

A.9 Darfur - 2004 (ongoing) - Conflict

Materials distribution

Project type:

Darfur shelter materials pipeline
Multi-agency common logistics system
Distribution of shelter materials and non-food items

Emergency:

Response to displacement caused by violent conflict in Darfur, Sudan, 2004 (ongoing)

No. of people displaced:

Over 1 million people affected (May 2004 estimates);
700,000 people internally displaced

Project target population:

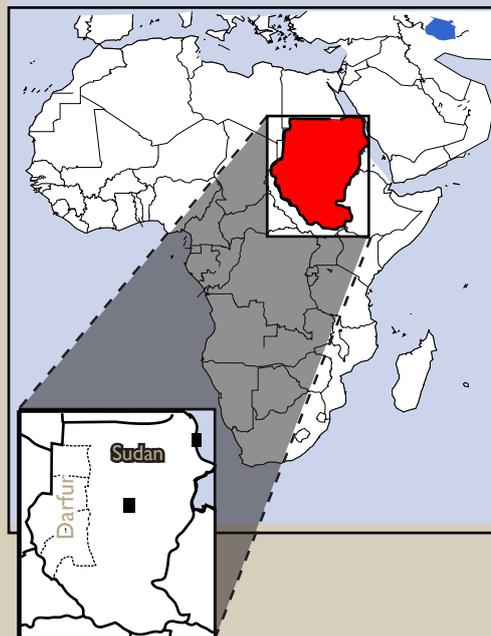
1 million people initially (167,000 families)
Increased to 1.4 million people in September 2004

Occupancy rate on handover:

80% of target population reached by December 2004
A further 8% of beneficiaries reached by those not operating within the pipeline

Shelter size

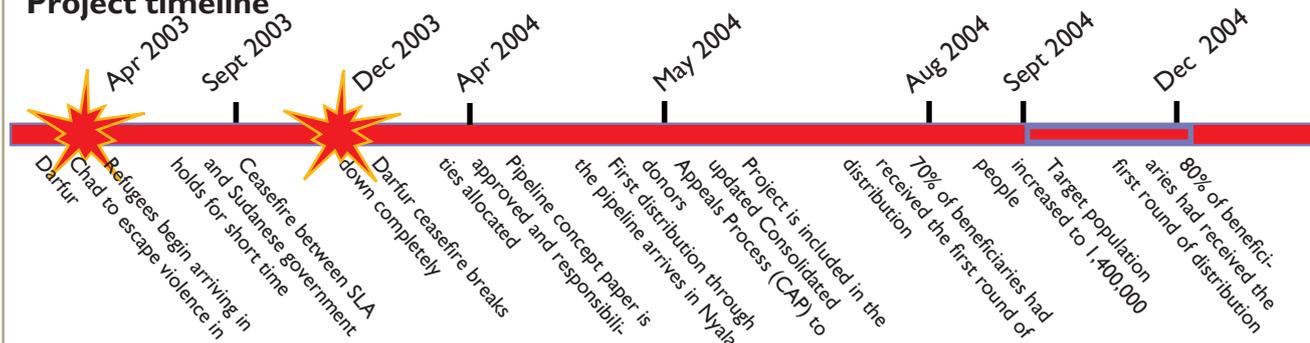
Maximum of 20m² of covered space for a family of six people, provided by a 4m x 5m plastic sheet. Actual covered space would have been less, due to the need to fix and fold the sheeting.



Summary

A joint distribution mechanism, which would later include joint procurement, was set up by a consortium of NGOs and UN agencies to standardise the procurement and distribution of basic shelter materials to those displaced by the conflict.

Project timeline



Strengths and weaknesses

X More effective use of overall emergency funds due to economies of scale.
X Reducing logistics overheads for individual humanitarian agencies in the field meant they could concentrate on service delivery to beneficiaries.
X Reduced competition for transport and warehousing among agencies limited price inflation.
X Customs clearance from the government was more

easily obtained by the UN than NGOs, so collective purchase reduced customs obstacles.

X Common purchasing meant greater ability to direct resources based on a broad overview of need in the region.
X Centralising stock in a warehouse outside of the conflict area meant that goods were not tied up in warehouses in the 'wrong' areas, so interruptions to distribution by security problems were minimised.
X Early donor commitment of funds and air cargo allowed

Strengths and weaknesses (continued)

the project to move quickly. Donor coordination meant funding went through a central channel, avoiding duplication of projects.

X Individual agencies in the field augmented the provision of shelter items with their own locally procured materials (such as poles) to provide shelter solutions.

W Roles could have been decided more quickly at the beginning, as slow-moving discussions delayed initial implementation.

W Some key items (poles and cooking fuel) were problematic to procure in bulk and the poles were not supplied.

W Without the distribution of a frame, the distribution of plastic sheeting did not constitute a complete 'shelter solution'. If not provided by an NGO working in the field, IDPs had to provide these items themselves, which carried risks in terms of collecting material from unsafe areas or having to buy local materials at high prices.

W Shelter issues were seen as being dealt with by the provision of basic materials and the project had limited technical support to help consider what other shelter issues might need to be addressed.

W Access was severely restricted due to the conflict itself and limitations set by the government.



Photo: Joseph Ashmore
Queue for distribution of materials

Situation before emergency

Before 2004, Darfur was one of the poorer areas of North Sudan. Although there are no exact figures, its mostly rural population had limited access to safe drinking water and had poor child nutrition. The region's increasingly scarce natural resources of grazing land and water were one of the factors behind the conflict.

The situation in Darfur became increasingly volatile throughout 2003, with refugee movements beginning as early as April. The crisis began to escalate at the end of the year. Response to the crisis in Darfur was hampered by the Sudanese government's restriction of access to the affected areas.

Situation at the initial response stage

At the end of 2003, humanitarian agencies were able to access less than 5% of IDPs due to travel restrictions imposed by the Government of Sudan. This made accurate needs assessment difficult. The May 2004 revision of the Consolidated Appeals Process for Sudan estimated a US\$ 22.5 million need for shelter and non-food items for the remainder of the year.

The severe lack of shelter available to IDPs was a major health threat, with exposure to heat and dust during the day and very cold temperatures at night. By May, exposure to rains led to an increase in communicable diseases.

Selection of beneficiaries

The project aimed to reach all of those displaced by fighting in Darfur, which by April 2004 was estimated to be a total of 1 million people. Beneficiaries were then divided into categories of full or partial assistance so that the most vulnerable would receive a full package of items. Those receiving a partial package were assumed to be able to supply missing materials themselves, which may not have always been the case.

By August, 70% of the beneficiaries were reached with 'first tier' NFIs, comprising plastic sheeting, blankets,

jerry cans and soap. In September the number of beneficiaries in need was raised to 1.4 million and by December 2004 around 80% of this target population had received assistance. This equated to almost half a million blankets and other material by the onset of winter. An additional estimated 8% was covered by other agencies not using the common pipeline.

Technical solutions

With the shelter materials supplied, beneficiaries were assumed to be able to construct basic shelters using poles as frames, plastic sheeting as a roof and rope for fixings.

However, procuring poles in bulk at a national level proved too difficult and these were left out of the package. This meant that no complete shelter solution was provided.

Many agencies in the field planned a shelter response where they augmented the materials received through the pipeline with items they procured locally, such as poles. However, the lack of a clear idea of how beneficiaries would use items to create shelters meant that some beneficiaries would have had to source construction materials themselves. These may have been expensive, or, in the collection of poles, have entailed the same risks to personal security that many women faced when collecting wood for fuel.



Joseph Ashmore
Unloading a lorry of relief items

The limited consideration of technical shelter issues was unsurprising considering that the programme's main focus was on the logistical challenges of mass distribution.

Implementation

Meetings to discuss the idea of a pipeline were held in March 2004, with a concept paper for funding included in the updated Consolidated Appeals Process released at the beginning of May 2004.

With such a large affected population and the government restricting both access and imports, the main aim of the pipeline was to get enough non-food items and shelter items into the hands of beneficiaries as quickly as possible to cover basic needs.

During April 2004 a structure was agreed upon for the management and

started later in the year). An NGO was responsible for the ongoing transportation and storage of these items to sub-level warehouses and the UN agency that made the original pipeline proposal was made responsible for coordinating the supply chain.

In addition, a third UN agency agreed on 19 April to act as a 'consignee' to officially receive imported goods, an extension of their role in receiving food items. This was crucial, as individual NGOs were unable to clear customs as quickly as the well-established UN agency.

On the programmatic side, coordination of needs analysis, gap identification and interaction with humanitarian partners in the field was carried out by the UN coordination agency and the agency that initiated the whole project.

The centralising of procurement and the management of an efficient and cost-effective supply chain reduced the logistics overheads for agencies on the ground, freeing them up to concentrate on direct assistance to beneficiaries.

The coordinating agencies were able to keep an up-to-date broad overview of the requirements in Darfur, which helped to direct assistance to those areas most in need and prevented a duplication of response.

Any agency wishing to receive items from the pipeline had to fill in a request form and a basic needs assessment form. The procurement agency delivered items to El Obeid and/or Nyala. From there the NGO responsible for distribution arranged for deliveries to their warehouses in the different state capitals. The individual NGOs responsible for making the initial request would then make the final distribution to beneficiaries.

Information-sharing on needs gaps, current stocks and supply chain updates was achieved through regular meetings and access to an open website.

Logistics and materials

A basket of non-food items was agreed on by participating agencies. This basket included plans for some sanitary items, clothing and kitchen sets. Initial plans for additional shelter items – poles and rope – were dropped after it proved too difficult to provide them. Plastic sheeting was mostly donated from abroad or imported. Other non-food items were purchased in Khartoum or Nyala.

Shelter items in the NFI basket

Note: Other items, such as sanitation items, were also supplied in the non-food item basket, but are not listed here.

Materials	Quantity
Blankets	2
Plastic sheet (4m x 5m)	1
Rope	20 m
Poles	6 planned, but not distributed
Sleeping mat	2



Emergency shelters

implementation of the pipeline. The process was supported by several donors and the final allocation of responsibility was undertaken by the UN Country Team. The organisation of the pipeline was split into two main parts: a supply part and a programme part.

For the supply part of the programme, one UN agency was nominated for procurement, which would be distributed as far as a centralised warehouse (though this process

'Coordination with all of the agencies was key. We held weekly meetings in Khartoum and the field and set up information-sharing systems such as a website. No one had an excuse for not knowing what was going on!'
- Coordinator