



MONTHLY UPDATE

June 2007

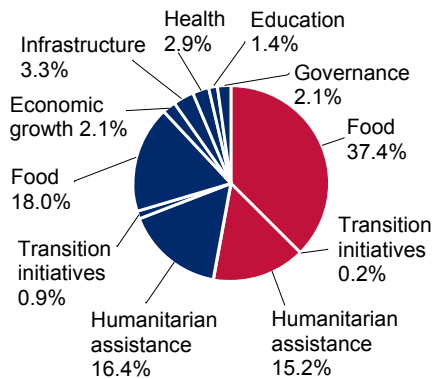


Seed Fairs Provide Sustainable Assistance

Despite providing food aid to half the population of Darfur and distributing free hand tools and grain, legume, and vegetable seeds to vulnerable people, relief agencies have as yet been unable to sustainably combat food insecurity in the region. The massive human displacements that have taken place throughout the region have disrupted traditional market networks and livelihoods. At the same time, the conflict has forced Darfuris to practice unsustainable farming methods, lowering the quantity and quality of farmer-produced seeds. The number of established and reputable seed traders has fallen as well, and the seed and tool distributions conducted by relief agencies are not a viable long-term answer.

Through its work in Sudan and other countries throughout Africa, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has developed an innovative response to these issues—a seed fair and voucher program. Farmers are provided with vouchers, which they use at a local fair to purchase seeds from invited vendors at fair-market prices. Unlike distributions, farmers are able to compare the product and choose their own seeds, which are locally sourced. When effective, seed fairs can enhance crop production, increase food security, and decrease dependency on food aid. They also help raise awareness of seed sources and varieties, stimulate markets, and reestablish traditional commerce patterns.

USAID ASSISTANCE TO SUDAN FY2006, ESTIMATED



Darfur 52.8%

Humanitarian assistance:	\$108.270 million
Transition initiatives:	\$1.400 million
Food:	\$266.110 million
Darfur:	\$375.780 million

South, East, and Three Areas 47.2%

Humanitarian assistance:	\$116.520 million
Transition initiatives:	\$6.660 million
Food:	\$127.807 million
Economic growth:	\$15.120 million
Governance:	\$14.850 million
Health:	\$22.692 million
Education:	\$10.250 million
Infrastructure:	\$23.350 million
South, East, and Three Areas:	\$335.249 million
Countrywide Total:	\$711.029 million

The Three Areas are Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan.



Small farmers display locally grown seeds at a fair in Safia village in South Darfur. Photo: Amadou Gaye



Truckloads of local seeds arrive for the fair in Dibbis, South Darfur. Photo: Robert Lankenau

With support from USAID and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Corporation in Nyala, Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF), American Refugee Committee (ARC), and World Vision conducted seven seed fairs in Nyala, Kass, and Ed al Fursan in South Darfur during the May-to-June planting season. Farm households were assessed initially to determine seed budget based on their household size, the farm size

they currently cultivate, the amount of seed required to plant that area, and the price of seeds in the local market. Based on the assessments, 1,986 households—most of them headed by women—each received vouchers worth \$26.50–\$30.00 (SD5,300–SD6,000) to purchase local varieties of a range of crops, including millet, groundnut, sorghum, cow pea, okra, maize, sesame, hibiscus, radish, chickpea, watermelon, and bambara bean.

Data gathered at the seed fairs shows that the initiative has already made significant inroads toward improving markets and livelihoods for thousands of farm and agro-pastoralist households in the poorest, most remote areas of South Darfur. Of the 264 vendors from 15 villages participating at the seven fairs, 143 were women, and payment of the vouchers they received injected more than \$78,500 (SD15,700,000) into local economies. Rigorous quality controls conducted at all the fairs ensured seed quality, and there have so far been no incidences of germination failures.

Mohamed Issa Mohamed, a vendor from Ed Al Fursan earned more than SD500,000 through the fairs. “Part of my sales income will be re-invested in grain trade, a part in stores improvement, a part in purchasing vegetable seeds and pesticides, and a part will go to support the schooling of two orphans in my care, as well as the education of my three younger sisters at university in Nyala and Khartoum,” he said.

Critical Nutrition Program: Mornei, West Darfur

Mornei camp, located southeast of El Geneina in West Darfur, is home to 73,000 internally displaced people, who struggle with the same food insecurity issues that exist throughout Darfur.

USAID partner Concern provides critical nutrition programs in the camp to combat the problem. Concern employs 300 community volunteers to survey the camp’s population for malnutrition. An outpatient therapeutic program refers patients with medical complications to the nearby clinic for treatment, while others are directed to the supplementary feeding center. From then on, patients come to the center twice a week for a distribution including oil, sugar, and corn-soya blend. The center treats an average of 250 malnourished children a month. ♦



A woman prepares a meal in Mornei camp. Photo: USAID



During the cultivation season, staff from CHF, ARC, and World Vision will monitor seed usage, crop establishment, and performance, noting harvested crops and total production. The findings will not only help hone planning for future seed fairs and build local capacity, but will also help monitor food security in target areas. With good rainfall, minimal insect infestation, and no violent attacks on farmers or their crops, these new resources will help many of South Darfur's farmers to achieve substantial food security by the end of the season. ♦

Darfur Festival Brings Groups Together

Historically, equestrian festivals in Darfur have allowed communities to compete in friendly races, socialize, and discuss difficult issues in a neutral setting. By all accounts the last of these was held in 1971, but on March 29–31, USAID revived the event by sponsoring an equestrian festival in Ad Daein, South Darfur.

Complementing the main event of horse racing, the Equestrian Festival featured nationally known singers, academics, poets, and comedians, all of whom showcased the benefits of unity, cultural diversity, and peace. Attendees said the event reminded them of a time when conflict was less pervasive and regional centers like Ad Daein, hundreds of miles from Khartoum, had a more prominent role in people's lives. According to one observer, the event "shocked people out of conflict mode."



The winner of the South Darfur Equestrian Festival celebrates. Photo: USAID

One group of nomads attending the event was overheard asking themselves, "What have we been fighting for?"

The festival's organizers noted that in contrast to recent public debates in which extreme political ideologies were front and center, this event brought to the fore a new vision of cooperation. Young leaders who "did not have blood on their hands" were given a chance to lead this event and remind Ad Daein that the benefits of a peaceful land far outweigh any gains of conflict. ♦

Improved Water Access Promotes Peace

For decades, the competition over water has been a source of tension between nomads and farmers in the Nuba Mountains and Abyei regions of Southern Kordofan state. Because the nomad population is largely Arab and most of the farmers are indigenous Nuba, many people consider the clashes to be ethnically based. However, the conflicts that arise over water points and water access are due to a sense of ownership of land and stiff competition for scarce resources, rather than to ethnic differences. To safeguard their resources, permanently settled communities are often unwilling to allow nomads the seasonal access to land and water their way of life requires.

In El Samasim, a village 30 kilometers outside of Dilling, the situation is even more complex as the land is so dry that boreholes often cannot even provide sufficient water for the resident population. Women in El Samasim often have to walk two hours to find a source of clean water. Adding to the significant strain of water scarcity, El Samasim lies on a traditional migratory route of nomadic communities. When nomads pass through the area, they use the already scarce resources to drink and to water their animals.

As a result, the resident population and nomads have clashed on numerous occasions for decades. In recent months, several lives have been lost. While attempts have been made to address the growing tension in and around El Samasim, thus far none have been successful or lasting.

To promote peace between these communities, USAID partner Save the Children is constructing a *hafir*, or reservoir, to serve the area. The *hafir* was designed to hold 25,000 cubic meters of water and is



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Fadul and Halima, residents of El Samasim, stand at the construction site of the hafir, which will reduce the time it takes for Halima to fetch water from four hours to about four minutes. Photo: Save the Children

engineered to maximize the collection of rain water. The slope of the land allows for water from the nearby seasonal river to drain into the basin, from which water is pumped through a natural filtration system to be purified. The water then passes into holding tanks, where gravity feeds the water through a faucet, and with the turn of a handle, residents have ample, year-round access to potable water. A separate area contains a holding tank for unfiltered water suitable for animals. Here, water can be retrieved through the traditional rope and bucket system to fill troughs for livestock. In a coming phase of the project, a pipeline will be built to a second faucet system to increase the access points for potable water.

The *hafir* was designed to be large enough to provide water not only for the community of El Samasim and the nomad populations that migrate through, but also for people displaced by the war that have begun returning to the area since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. The community of El Samasim will form committees to monitor, regulate, and maintain the *hafir* for both the settled and nomadic people.

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The completion of the *hafir*—the first of its design to be built in Southern Kordofan—will significantly decrease water scarcity issues in and around El Samasim, and may thereby mitigate one of the primary causes of conflict in this area. ♦

Rebuilding the University of Juba

Founded in 1975 after Sudan's first civil war ended, the University of Juba was the first university to be established in Southern Sudan. The school eventually became a powerful symbol of Sudanese unity and integration, bringing in students from every region of the country. However, due to the deteriorating security situation in the south, the university was relocated to Khartoum in 1989. The citizens of Juba resisted the move then and have been adamantly calling for its return since the signing of the 2005 peace agreement.

Unfortunately, years of neglect and war had left university facilities in a dilapidated state, unsuitable for students. The Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Education asked USAID to help with urgent renovations so that a new class of first-year students could be accommodated for the spring semester of 2007. In cooperation with the Ministry, USAID renovated the university's main auditorium and library, both of which had become largely unusable during the war, but which were vital to the school's operation.

With these core facilities functional, the university was able to restart undergraduate courses this spring. In early April, 600 first-year students transferred from Khartoum to join 200 students already studying in Juba—the first step in the eagerly awaited return of the university to its original home. Another 1,000 students will transfer from Khartoum in 2008.



A professor teaches in Juba University's rehabilitated lecture hall. Photo: USAID



*A woman reads in Juba University's rehabilitated library.
Photo: USAID*

The reopening of the Juba campus is a key symbolic step in the development of Southern Sudan and the transition from war to peace. The University of Juba continues to maintain its tradition of accepting students from all parts of Sudan, and the university administration is working with the student union to ease the concerns that new Northern students may be harassed. In one initiative, the university organized bus excursions in and around the city to allow Northern students to meet Southerners and foster social interaction across ethnic and regional lines. ♦

Journalists Promote Press Freedom

Sudan's track record for press freedom is poor. It ranked 139th out of 168 countries on Reporters Without Borders' 2006 Worldwide Press Freedom Index, and the independent monitor Freedom House rates its media as "not free" due to legal restrictions, economic pressures, and political influences.

Like most Sudanese press, journalists working for USAID partner Sudan Radio Service (SRS) risk harassment and arbitrary arrest. On March 24, SRS Khartoum bureau producer Nichola Mandil was arrested, detained, beaten, and interrogated for five days. After pressure from SRS and other Sudanese media outlets, Mandil was released, but his telephone and recording equipment have yet to be recovered.

Despite these challenges, USAID and SRS continue to work with Sudan's burgeoning independent press movement to push for increased media freedom, particularly in Southern Sudan. SRS is a member of the Association for Media Development in South

Sudan (AMDISS), a group that is collaborating with the Government of Southern Sudan on several draft laws, including an independent broadcasting bill and a right to information bill. Recently, AMDISS drafted a code of ethics for Sudanese print journalists and is working on a similar code for broadcast journalists.

On May 3, SRS joined the Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan in Juba to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. The previous day, SRS led a training on international standards in press freedom for 40 journalists, and organized a march to publicly demand press freedom. Led by a police marching band, 60 people marched through the streets of Juba. SRS broadcast extensive coverage of the event, as well as analyses of the state of press freedom in Sudan. ♦

Training Builds Public Information Skills

To complement USAID's efforts at increasing both access to and supply of independent public information in Southern Sudan, USAID partner Bearing Point facilitated a communications workshop this April in Juba. Participants from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting learned how to effectively communicate messages to journalists and other members of the public, as well as strategies for responding to questions from reporters.

Alex Petia Stephen, a ministry staff member, said he gained a new understanding of the role the ministry plays in helping people engage with their government. As part of the Information Directorate, Alex had been working under an archaic system of state-controlled media and one-way communication espoused in the past by the Sudanese government. Bearing Point's training sought to build the ministry's ability to foster transparency in government programs and policies, and to use modern methods of delivering government messages to citizens.

"This workshop was great at introducing the concepts of public information," said Stephen Zakaria, a Deputy Director from the Information Directorate. "This is a big change for us, a change at our Ministry where we need to start learning the ABCs of public information. This will help us understand our role in government—our role to provide services to society."

"The most important thing I learned was how we can use techniques like 'bridging' and 'spinning' to go from a journalist's question directly to the answer we need



to communicate to the public,” said Alex. “This will help us get precise information about the government out to the people.”

The workshop is also helping to change the culture of work at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Scopas Kenyi, another Deputy Director at the Directorate of Information, is developing a new approach to his job. “A public information officer needs to know what the public needs,” he said. “Our government wants to serve the public, and the public information officer can be the carrier of information from the people to the government so that our government can improve services.” ♦



Ministry officials participate in a workshop on public information techniques. Photo: Bearing Point

World Food Program Sudan Distributions



Sorghum distribution, Kalma camp. Photo: USAID

USAID is the world’s leading donor of food assistance to Sudan. Since October 1, 2006, USAID has provided 388,020 metric tons of emergency food aid worth more than \$389 million to Sudan and Eastern Chad. Approximately 75 percent of this total goes toward feeding displaced people and refugees in Darfur and Eastern Chad, where conflict continues to disrupt food security. The remaining 25 percent is allocated to people in Southern Sudan, Eastern Sudan, Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan, where food aid continues to play a vital role in supporting returnees to Southern Sudan and helping communities recover from two decades of civil conflict.

WFP Distributions April 2007

Region	Beneficiaries
Darfur	2,123,189
South	327,027
East	35,052
Three Areas*	146,848
Central	18,332
Total	2,650,448

* The Three Areas are Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan.

WFP Target vs. Actual Food Distributions - Darfur

