

# ***SUDAN: FIRE OUTBREAK***

*June 14, 1999*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 1/99***

### ***The Disaster***

A catastrophic fire started in the village of Um-Sayala in North Kordofan on April 14, spreading rapidly and continuing for 2 weeks until May 1. Approximately 650 huts and 235 "rabukas" (enclosures used as animal enclosures/cooking areas/storage) were destroyed, and all inhabitants (a total of 1,150 people) lost their property (sheep, cattle, tools, and food reserves). Only the mosque and the school were saved.

Um-Sayala is located about 230 kms northeast of the town of El Obeid. The nature of the land is sandy and dry. There are no paved roads which makes access to the area extremely difficult, particularly during the rainy season which is expected to begin in June. The village will then be isolated from the urban centres such as Um Rawaba.

After some delay caused by operational and organisational constraints as well as the isolated nature of the area, the North Kordofan branch of the Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC), in collaboration with the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), El Obeid and a member of the Wad Ashana locality, conducted a survey in mid-May to collect relevant information and make a recommendation for a possible rehabilitation intervention. In addition to the destruction of residences, the assessment indicated other losses consisted of 360 sacks of sesame and sorghum, 400 sacks of beans, 50 hens and 10 goats.

A second Federation/SRC/HAC Khartoum assessment mission visited the site on June 2-3 in order to prepare a comprehensive plan of action.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

On May 1, the Minister of Social and Cultural Affairs for North Kordofan urged those NGOs working in the area to consider providing support to the affected population. People have so far been stretching their supplies and managing to subsist with minor support provided from Care International (100 blankets) and national NGOs (50 bags of sorghum, 2 bags of sugar, 2 cartons of medicines), local government (including 100 bags of sorghum) and neighbours and relatives. With only two small NGO's present in the area and not in a position to assist, the SRC responded to the request of participating in the assessment mission.

The SRC has already provided some 120 blankets and 50 jerrycans to the village from existing disaster preparedness stocks in Khartoum. The local government and some national NGOs have provided approximately 25 mt of sorghum and some sugar and blankets and neighbouring villages have lent limited supplies. The Um Rawaba province also allocated some money, which has made it possible for the people to rebuild 50 huts to house the elderly and some of the children.

The local popular committee in the village whose role it is to mobilise the community during emergencies has been active in generating support to this situation. The committee is well organised and enjoy the full support of the local population.

In terms of health, there has only been one death due to the fire. Since the health situation seems to be stable, there is presently no need for any intervention in this field.

## *Needs*

**Food** : people are urgently in need of food for the remaining two months (sorghum 27.6 mt, lentils 4.1 mt and oil 2.1 mt) until the next crop is harvested in September. Since WFP-Sudan is not in a position to provide the required food assistance, the Red Cross has been requested to contribute. Local purchase is possible in Khartoum.

**Seeds** : approximately 14 mt of seeds (one sack of sorghum per household) is required.

**Shelter** : people have sought temporary shelter under trees. However, the rainy season is now imminent and there is an immediate need to build new huts. This work is now underway, but there is a lack of construction material in the area: nearest supplies are approximately 150 kms away. During the most recent visit to the village, the local popular committee requested support for permanent housing rather than temporary plastic sheeting. Bamboo and straw roofs are not available locally, and will need to be supplied from Um Rawaba.

**Other non-food assistance**: additional blankets (2 per household) as well as jerrycans are needed.

**Volunteers** : 10 SRC volunteers from El Obeid branch will be needed for 1 week to organise the food distribution in the village. Monitoring from the SRC headquarters is still necessary given the weakness of the local branch -- the reason for planning two visits in the next 2 months.

A preliminary budget for 2 months' support to 1,150 people includes procurement and transportation of food items, construction material, jerrycans and blankets, State Branch costs (transportation and volunteer incentives), and monitoring from the SRC headquarters.

### **Preliminary Budget Breakdown (CHF)**

Food : Sorghum (27.6 mt, including transport)	4,478
Lentils (4.14 mt, including. transport)	5,630
Edible oil (2.07 mt, including transport)	3,884
Seeds (14.4 mt, including transport)	3,271
Blankets (500 pieces, including transport)	3,594
Jerrycans (300 pieces, including transport)	885
Construction material and transport (250 houses, local purchase)	7,375
Support for 10 volunteers for 1 week	207
Monitoring (2 trips)	2,500

**TOTAL** **31,824**

CHF 32,000 will be released from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to allow the SRC to initiate activities and to carry out the Plan of Action without delay.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta  
Director  
Africa Department