

Children of Darfur

Emergency appeal

December 2008

Five years since the conflict began, the children of Darfur in western Sudan continue to suffer in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

It is estimated that 4.7 million people are now affected by the conflict, with around 2.7 million of them displaced from their homes. Half of those affected are children. More than 95,000 children under the age of five have grown up knowing only the conflict and have only ever known life as a refugee.

It is estimated that so far more than 400,000 people have died in the conflict.

Background

Since 2003, conflict has raged between largely nomadic Arab-identifying tribes and the sedentary non-Arab tribes over land and water. (Unlike southern Sudan, most of Darfur's population are Muslim.)

Groups such as the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) rebelled against the Government of Sudan, accusing Khartoum of oppressing the non-Arab



A group of girls gather outside their classrooms in a newly constructed temporary classroom. The UNICEF-supported school is in the Kassab IDP camp near the town of Kutum, 116 km from El Fasher, capital of North Darfur. © UNICEF/SUDA01469/Pirozzi

population. The *Janjaweed* militia responded by murdering civilians, raping women, driving people from their homes, and burning entire villages.

By 2004, 100,000 people had fled into neighbouring Chad. In 2005, African Union (AU) peacekeeping forces were brought in. On 5 May 2006, a peace accord was signed by the Government of Sudan and the SLA, but other

rebel groups rejected the accord and fighting intensified in July and August 2006. In May 2007 Sudan and Chad signed a peace accord, but the situation remains tense and insecure.

In February 2008, there was a fresh government-led offensive against rebels in West Darfur. The level of insecurity and violence in West Darfur continues to hamper humanitarian

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assistance. In November 2008, the Sudanese President announced a unilateral ceasefire. The impact of the ceasefire on the humanitarian situation remains to be seen.

UNICEF is repeating its call for all actors in the conflict to respect humanitarian principles, cease attacks on humanitarian personnel and assets, and allow unimpeded access for humanitarians to communities in need of assistance.

UNICEF's response

UNICEF continues to work with other UN agencies and local partners in the region to provide essential humanitarian assistance to vulnerable children and their families. We focus on four key areas.

Water and sanitation

The provision of safe, clean water and adequate sanitation facilities are crucial life-saving interventions during any emergency. In the cramped environment of the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), disease is a constant threat and can spread extremely quickly.

In 2007, UNICEF's water and sanitation activities benefited 4.2 million people, including 2 million IDPs.

In 2008, UNICEF has been able to support the sustained supply of chlorinated water for over 500,000 persons at IDP locations across Darfur through the operation and maintenance of motorised water schemes and hand pump sources.

An additional 110,000 people now have access to clean water through the construction and rehabilitation of water sources.

Hygiene committees have been formed to help maintain UNICEF-supported water points and educate affected populations on safe hygiene practices. So far in 2008, over 1 million people have received safe hygiene messages. Recent flooding in a number of IDP camps in South Darfur damaged shelters and latrines. In response, UNICEF was able to support water chlorination and the backfilling of damaged latrines. UNICEF continues to monitor groundwater levels at IDP locations across Darfur. In preparation for the rainy season an emergency preparedness plan has been developed.

Education

Education is essential in any child's life. During an emergency, school can provide a routine, a safe place to play and learn, and hope for the future.

One positive outcome of the displacement caused by the conflict is that many children who previously have not had access to education are now attending school. Among the conflict-affected children, enrolment in school has increased from 382,000 in 2005 to more than 872,000 in 2007.

UNICEF is supporting the construction of temporary classrooms from locally available materials such as straw and bamboo. To date, over 2,000 classrooms have been built in this way.

Last year, UNICEF helped to repair 1,200 classrooms. We are also providing educational materials such as school-in-a-box and recreation kits. UNICEF has also helped to train 3,400 teachers.

Child protection

Many children in Darfur have lost family or friends in the conflict. Many have witnessed the brutal violence at first hand, lost their homes, and now live in the crowded conditions of the IDP camps. In addition, UNICEF estimates that up to 7,000 children could be involved with the fighting in Darfur.

With our partners, UNICEF is helping to trace and reunite separated children with their loved ones.

We are also providing psychological and social support and structured play in child-friendly spaces, and supporting nearly 20,000 young people in vocational education on community projects and in youth centres.



You can make a donation to the **Children of Darfur Emergency Appeal** by:

☎ **08457 312 312**

🌐 **www.unicef.org.uk/sudan**

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Thank you