

Sudan

AT A GLANCE



Country data *(2005 figures, unless otherwise noted)*

- 2006 Human Development Index: 0.516, ranked 141 of 177 countries
- Population (2006): 37 million
- GNI per capita Atlas method (2006, current US\$): 810
- Life expectancy: 56.7
- Under five infant mortality rate: 90 per 1,000
- Population undernourished (2001-03): 27 percent
- Population with sustainable access to improved water source: 70 percent
- Primary education completion rate: 49.7 percent
- Gender-related development index (2006): 0.495, ranked 110 of 177 countries
- Official development assistance (ODA): US\$1.8 billion
- 2006 Corruption Perception Index: 2.0, ranked 156 out of 163 countries

Sources: World Bank, 2006; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2006; Transparency International, 2006.

The crisis

- Over 2 million people died in the conflict in the South, and 4 million fled their homes;
- Human rights violations in Darfur included use of child soldiers, systematic rape, and torture;
- Between May and end-2006, over 250,000 people were displaced; by August 2006, there were 5 million IDPs across the country, and 200,000 refugees in Chad; by October, there were 343,600 Sudanese refugees;
- Camp conditions were often inadequate and insecure; in 2006 the number of severely malnourished children rose by 20 percent;
- By the end of 2006, 3 million were reliant on humanitarian assistance; by March 2007, 4 million;
- By December 2006, 73,800 refugees returned spontaneously, an additional 18,600 with UN support;
- During August 2006, approximately 45,000 people in Blue Nile State were forced to leave their homes due to flooding; March saw outbreaks of cholera and watery diarrhoea in the South.

Sources: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2007; and *BBC*, 2006.

The humanitarian response

- Sudan received 19.6 percent of all 2006 humanitarian aid; cf. next largest, Lebanon, with 7 percent;
- UN Sudan Work Plan world's largest humanitarian operation, reaching 4 million+; Plan requested US\$1.5 billion, received 66 percent of requested funds;
- By early 2006, only 38 percent of required funding pledged or committed; by April, the World Food Programme (WFP) halved food rations; UNICEF received US\$15 million of promised US\$89;
- Sudan received total of US\$1,225 million in 2006 donor aid; the largest DAC donors: U.S. (US\$685.5 million / 47.9 percent); EC/ECHO (US\$153.5 million / 10.7 percent); UK (US\$97.1 million / 6.8 percent); Netherlands (US\$57.3 million / 4 percent); Canada (US\$36.6 million / 2.6 percent); US\$71.35m (5 percent) carried over from previous year and US\$31m (2.2 percent) from CERF;
- Attacks on humanitarian actors rise; 12 killed between July and September 2006;
- By April 2006, one-third of IDPs in Darfur without assistance due to increasing insecurity; in July, 470,000 people without food.

Sources: OCHA, Financial Tracking Service; *BBC*, 2006; Amnesty International, 2006.

Sudan

From One Crisis to Another

FERDINAND IRONS¹



Introduction²

The humanitarian operation in Sudan in 2006, the largest in the world, addressed three distinct, but interrelated conflicts, characterised by brutality, gross human rights violations, and massive civilian displacement. The violence exacerbated conditions of widespread poverty, environmental degradation, and competition for scarce resources, as well as vulnerability to disease and natural hazards. With each of the conflicts at differing stages, the year witnessed continued instability, with Darfur experiencing renewed violence and a deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

In addition to the largest volume of humanitarian aid, Sudan also received much international attention, from the media, NGOs, civil society, and the international community. Political, strategic and commercial interests in Sudan divided the international community's attitude and response to the crises, which illustrates the complex and critical relationship between international political and humanitarian efforts. There was a marked contrast between the failure to halt the violence in Darfur and the start of recovery efforts in the South. Failure to protect humanitarian space in Darfur had tragic consequences for the population, as implementing agencies became targets of violence and many withdrew.

Causes and Dynamics of the Crises: Three conflicts with common roots

In 2006, Sudan was wracked by three armed conflicts: one in the South, another in the West (Darfur), and a third in the East. Their shared causes included Sudan's colonial past, ethnic and religious tensions, the centralisation of power and resources in the capital (Khartoum), marginalisation of the South, West, and East, and competition over resources (land, water, and oil). Conflict over scarce resources between nomadic and sedentary tribes, desertification, the erosion of agricultural and grazing lands, and pervasive poverty added to the explosive mix. These factors were compounded by the virtual absence of social services from the state (especially in marginalised areas), weak state institutions and authority, and the widespread presence of small arms. Spillover from conflicts in neighbouring states and the support of rebels by regional rivals fuelled the violence.

The civil war between North and South began in 1983, after President Jaafar Nimeiri attempted to include southern states in a federal government and impose sharia law. In the largely Christian south, this provoked the emergence of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) rebel group, which receives support from Uganda. The conflict was fuelled by ethnic divisions between the African South and Arab North and competition over power and resources, including oil. After 21 years of conflict, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in January 2005, due in part to the work of the Kenyan-led regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development and pressure by Western governments, particularly the United States. The CPA granted southern Sudan dependent autonomy for six years, after which a referendum on full independence, or secession, was to be held, and permission given for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force (UNMIS). However, as the CPA is fragile and many of its terms have not been implemented (including the lifting of sharia law and the more equitable sharing of oil revenues), sporadic fighting continued into 2006.

The situation in the South is further complicated by the presence of the Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), supported by Khartoum, which has waged brutal guerrilla warfare for over 20 years. Despite peace talks, the LRA continued to threaten civilians in the South throughout 2006. Localised disputes, in part due to the cyclical movement of cattle

herders in the dry season, have further aggravated the situation.

The conflict in Darfur broke out in 2003 with the emergence of the rebel forces, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The violence which erupted followed ethnic and tribal cleavages and was driven by localised competition for resources between pastoralists (largely Arab) and agriculturalists (largely African). In response, the government of Sudan (GoS) armed traditional militias from Arab tribes, the Janjaweed. The violence was characterised by attacks on villages who were thought to be supporting the rebels, first by aerial bombardment by government troops, followed by attacks by the Janjaweed. All sides in the conflict committed grave human rights violations.

The government has opposed international involvement, particularly under the UN, and the 7,000 strong African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), deployed in 2004, is under-strength and ineffective. Following a split in the SLA, in May 2005 the GoS signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) with one of the rebel groups. This was rejected by the other armed groups, resulting in violence between signatory and non-signatory rebels. Further rebel splits and deteriorating command structures added to the violence and lawlessness. 2006 also saw breaches of the UN arms embargo and continued government support to the Janjaweed. The situation was further complicated by the interaction of the crisis with conflicts in neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic. In 2006, violence increased in intensity and frequency.

Although less intense, the Eastern conflict is also fuelled by the perceived marginalisation of the region, with its repeated, acute livelihood crises. In June 2006, the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) was signed between the Eastern Front rebel groups and the GoS. This included a power-sharing agreement and a more equitable distribution of resources. Despite the lifting of the state of emergency, sporadic pockets of violence continued and the agreement has been only partially implemented.

Humanitarian Impact of the Crises: Regional needs and increasing crisis in Darfur

The Sudanese conflicts have been characterised by attacks by all actors on civilians, human rights violations, and massive forced population displacements.

As of August 2006, there were an estimated 5 million internally displaced people (IDP) across the country.³ The UNHCR estimated that as of October 2006, there were 343,600 Sudanese refugees outside the country.⁴ Although some have begun to return to the South, most IDPs and refugees live in precarious conditions. For example, OCHA estimates that 48 percent of IDP children in Khartoum do not go to school,⁵ and in August 2006, the government forcibly evicted 12,000 IDPs from the Dar al-Salam settlement.

Displacement, along with the destruction of homes, livelihoods, and infrastructure has made millions in the Sudan dependent on humanitarian aid, further increasing the vulnerability of the population. In fact, Sudan ranked 141 of 177 countries in the 2006 UNDP Human Development Index.⁶ Large areas of the country are exposed to natural hazards such as floods, droughts, and locust infestations, which exacerbate food insecurity, displacement, and public health problems. During August 2006, approximately 45,000 people in Blue Nile State were forced to leave their homes due to flooding. February and March 2006 saw outbreaks of cholera and watery diarrhoea in the South, with poor sanitation and overcrowding blamed for an estimated 209 deaths.

Over 2 million people died directly or indirectly as a result of the conflict in the South, and some 4 million were forced from their homes. However, the UN estimated that by August 2006, from 1 to 1.2 million IDPs had spontaneously returned to their villages, some fleeing violence in other areas. By December, 73,800 refugees had also returned spontaneously, and a further 18,600 with UN support. Yet, the pace of return was not matched by the level of assistance needed. For many, the presence of landmines and armed groups made coming back to their homes a hazardous undertaking, complicated by the lack of food and water. The destruction in the South has been almost total, creating immense vulnerability, with few or no services or livelihood opportunities and scarce food and water. One doctor served every 100,000 people and less than 40 percent of the population has access to clean water. The main killers in these conditions are diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, and respiratory infections.⁷ Successive waves of returnees only increase the pressure on meagre resources.

Darfur has witnessed appalling brutality and human rights violations, including the use of child soldiers,⁸ systematic rape and sexual abuse,⁹ and torture, resulting in well over 180,000 deaths. In fact, Amnesty International argues that “human rights are at the heart of the

humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Without an improvement in the protection and human rights of the people in Darfur, humanitarian aid alone will not be effective.”¹⁰

As the violence in Darfur escalated in 2006, humanitarian access declined. Between the signing of the DPA in May and the end of 2006 over 250,000 people were displaced and hundreds of civilians killed.¹¹ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that by August 2006, there were 1.8 million IDPs, and 200,000 refugees in Chad. Camp conditions were often inadequate, and in April, UNICEF reported a rise of 20 percent in severely malnourished children.¹²

The camps themselves became targets. In October, 80,000 people fled the Gereida camp, following fighting between opposing rebel groups. Women leaving the camps in search of firewood were routinely raped by armed groups or civilians, and security within the camps deteriorated, as many had been infiltrated by armed groups. By the end of 2006, three million people—half of Darfur’s 6 million people—were dependent on humanitarian assistance. By March 2007, this number had risen to 4 million.

The international donor response: Massive funding but political impasse

Sudan received approximately 19.6 percent of global humanitarian donor aid in 2006, followed by Lebanon (7 percent) and the Palestinian Territories (6.2 percent).¹³ The 2006 UN Sudan Work Plan was the largest humanitarian operation in the world in terms of funding and beneficiaries, reaching over 4 million people. The Work Plan requested US\$1.5 billion for humanitarian needs and US\$206 million for recovery programmes. By late 2007, it had received approximately 66 percent of the funding requested.

However, according to OCHA the speed of the funding was crucial in order to launch programmes in time to avoid the logistical difficulties of the rainy season.¹⁴ By the start of the year, only 38 percent of funding required had been pledged or committed, resulting in a shortfall of 60 percent for January. In February 2006, OCHA warned that “the short term consequences of a funding squeeze are being felt, even before the critical hunger gap period which begins in May.”¹⁵ By April, lack of funding and the deteriorating situation in Darfur meant that WFP was forced to halve food rations. UNICEF warned of severe funding shortages,

having received only US\$15 million of the promised US\$89 million.¹⁶

Sudan received a total of US\$1,225 million in humanitarian donor aid in 2006, with all 23 OECD-DAC members contributing. The largest DAC donors were: the U.S. (US\$685.5 million or 47.9 percent), EC/ECHO (US\$153.5 million or 10.7 percent), UK (US\$97.1 million or 6.8 percent), the Netherlands (US\$57.3 million or 4 percent), and Canada (US\$36.6 million or 2.6 percent). A further US\$71.35 million (5 percent) was carried over from the previous year's funding and US\$31 million (2.2 percent) came from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), funded principally by DAC donors, excluding the EC and the U.S.

Most humanitarian assistance was requested for Darfur (53 percent), followed by the South (25 percent), with other regions receiving significantly less. Regarding actual coverage, Darfur received 77.5 percent, the disputed area of Abyei 25 percent, and Khartoum and other northern areas 12 percent. This distribution was driven substantially by media exposure in the case of Darfur, and by political considerations in the South, where it was important for donors to reinforce the CPA, which they supported and helped negotiate. Arguably, too little attention was paid to humanitarian needs and too much pressure was exerted by the GoS and the government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) on IDPs to return to ensure their presence in the pending elections. Almost two-thirds of the funds received (much of it in-kind food donations from the U.S.) was assigned to food aid, with other sectors, such as basic infrastructure and resettlement receiving amounts on the order of 7 and 5 percent of the total. It is questionable if all needs were sufficiently covered.

As reflected in the high funding levels, Sudan has received significant international attention in recent years. The UN Security Council has passed 19 resolutions on Sudan since 2004, imposed a sanctions regime, and has put in place a 10,000 member peacekeeping force in the South. Darfur in particular has become the focus of the international media, championed by well-known film celebrities and writers.

Many countries have maintained tense relations with the Sudanese government, because of the country's geo-strategic and commercial importance—including its size and location, potential for regional instability, past connections to radical Islamic terrorism, and rich oil reserves. However, the international community's response to the conflicts has been divided. On one

hand, China has often supported the GoS, guided by its oil interests and a foreign policy characterised by the rejection of interference in domestic matters, particularly those concerning human rights.

On the other hand, the United States and European Union have often tried to pressure the GoS, and their relations with Sudan are characterised by a complex set of political and economic issues. For example, in 1998, the presence of terrorist organisations and the bombing of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania precipitated a missile attack by the United States. In 2005, the U.S. went so far as to call the violence in Darfur “genocide,” in contrast to the more restrained language of the Security Council. However, the next year, Sudan was described by the US State Department as reflecting a “cooperative commitment” to fighting terrorism, and by 2007, was being described as a “strong partner” in the “war on terror.”¹⁷

The United States, UK, Norway, and Italy were involved in the negotiations of the CPA. However, international diplomatic efforts resulting in the DPA have been described by some as “precipitated,” “one-dimensional,” and “uncoordinated.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, in August 2006, the US Congress passed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which calls on the United States to pursue a solution to the conflict. Darfur has also been key in the discourse on the Responsibility to Protect, championed by, among others, Canada. The international community, and in particular the United States, has invested considerable political capital in addressing instability in Sudan.

The humanitarian response: Closing humanitarian space

Prior to 2006, there were signs of progress across the country on both the humanitarian and political fronts. The signing of the CPA and DPA offered a glimmer of hope. In Darfur, malnutrition had been halved and nearly 2 million people were provided with safe water. Early in 2006, some organisations assumed that an important part of humanitarian assistance would shift towards recovery and development. Indeed, a significant number of people returned to the South. However, the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur deteriorated alarmingly, violence continued in areas of both the South and East, and many returnees continued to require humanitarian assistance, both during and after their return.

Humanitarian activities in 2006 covered the full range of assistance, including protection, food aid, water and sanitation, disaster preparedness and response, and rehabilitation and reconstruction. In addition, the country faced other severe challenges, including outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever, and extensive flooding.

Parallel to bilateral donor funding, the Work Plan employed a number of funding mechanisms to direct resources towards those sectors which had not been well covered. A Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) was established in early 2006, managed by OCHA, with the aim of meeting immediate or neglected needs across the country, crucial in an operation of the scale, complexity and fluidity as that of Sudan. Furthermore, it provided early funding to launch programmes more quickly than either the Appeal process or bilateral donor funding.

Nonetheless, while some NGO critics claimed that the CHF was slower and more cumbersome than bilateral funding, others felt it a positive move, allowing them to access funding which they might not otherwise receive. US\$165 million was delivered through the CHF in 2006. Two other Multi-Donor Trust Funds, administered by the World Bank and supported by DAC donors were also operational in 2006, totalling US\$611 million in pledged funds.

In addition to mammoth logistical difficulties and funding shortfalls, the most significant obstacle to humanitarian action in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, was increasing violence, by all parties, against not only the civilian population but also humanitarian actors. In other words, increasing need was exacerbated by deteriorating humanitarian space and access. This constituted a gross violation of both international humanitarian law and of the most fundamental humanitarian principles, as embodied in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles. Camps were attacked, vehicles hijacked, supplies looted, and aid workers beaten, sexually assaulted, and murdered. Direct attacks on humanitarian actors rose considerably in 2006 and between July and September 12 humanitarian workers were killed.¹⁹ According to UNICEF, by April 2006, a third of IDPs in Darfur were without assistance due to increasing insecurity.²⁰ According to the WFP, in July 2006, some 470,000 people went without food aid.²¹ In the East, due to the forced withdrawal of implementing agencies, two-thirds of the population in some areas went without access to health care. In the South, the November fighting between the SPLA and government forces resulted in the temporary withdrawal of humanitarian aid staff.

Declining humanitarian space and access were further exacerbated by the actions of the GoS. The UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for North Sudan stated that, “from November 2005 onwards we have begun to see a roll back in the facilitation activities of Sudanese authorities... We are seeing inane bureaucratic measures being prioritised above life-saving activities.”²² Furthermore, the use by the GoS for military purposes of white aircraft—similar to those used by the UN, the African Union (AU) and humanitarian actors—blurred the line between humanitarian and military operations and jeopardised the neutrality, and therefore the security, of the humanitarian mission. NGOs and journalists who criticised the government on human rights issues were targeted for harassment. NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were denied entry into the country. Similarly, UN Special Representative Jan Pronk was expelled from Sudan in October 2006. After its fifth suspension by the GoS, the Norwegian Refugee Council closed down its operations in November.

The actions of armed groups, an increase in banditry, and the proliferation of factions further threatened the security of both the civilian population and humanitarian actors.

Conclusion

Despite high levels of international political and media attention, and the largest humanitarian operation in the world, civilians continued to suffer tragically across Sudan. Although media attention and political and economic interests and engagement help to attract donor funding—calling into question the degree of respect paid to the GHD Principle of independence—it is evident that without a lasting political solution to the crisis, humanitarian aid represents, at best, temporary relief rather than a cure. A united, robust, and effective effort is required by the international community to pressure all sides to end the conflict.

Some humanitarian reforms, reflecting objectives within the GHD Principles, are proving successful, such as the use of CERF and the Pooled Fund to release funds quickly, often to low-profile programmes. These should be encouraged, as they are proving to be crucial for the alleviation of suffering.

But even a political resolution will not end the need for humanitarian aid, much less address the long-term causes of the conflict through sustainable

development. Donors must continue to invest considerable political and financial resources over the long term. This funding must also be focussed on all regions and communities in the country, according to need, not political objectives. In this respect, the application of the GHD *Principles* to the Sudan crises will be critical for the country's future.

At present, observance of GHD Principles 4 and 17—respect for international humanitarian law and human rights and the facilitation of safe humanitarian access, respectively—is fundamental to saving lives, particularly in Darfur. The violence and human rights abuses perpetrated by all sides cannot be underestimated. Attacks on humanitarian space, by all sides to the conflict, are not only disastrous for the civilian population, but have served to unravel the gains made in 2005.

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Notes

- 1 Pseudonym.
- 2 The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DARA.
- 3 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006.
- 4 Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2007.
- 5 OCHA, 2006b.
- 6 UNDP, 2006.
- 7 Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2007.
- 8 By December 2006, 1,040 children had been removed from armed groups in the South, representing only a small proportion of those across the country.
- 9 Exact figures for sexual violence are impossible to ascertain but the International Rescue Committee reported that over 200 women and girls were sexually assaulted near the Kalma camp in only five weeks in 2006, more than double the rate previously reported.
- 10 Amnesty International, 2006.
- 11 By July 2007, a further 140,000 people had been displaced in Darfur (many for the second or third time) and 170,000 in Chad.
- 12 *BBC*, 2006
- 13 OCHA, Financial Tracking Service
- 14 OCHA. 2006b.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *BBC*, 2006.
- 17 US Department of State, 2006 and 2007.
- 18 By ENOUGH (the Project to Abolish Genocide and Mass Atrocities), 2007.
- 19 Amnesty International, 2006.
- 20 *BBC*, 2006.
- 21 Amnesty International, 2006.
- 22 OCHA, 2006a.