



Behind the Scenes of the World's Largest Humanitarian Operation

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As the sun beats down on the desert in Nyala, South Darfur, a truck convoy carrying relief supplies pulls into town. Hundreds of miles southeast, in the town of Torit in Eastern Equatoria, a small propeller plane carrying several humanitarian workers touches down on a dirt airstrip. Later the same day, dozens of representatives from U.N. agencies and NGOs gather in a meeting room in Khartoum to share the latest news and developments affecting the humanitarian situation.

Throughout Sudan, OFDA-funded logistics and coordination programs support shipments of cargo, flights for humanitarian workers, and information-sharing structures, forming the backbone of the world's largest humanitarian operation. Vital for service delivery, logistics and coordination programs ensure that people and goods efficiently reach those in need. In FY 2006, OFDA contributed more than \$15 million for coordination and logistics programs in Sudan, where humanitarian organizations serve 5.5 million people affected by conflict.

Sudan is confronted by concurrent challenges, including an ongoing conflict in the western Darfur region, Southern Sudan struggling to emerge from 21 years of civil war, and the world's largest internally displaced population. OFDA's presence throughout Sudan is highly visible. OFDA also supports behind-the-scenes activities that keep the Sudan humanitarian operation running.

Humanitarian Air Service

Transporting humanitarian staff to remote areas is one of the biggest challenges of working in Sudan. The country includes some of the most inaccessible areas in the world. With few paved roads, landmines in the southern and central portions of the country, and varied harsh terrain that includes deserts, mountains, and swampland, air travel is the only reliable way to reach many locations and beneficiaries.

Since 2004, OFDA has contributed more than \$21 million to support the U.N. World Food Program's (WFP) Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in Sudan. From Khartoum, humanitarian workers and cargo travel to 20 locations in Sudan on regularly scheduled flights, and reach populations in need more quickly than by overland travel. To keep up this rigorous schedule, UNHAS maintains a fleet of 28 aircraft that includes helicopters and fixed-wing cargo and passenger airplanes. In 2006, UNHAS estimated that each month approximately 5,500 to 6,000 members of the humanitarian community used the UNHAS service in northern Sudan and as many as 7,500 passengers used the UNHAS service in Southern Sudan.

"In Southern Sudan, you can't get the job done without flight operations," said Jennifer Mayer, an OFDA disaster operations specialist who has spent considerable time working in Sudan and other conflict-affected areas of Africa. Mayer explains that due to insecurity and the lack of adequate infrastructure, "It's nearly impossible to get to some of the towns by road. The only reason you see medicine in the town health clinic is because an airplane brought those goods in."

Common Pipeline and Transport Service for Darfur

When newly displaced families arrive at camps in Darfur, humanitarian agencies provide blankets, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, water containers, clothing, and other basic items to offer critical support and to help people facing uncertainty and insecurity. Many of these items must be purchased and shipped from outside Darfur, a time-consuming and costly endeavor.

With funding and support from OFDA, the U.N. developed the Common Pipeline with the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the U.N. Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC), the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the international NGO CARE to procure, transport, store, and distribute relief goods for the entire humanitarian community in Darfur. This system saves the humanitarian community money through

the bulk purchase of items and ensures that multiple organizations do not unknowingly order redundant goods for the same target populations.



Sudanese youth greet an UNHAS flight (Stan Stalla, USAID).

To tackle the challenge of moving thousands of tons of additional supplies to Darfur, in FY 2006 OFDA provided CARE with more than \$6.8 million to operate a common cargo transport service. The service allows humanitarian organizations working in Darfur to send cargo on scheduled shipments funded through the OFDA grant. An evaluation conducted by OCHA in 2006 showed that by using the combined transportation service, the humanitarian community saved 40 percent on shipping costs when compared to the costs of individual organizations sending supplies in separate shipments.

Coordination

Once humanitarian personnel and cargo have arrived in country, OCHA uses the most recent assessment results to determine how the humanitarian community can best coordinate these resources to immediately respond to local needs. In FY 2006, USAID provided approximately \$4.6 million to support the coordination work of OCHA in Sudan.

One of OCHA's most important tasks is tracking what is referred to as "Who Does What Where," to minimize gaps in humanitarian assistance coverage and to prevent redundant program implementation. OCHA also helps assess needs at the state- and country-level and identify organizations that have the ability to provide specific services.

OCHA plays an invaluable role in maintaining an understanding of the overall humanitarian situation in Sudan, where needs vary greatly by location and communication of needs and humanitarian operations is difficult due to weak infrastructure. OCHA leads regular meetings for the humanitarian community to discuss and share information and provides reports on relevant humanitarian issues.

Meeting the emergency needs of 5.5 million people in Sudan is a daunting task, one which requires reliable transportation, abundant supplies, and effective coordination. OFDA's funding for these essential logistics and coordination activities is not frequently highlighted as part of the international response to the ongoing crisis. Yet this programming is, in essence, the "how" of U.S. and international relief efforts. Without it, the relief supplies provided through the world's largest humanitarian operation would be waiting in a warehouse rather than saving lives.

- The USG is the leading international donor to Sudan, providing more than \$706 million in humanitarian programming in FY 2006 and more than \$3.5 billion since 1983.
- OFDA programmed more than \$173 million for critical life-saving activities in Sudan in FY 2006.
- OFDA support for logistics and coordination in FY 2006 facilitated the synchronization of all international relief efforts throughout Sudan.