

Sudan: Influx of Eritrean Refugees

**Preliminary Appeal
number: 12/2000**

Monday 22 May 2000

***THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,310,393
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST UP TO 80,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 2 MONTHS***

Summary

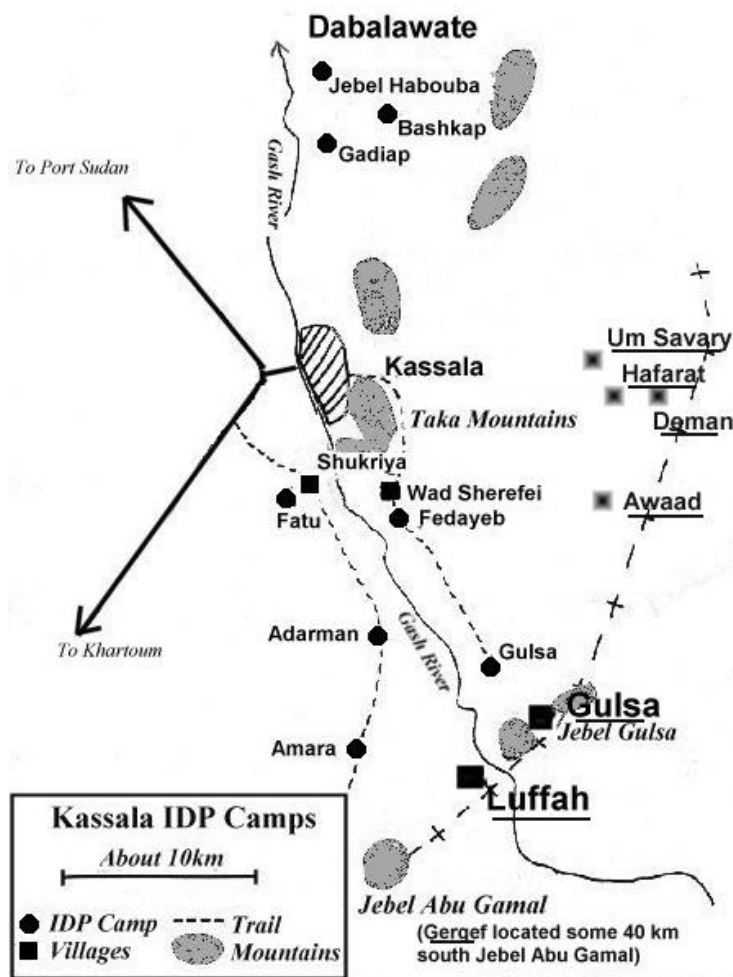
On Thursday 18 May refugees from Eritrea began crossing the border into eastern Sudan, several kilometres from Kassala town. The influx continued over the following days and around 30,000 people are thought to have arrived already, with more expected imminently. The authorities are anticipating up to 80,000 people could eventually arrive at a number of crossing points. The Sudanese Red Crescent (SRCS) has been extremely active from the first day, and this appeal is to supply urgent relief items and to enable the SRCS to continue their assistance to the refugees, in close cooperation with other agencies.

The Disaster

Following advances by the Ethiopian army and air force deep into Eritrean territory, at least 12,000 Eritrean refugees reached Sudan on May 18-19. Those arriving so far are mainly from the town of Tessenay, only a few kilometres from the border. Others from other areas including Barentu are expected to arrive later. Eritrean authorities have reported that more than 500,000 civilians have been forced to flee towards the north of the country.

The two main entry points are Luffah and Gulsa villages - see map - with up to 8,000 and around 4,000 new arrivals respectively, most of them elderly, women and children. A few families have arrived at Awaad. More people are coming by foot or any means of transportation. They are bringing some of their household possessions, animals and some equipment. The two temporary camps are villages on the border, which have been abandoned for over two years due to insecurity. Between 20 and 21 May some 4,000 more refugees arrived at Gergef and three more entry points. They had been travelling for days and had run out of their own food. All entry points are located in an area east and south east of Kassala where there are several IDP and refugee camps already.

The new influx of refugees from Eritrea comes at a bad time for Sudan and UNHCR, which were about to initiate the voluntary repatriation of several thousand Eritrean refugees in accordance with an agreement recently between the Sudanese and Eritrean governments.



The Response so far

Government Action w

The SRCS Secretary General and the Federation Head of Delegation accompanied representatives of the Government of Sudan on a visit to the area on 19 May to assess the situation. The Governor of Kassala has mobilized the state government strategic food stock and citizens have been offering daily food donations. Authorities are also assisting international organisations in obtaining access to Kassala, which has not been possible since mid March due to insecurity.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w Federation

CHF 150,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund has been released for immediate response.

Sudanese Red Crescent

SRCS Kassala immediately assisted in the reception of the newly-arriving families in conjunction with the authorities, and continues to help with transportation and registration. They have also set up four provisional health posts in the abandoned schools at Gulsa and Luffah and in Gergef and Um Savary, and provided medicines as a loan from the ongoing refugee health programme. One hundred volunteers were transported to the site on the first day of arrival, increasing to over 300 the following days. The volunteers assist in registration, distribution of food, advising on sanitation and health issues and in providing and distributing water. SRCS provided two bladder tanks and one water tanker, operating from the nearby Wad Sherefei refugee camp. In addition, the SRCS is operating a second water tanker which was brought out by the refugees.

Other Agencies' Action w

The assessment mission found that water and sanitation will be the responsibility of COR (the Commission for Refugees), and UNHCR, and food items will be provided by WFP. UNHCR will also provide some tents and essential drugs. However, these food items and drug supplies, although available in country, are designated to other ongoing programmes and will have to be replenished. A joint assessment mission comprising a number of INGOs will leave for Kassala on 22 May.

Co-ordination w

Co-ordination so far has been excellent between the government, UN agencies and about ten INGOs, willing to assist the refugees. Regular information meetings are held, as well as inter-agency coordination meetings. There is a close cooperation between ICRC and International Federation Country Delegations. The ICRC in Khartoum has already offered relief goods and support to the SRCS in response to the needs in the field.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

An initial field assessment was made on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 May. The refugees, mainly women, children and the elderly, are in reasonably good condition but many have brought little with them. Newcomers on 20 and 21 May were in great need of nutritious food. The refugees are currently camped on the border where with high daytime temperatures (+40-45 degrees C) and unseasonal rains as well, the priority requirements at this stage are shelter, drinking water and emergency food supplies. In view of possible newcomers, plans are being formulated for a caseload of up to 80,000 persons for two months. Regular assessments will be undertaken as the situation continues to evolve, including the detailed assessment due to take place early this week (see above).

Immediate Needs •

Immediate needs for the time the refugees will have to stay at the entry points have been identified as follows:

- Water (provision of additional water tankers, especially for Gulsa);
- Sanitation (public latrines);
- Shelter (tents and canvas tarpaulins);
- Food (to complement WFP provided food items);
- Essential drugs and medical equipment (to be purchased locally);
- Staff/volunteers and transportation, including evacuations to hospital.

Anticipated Later Needs •

If the situation inside Eritrea remains serious and/or unclear, it is likely that very few refugees will be prepared to return. Then the Sudanese authorities are planning to move the refugees away from the border to other sites. Needs at those places will be assessed at the time. It is expected, however, that this will be a short-term displacement and that the people will return to Eritrea within a couple of months.

Objectives •

The Red Cross/Red Crescent aims to continue its emergency assistance to the populations with immediate water distribution, health services and distributions of emergency supplies as available. It is likely they will also be involved in the food distribution activities.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Emergency Phase: *May 2000* •

The SRCS continues to assist the authorities with registration, and once this is completed numbers will become clearer. Immediate plans are to deliver and distribute emergency food supplies and shelter materials to those refugees who have already arrived, to give time for the other in-country stocks to arrive. SRCS has already provided 2,000 plastic jerrycans from its own stocks and is ready to implement the sanitation programme. Cash will enable the SRCS to purchase locally available food supplies for immediate distribution, plus charcoal for the cooking sets. The SRCS/Federation also intend to distribute more collapsible jerrycans and tarpaulins. The SRCS will continue its health services, and thus funds are required to purchase drugs and medical supplies on the local market.

Phase Two: *June 2000 onwards* •

It is anticipated that this will be a short term operation depending upon the military and political developments inside Eritrea, and those activities outlined above will continue for the two month period only.

Capacity of the National Society •

The Sudanese Red Crescent has a wide experience in emergency interventions at all levels and the local Branch at Kassala is particularly well prepared. On the first day they mobilised 100 volunteers, more than 300 the following days, and a total of 400 will be active within a short time. The Branch has a good communication system with Khartoum, but needs improved VHF communication.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Sudan •

The Federation Delegation is small and operates in support of the SRCS. It has three delegates (HOD, Finance and Health). An additional relief delegate will be required for this operation.

Evaluation •

As numbers change or the situation becomes clearer, ongoing evaluations of needs and responses will be undertaken.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for budget summary.

Conclusion

The SRCS was the first agency to take action after the arrival of these refugees. This preliminary appeal is to enable the SRCS to provide immediate relief assistance to the Eritreans and to any more refugees still to arrive, and to continue the services already underway. At this time the assistance is anticipated for only two months.

Jean Ayoub
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