics, however, badly need upgrading. The delegation's Health Delegate will participate in this technical assistance in order to prepare for extending this capacity building element to other State Branches.

The SRCS's Kassala vehicle fleet (4 x 4) is old and in poor condition. Maintenance costs are high. In addition to 4x4 vehicles already ordered through the appeal budget, an ambulance is needed for the referral system which is totally dependant on SRCS.

With UNHCR covering part of the SRCS operation (an implementing agreement was signed in mid-August) and the appeal fully funded, additional funds needed to cover the proposed programme extension period is CHF 240,000 to pay for further supplies as listed above.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Overall responsibility for co-ordination of the refugee programme rests with the CoR. The SRCS maintains an active relationship with CoR, passing on information about its activities, lobbying for change or improvements in programme services where it feels necessary and co-ordinating its distributions in the camps with other agencies involved in the same sectors. All SRCS distributions are controlled and monitored by the SRCS (although sometimes CoR participates). In general, the SRCS maintains a healthy independent line from CoR which sometimes appears to act under political pressures. The SRCS's experience and resources are greatly valued by the state authorities and the branch is able to remain impartial.

UNHCR has identified the SRCS as a major contributor to the health services in Gulsa and Laffah and thus (as mentioned above) decided to support the National Society financially for a period of four months.

The main partner agencies are as follows:

AGENCY	MODE OF CO-OPERATION	COMMENTS
Commission on Refugees	Co-ordination	Ongoing
UNHCR	Partial funding of SRCS clinics	Ongoing
MSF-Holland	Construction of clinics and feeding centres	Completed, handed over to SRCS
ICRC	Water delivery and distribution	Phased out
International Rescue Committee, GOAL (Ireland), International Islamic Relief (IIR)	SRCS volunteers assisted with distribution of shelter materials	Completed
Spanish Red Cross	Distribution of tarpaulins and BP-5 biscuits	Completed
Saudi Red Crescent UAE Red Crescent	Distribution of food and non-food relief items	Completed

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

SUDAN: Influx of Eritrean Refugees						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No.12/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			22/09/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,294,270		TOTAL COVERAGE 96.2%
Balance carried forward from 1999				0		
AMERICAN - GOVT /PRM		150,000	USD	253,275	14.07.00	
AUSTRALIA - RC		10,000	AUD	9,835	23.05.00	
BRITISH - GOVT/RC (DFID)		245,000	GBP	617,400	01.08.00	SHELTER, MOSQUITO NETS, CHEMICALS, TRANSPORT, VOLUNTEER SUPPORT
ECHO		285,000	EUR	443,517	26.06.00	ECHO/SDN/210/2000/012021
JAPANESE - RC				76,000	30.06.00	
MONACO - RC		60,000	FRF	14,376	22.06.00	
NETHERLANDS - RC		50,000	NLG	35,674	24.05.00	
NETHERLANDS - RC		32,600	NLG	23,018	29.06.00	LOCAL TRANSPORT/STORAGE, SALARIES LOCAL STAFF, TRAINING NS STAFF & VOLUNTEERS, RELIEF GOODS FOR LOCAL PURCHASE
SPANISH - RC		5,000,000	PTS	46,760	25.05.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		750,000	SEK	141,225	05.07.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,661,080	CHF	72.4%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
BRITISH - RC				10,000	02.08.00	RELIEF DELEGATE, 2 months
DENMARK - GOVT/RC		500,000	DKK	105,600	25.05.00	2120 TARPAULINS, INCL. PART OF TRANSPORT COSTS (FROM KENYA)
DENMARK - RC		207,000	DKK	43,718	25.05.00	880 TARPAULINS, INCL. PART OF TRANSPORT COSTS (FROM KENYA)
NETHERLANDS - RC		82,000	NLG	57,899	08.06.00	
SPANISH - RC		35,068,112	ESP	327,957	25.05.00	2600 KITCHEN KITS, 3000 PLASTIC SHEETINGS, 36'000 HIGH ENERGY BISCUITS, AND FLIGHT COST
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				545,174	CHF	23.8%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		703,650	AED	325,679	15.07.00	100 TENTS, 1000 BLANKETS, 375 CARTONS GARMENTS, 1 WATER TANKER, 1 AMBULANCE, 420 CARTONS DATES
SAUDI ARABIA - RC		1,651,163	SAR	743,355	26.08.00	MEDICAL MATERIALS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				1,069,034	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PSD513						