

This report was issued by OCHA New York. It covers the period from 8 to 13 March. The next report will be issued on or around 20 March 2009.

I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

A meningitis outbreak in Kalma camp, South Darfur, is of growing concern. Two meningitis deaths were reported from the camp on 10 March. WHO has confirmed a total of 54 cases since January. South Darfur accounts for 41 of these cases with four deaths; North Darfur has five cases while West Darfur has four cases. Nine suspected cases have also been reported by the Nertiti HAC commissioner. Three tested positive. MSF-France, one of the expelled NGOs, was the only medical actor in the area.

Information is also coming in about the impact of the expulsions in Sudan's three "Protocol Areas", Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan, which were particularly hard-hit by the country's decades of warfare, and Eastern Sudan, which includes Kassala, Gedarif and Red Sea.

In order to identify the most urgent needs and the gaps left by the expulsion or dissolution of the 16 NGOs, the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the UN have agreed to carry out joint assessments in the three Darfur states. The assessments began on 11 March and are tentatively planned to be completed around 18 March. The teams are focusing on the following sectors: water, sanitation, and hygiene; health and nutrition; food aid; and non-food items and shelter.

II. Situation Overview

Immediately after the decision made by the Government of Sudan to expel 13 International NGOs (INGOs), several incidents involving the harassment and detention of staff, asset seizures and break-ins in NGO compounds were reported. The majority took place early last week, when the International Criminal Court (ICC) decision was first announced. Most of the incidents reported occurred in Khartoum, and details are being compiled to be shared with the authorities. Crucial humanitarian assets belonging to the United Nations and NGOs have been confiscated from the expelled humanitarian organizations, including computers, vehicles, and communications equipment. Following unified concern over the safety of international and national staff of the expelled organizations, the level of harassment and seizures had decreased for most organizations. At the federal level, the Government of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has stated that:

1. INGO assets will remain assigned to INGO project locations, and, if possible, will be used to support similar activities in the future;
2. A clear administrative framework will be defined for the closure of the INGOs;
3. The safety of NGO staff, both national and international, will be assured by the Government.
4. For the remaining INGOs working in Sudan, Technical Agreements will be negotiated as soon as possible at the Line Ministries and State HAC levels;
5. Access to offices and office equipment (files, computers), guesthouses, and vehicles in Khartoum should be granted according to the needs dictated by the administrative closure, and;
6. The Government committed to the 2004 Moratorium on Restriction (Darfur Emergency Program), March 2007 Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of the humanitarian assistance in Darfur and to all coordination mechanisms in place.

In Zam Zam camp, North Darfur, the rate of new arrivals from the Muhajariya region in South Darfur has slowed. There are more than 33,900 new arrivals already in the camp. Access to safe drinking water, emergency shelter and allocation of sufficient space are just some of the issues the humanitarians are dealing with.

The abduction of MSF staff in Darfur on 11 March, combined with the injury of UNAMID peacekeepers, has left the humanitarian community feeling vulnerable.

III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

Food and Nutrition

NEEDS AND KEY GAPS: The expulsion of CARE, Save the Children US, ACF and Solidarités threatens the distribution of food aid to 1.1 million people.

- With the loss of all MSF chapters, an estimated 7,000 children who are, or will become, moderately or severely malnourished, risk not being treated. Access to targeted feeding programmes in the most vulnerable remote rural areas and IDP camps has been decreased significantly, thus increasing risk of mortality.
- The interruption of the General Food Distribution threatens the well-being of vulnerable families. This programme ordinarily provides preventive support, without which increased malnutrition will set in. Those who become malnourished will need to be treated with a reduced nutrition infrastructure.

RESPONSE: The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is starting a one-off food distribution that will provide 1.1 million people with enough food for two months. WFP recognizes that monitoring may not be sufficient and gaps in distribution may occur. WFP acknowledges that the one-off food distribution cannot be repeated and short-term solutions are unsustainable in the longer-term.

- A complete inventory of stocks and stores is still pending. Supplies for specialized feeding programmes may have been lost as a result of the expulsion. Within Darfur it is estimated that there are enough stocks with operational NGOs to cover one month. The key to preventing shortages will be replenishment.

Health

NEEDS AND KEY GAPS: The expulsion of the NGOs is estimated to affect health service delivery for up to 1.5 million people in Darfur.

- Basic provision of healthcare services, early warning, and sentinel surveillance systems relied heavily on the presence of the now expelled NGOs in a number of areas, including camps.
- The meningitis outbreak at the Kalma camp in South Darfur is a growing concern. 41 suspected cases have been reported. Two samples sent to the MoH laboratory in Khartoum were positive in epidemiological week 7 and another positive in week 8. The situation was therefore termed an outbreak by the SMoH.
- Nine cases of suspected meningitis have also been confirmed by the HAC commissioner for Nertiti, West Darfur. Three tests were positive. Some areas close to Nertiti are not assessable to HAC, and there is a high probability that there are more cases. Because of the expulsions, there is no direct access to health care, as MSF was the only medical actor in the area.

RESPONSE: The State-Level Inter Agency Management Group (IAMG) continues to search for a partner with enough capacity to counter the meningitis outbreak in Kalma camp. There are sufficient supplies for a vaccination of some 88,000 people in the camp, as part of preventive measures. Another 32,000 persons in Beileil camp will also require vaccination. If the campaign does not take place, given the reduced capacity to fight the disease, there is a risk it will spread outside the camp.

- A mission to Nertiti to follow up and monitor the meningitis situation is pending. Prior to its expulsion, the INGO in the area reported a number of the cases as coming from the non-signatory held area outside Nertiti.
- Sudan's Ministry of Health (MoH) has stated they have deployed 100 doctors to Darfur. Their precise locations, scope of operation and speculation is not yet known.

Logistics and Emergency Shelter

NEEDS AND KEY GAPS: With the rainy season approaching, replenishment of key items such as basic household items and kitchen supplies to the population is essential. Most distribution must take place in one month for 700,000 people

- Of the 16 NGOs that were expelled, 11 were logistics and emergency shelter sector partners.

RESPONSE: All UNJLC's NFI items in Darfur are housed in premises that are not currently accessible to humanitarians. Despite the needs, and the availability of the items on the ground, the items cannot be distributed.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

NEEDS AND KEY GAPS: Access to adequate amounts of safe drinking water for some 1.16 million people is not assured. UNICEF estimates that only 30 to 35 percent of needs may be addressed in the coming weeks. UNICEF can deploy some staff to support in the initial 1-2 weeks, with Government cooperation.

- Sanitation and hygiene services have been compromised and chlorination services interrupted in many areas. Basic maintenance of structures is imperative. Trained community members could perform some of these tasks, if facilitated with the necessary equipment and support.
- If not addressed efficiently and in a timely manner, there is an increased risk of outbreaks of hygiene-preventable illnesses, like diarrhea and cholera.
- Many remaining facilities such as health and feeding centers relied on water services provided by the now expelled NGOs. Re-supply of water services to such facilities is essential.

RESPONSE: The Governmental bodies of Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) Project and the State Water Corporation (SWC) plan to fill gaps.

- Where government entities cannot reach some of the IDP camps and non-signatory held areas, community-based organizations need to be empowered to take on the role of service providers. UNICEF and the SWC could work with the remaining NGOs in the three Darfur states (25 out of 30 areas) to respond to immediate issues on a temporary basis.

IV. Coordination

Following a series of meetings at many levels by the United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) and OCHA, joint United Nations/ Government of Sudan assessments of humanitarian needs in Darfur were agreed. Assessments of the three Darfur states began on 11 March. Each team comprises a technical representative from the UN and the GoS, for each of the four emergency sectors, health & nutrition; water/sanitation; food and emergency shelter. The aim is to assess the impact of the removal of the 16 NGOs operations, to identify the immediate life threatening issues and to assess possible interventions to meet these needs. OCHA and HAC are supporting the teams administratively. UNHAS, with funding from the Common Humanitarian Fund for Sudan (CHF) are facilitating the assessments. The field assessments are tentatively scheduled to be completed around 18 March.

Support to the remaining staff of the expelled INGOs continues. An informal group has been set up, to provide peer support, cohesion and facilitation. Access to internet connections, facilitating transport and other practical support has been provided by other organizations and the UN. For those seeking emotional support, a UN staff counsellor will be provided. Most of the international staff of expelled NGOs who are still in Sudan are involved in facilitating the close-out process. A clear framework for close-out is being elaborated with HAC. HAC with other governmental stakeholders have set up committees to work with the expelled NGO teams.

The DSRSG/RC/HC has continued to lobby for the return of the assets that have been seized. A preliminary list of UN assets for return was submitted to HAC.

V. Funding

With the continued uncertainty in the operational environment, it is still difficult to define both the incurred financial losses from the expulsions, and the cost of emergency interventions to cover the immediate life-saving needs.

Emergency funding opportunities are available should they be required to respond to imminent life threatening issues.

All humanitarian partners including donors and recipient agencies are encouraged to inform FTS of cash and in-kind contributions by sending an email to: fts@reliefweb.int.

VI. Contact

Please contact:

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