



SUCCESS STORY

Promoting Sustainable Income-Generating Activities in Darfur



IDP women in Kas, South Darfur, learn to make cheese during a three-month income generation course.

USAID/OTI supported the development of an IGA methodology, which was shared and refined during a series of workshops and pilot projects.

September 2007 – Widespread displacement in the war-torn region of Darfur has disrupted traditional livelihoods and forced families to search for alternative sources of income. Often, displaced women resort to the collection and sale of firewood – an activity that increases risk of exposure to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. Many popular alternatives to income generation promoted by aid agencies, such as pasta-making, have provided psychosocial benefits but have not generated profit.

In 2006, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched an income-generating activities (IGA) initiative to provide national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with tools to train Darfuris to identify and conduct IGAs that are safe and profitable. In collaboration with CHF International, which has extensive livelihoods experience,

USAID/OTI developed an IGA methodology for the Darfur context and documented it in a training manual (<http://igamanual.dai.com>). The manual introduces basic business skills, including market and cost-benefit analysis, marketing techniques, bookkeeping, and market niche assessments. The initiative funded a training of trainers who then disseminated the methodology to internally displaced persons (IDPs) during a series of workshops and supported promising pilot projects that resulted.

In one instance, a local NGO in Kas, South Darfur, taught IDP women how to make cheese once they had acquired basic business skills. An initial market survey revealed a demand for cheese, which is generally purchased and transported on insecure roads from Khartoum to Darfur, thus leading to frequent shortages. By the end of the three-month course, the women were able to sell a high-quality product and obtain a steady flow of income. Today, 17 women gather daily to make approximately 40 pounds of cheese, which they sell to restaurants and merchants. One mother uses the extra income to pay for her children's school fees, while another purchases meat to enhance her family's diet. Several of the women now buy firewood at the market instead of venturing outside the camp to collect it.

Providing women and men with the knowledge needed to identify and conduct sustainable IGAs is one way USAID/OTI aims to protect vulnerable populations in Darfur.