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## UNICEF Progress Report

### Humanitarian Action in Darfur, Sudan

June 2009

#### Overview

The ongoing devastating crisis in Darfur has affected more than 4.7 million people and continues to be one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies in the world. With continued violence and insecurity, and increasing fragmentation of various rebel groups, the situation of children and women remains precarious. Acts of violence towards civilians have not only disrupted livelihoods, but have also severely impacted the provision of basic services and the delivery of essential relief. Since the beginning of 2008, an additional 310,000 people have been newly displaced, raising the total number of internally displaced persons above 2.7 million. More than 2 million children have been affected by the conflict, many of them displaced multiple times through repeated attacks.

The nutritional status of children in Darfur is a growing concern: the compounded effects of a global increase in food prices, rising transport costs and insecurity on trade routes all threaten the health and well-being of thousands of children. The impact of violence, malnutrition and disease continues to leave a mark on this generation of children, weakening their capacity and trapping them into a cycle of poverty.

The provision of education has remained a continual challenge in Darfur, yet it has also encompassed key successful interventions over the past year, including wide-scale teacher training, the creation of temporary learning spaces and permanent child-friendly schools, and the establishment of school feeding programmes. Special attention has been paid to nomadic children and girls, groups that face added barriers to education reflecting in particularly low enrolment rates.

Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene remains a critical issue. With many children's deaths linked to waterborne diseases, poor sanitation and limited access to clean water and sanitation, UNICEF is contributing to massive improvements in sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion.

## Actions and Achievements 2007-2008

As the lead for three focus areas for humanitarian activities on the ground – nutrition, education, and water and sanitation – UNICEF has been one of the most active agencies responding to humanitarian needs on the ground in Darfur. Despite a complex and challenging humanitarian context, UNICEF together with partners continued to bring relief to an estimated 4.2 million people in Darfur, providing life saving support and maintaining services to vulnerable communities in 2007-2008.

### Improved Health and Nutritional Well-Being of Children

Preventative action and response to disease outbreaks and malnutrition have remained high priorities for UNICEF in Darfur. In 2008, UNICEF has helped to provide nutritional supplies and technical assistance benefiting more than 23,000 children suffering from malnutrition in therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes. UNICEF has supported the training of 37 staff from the Ministry of Health and partner organizations on guidelines to implement supplementary feeding programmes, and has helped to train 22 nutrition workers on community mobilization strategies around malnutrition prevention. With UNICEF support, 13,000 severely malnourished children in Darfur received essential treatment in 2008.

Nearly 2.2 million people affected by conflict and disaster were provided with essential and emergency primary health care services throughout 2007. In the first half of 2008, approximately 1.9 million additional people received these essential health care services in Darfur.



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An infant is vaccinated against polio in the town of Kabkabia in North Darfur State.

UNICEF has implemented an Accelerated Child Survival Initiative throughout Sudan – an integrated child survival programme that delivers low-cost, high-impact health interventions that dramatically improve child survival over a short period of time. As a part of this initiative, households in Darfur have benefited from the delivery of multiple interventions in 2008. These have included the distribution of more than 200,000 long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets to protect children and families from malaria transmission, more than 800,000 measles vaccinations and 1.6 million polio vaccinations, and vitamin A supplementation to more than one million children. In addition, UNICEF is supporting treatment for children affected by intestinal worms, and providing iodized oil capsules to prevent iodine deficiency among pregnant women.



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A girl raises her hand to answer a question at Al Humaira Girls' School in the town of Kabkabia in North Darfur State. UNICEF has helped renovate the school, as well as provided water and sanitation points, teacher training, textbooks and other supplies.

### Successful Educational Initiatives

In spite of a changing humanitarian environment, education continues to be a key success in Darfur, and UNICEF has helped enable huge gains in improving access to education in the first half of 2008. Nationally, enrolment in primary school is at an all-time high, and there are more children in school in Darfur than ever previously recorded. In 2008, girls enrolment increased by 55,000 and boys enrolment by 104,000.

Together with the State Ministry of Education and partners, UNICEF has supported the training of more than 1,750 salaried and volunteer teachers in Darfur and has distributed school supplies to nearly 500,000 children. UNICEF has also supported the construction or repair of some 970 additional classrooms and provided materials for improved temporary schools benefiting 2,400 displaced children. A UNICEF-supported workshop was held for 11 head teachers to establish children's clubs in their schools. In addition, more than 300,000 children in Northern Sudan, mainly internally displaced

persons in Darfur camps, received food through a school feeding initiative in collaboration with the World Food Programme.

Education initiatives have also integrated activities in HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, with more than 80,000 young people in the Greater Darfur region having received life skills education to reduce the risk of HIV infection.

### **Clean Water Supplies and Safe Sanitation Facilities**

UNICEF has focused on rehabilitating, maintaining and constructing water and sanitation infrastructure and promoting hygiene among internally displaced persons, returnee refugees and host communities. Schools and health centres are key focus areas for improvement in water and sanitation, ensuring communities can take a holistic approach to tackling disease and illness.

As of June 2008, more than 2 million people have been assisted in gaining access to safe water. This was accomplished through a variety of means including the rehabilitation and installation of hand pumps, the drilling and equipping of wells, the transport of water and installation of storage bladders. In addition, work was done on the construction of communal latrines and hygiene promotion. In 2008 alone, UNICEF has helped to provide clean water to more than 170,000 people and safe sanitation to more than 40,000. Information and awareness materials on safe hygiene practices were disseminated to more than 1 million people with UNICEF's support since the start of 2008. In addition to hygiene education, more than 800,000 people received soap to control and prevent disease outbreaks in areas at high risk of cholera and acute diarrhoea.

UNICEF and the State Water Corporation have rehabilitated 50 household latrines in the Otash Camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Darfur. A range of health and hygiene education programmes have also been implemented in this region, reaching more than 2,500 internally displaced persons in Al Salam, Mossei and Otash Camps. Ten boreholes have been drilled in West Darfur, and 17 hand pumps were maintained in IDP camps in West Darfur, providing improved drinking water facilities for children and families.

### **Protection of Vulnerable Children**

UNICEF has established child-friendly spaces in Darfur for children affected by the conflict. These spaces provide children with an opportunity to learn and play in a caring and normalizing environment that helps reduce the impact of the crisis. Child-friendly spaces also serve as makeshift classrooms and enable name registration to support reunification efforts for children that have been separated from their families. More than 120,000 children are benefiting from psychosocial support activities in Darfur through UNICEF-supported child-friendly spaces that are managed by NGOs and community-based organizations.

UNICEF has helped to roll out awareness campaigns on the prevention of child recruitment into armed forces and groups, with messages directed at families, community leaders and military commanders. A total of 300 children were released from armed forces and groups in Darfur, Khartoum, South Kordofan and Blue Nile State following advocacy efforts. Awareness on risks associated with mines have reached more than 45,000 people in North and South Darfur to date in 2008. In addition, UNICEF is supporting a new alternative family care project that has found placement families for children who have been abandoned or can no longer be cared for by their birth parents. As of June 2008, 20 children have been placed and cared for in new families.

## Latest Emergency Update for Darfur – as of June 2009

More than one million people in Darfur have been affected by the recent suspension (in March 2009) of 16 non-governmental organizations. These organizations – many of them key UNICEF partners in programme implementation – have provided life-saving humanitarian assistance for children and families affected by the ongoing crisis in Darfur.

UNICEF, together with the Government and non-government partners that are still operational, is striving to ensure that key health, education, protection, and water and sanitation services are provided to children in need. However, without the presence of the suspended NGOs, it will be difficult to continue to reach children in need with quality life-saving programmes beyond the short term. UNICEF continues to advocate for their immediate return. This month, four NGOs from related organizational families have been registered in Sudan as new humanitarian groups and authorized to open operations in the country on this basis.

In the meantime, UNICEF has been focusing on filling in the gaps and maintaining the delivery of supplies and services to families in need as best as possible.

### UNICEF's short-term measures in Darfur include providing the following life-saving support:

- Support for clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene education for 470,000 internally displaced persons in 18 locations affected by the suspension of NGOs. This includes construction and rehabilitation of water points for 35,000 and sanitation facilities for 37,000; provision of soap supplies for 868,000, support to operation and maintenance of water systems for some 868,000, and support to hygiene education campaigns.
- Support for essential health care including:
  - supplies and cash assistance for vaccination campaigns, including vaccination of 500,000 children against meningitis
  - provision of essential drugs and medicines, including Primary Health Centre kits, to restock more than 200 primary health facilities
  - distribution of at least 150,000 bed nets
  - provision of oral rehydration salts
  - provision of therapeutic and supplementary feeding supplies for 61 feeding centres
  - supporting malnourished children through supplementary feeding in South Darfur
  - training of more than 800 health workers and volunteers
  - strengthening nutritional surveillance of children in 60 sites
  - incentives for 600 non-government technical staff
- Fuel for water systems, drilling of new boreholes, supplies for feeding programmes, provision of vaccines for immunization campaigns, technical, financial, and coordination support to government and remaining NGO partners to maintain basic services in the short term.

#### Ongoing Initiatives in Sudan

*In Sudan, UNICEF seeks to contribute to reducing child and maternal morbidity, mortality and malnutrition; fighting waterborne diseases; improving hygiene; increasing access to quality basic education; promoting grassroots peacebuilding and respect for children's rights and humanitarian laws protecting children and women; and monitoring the situation of children and women. The programme includes preparedness for emergencies such as conflict-related displacement, drought, floods and epidemics. Humanitarian actions link closely with early recovery interventions, which lead directly into planning for longer-term development work. All three types of assistance are planned in harmony, so that one leads into the next as and when the situation on the ground changes.*



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## A Darfur village turns its back on conflict, opting instead for child-centred development

SOUTH DARFUR, Sudan – In the village of Yara, one finds a surprisingly different aspect of Darfur. In a region that has been ripped apart by ethnic differences and tribal tensions, residents of the local Fur tribe and Arab nomadic families live side by side, working together on improvements to their community. Relative stability here in Yara has allowed people to focus on their own priorities – strengthening their community for the future.

The school has been rebuilt, as has the local clinic. And with one eye on future income for the villagers, a horticultural nursery has been established, growing lemon, papaya and mahogany trees. Opposite the bamboo shelter where the seedlings are growing, a neat compound houses the rehabilitated health clinic. Serving a population of some 16,000 in the whole district, the centre has become the only source of regular health care for miles around. A solar panel powers the vaccine-storage facility to enable regular immunization rounds.

The school has become a colourful and noisy symbol of the village's efforts to turn its back on the conflict. More than 400 children aged 6 to 14 years, a quarter of them girls, spend five hours a day here in newly refurbished classrooms. A water point has been established at the gates to the school, while in one far corner of the compound large pits have been dug for latrines for the students. Each classroom has chairs, desks, chalkboards and textbooks. There is even a parent-teacher association in the village.

So what has enabled Yara to look to the future in such a positive way? Village elder Abdel Latif Eisa Haroun explains a little of the history. "In 1999, UNICEF established the Child-Friendly Community Initiative here," he remembers. "That enabled the community to take part in planning local services, with some money and support coming from the project and local people making their own contribution – sometimes materials, or just physical labour." The project ran in Yara for two years until the conflict interrupted. Then in 2006 a new round of projects began, starting with the horticultural centre. Now the community is determined to maintain the momentum. "The community wants to make this initiative work," says Mr. Haroun. "A day or two given now will lead to long-term benefits that will last for years."

Sitting in the Grade 8 mathematics class at the Yara school are Hamdan and Hamid, both 13. Their parents are nomadic sheep herders. They are of Arab origin, a minority group in this community. Yet their parents have left them in Yara for the last three years, supported by an older brother with guarantees of safety provided by the community elders. The sole reason for this decision was to ensure that they completed their schooling. "We used to have to walk a long way to get to the school," says Hamdan, "so our parents decided we should stay here. If we didn't come to school, we would just be looking after the sheep. We would have nowhere to go with our lives. By coming to school, we have a chance to do a lot more in life."

The boys miss their families, having last seen their parents three months ago. But they demonstrate a visible passion for learning – Hamid says it is the only thing he lives for right now. He wants to graduate to high school and, one day, become a doctor. Hamdan has set his sights on engineering. And their parents, traditional nomads all their lives, share those aspirations.

The boys have been embraced by the community. Head teacher Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil sees them as an indicator of a better future. "We are seeing children from this school now going to university," he says. "We should not even be surprised by this. Every child in the village is coming to school; we have many Arab children with us here. Our village committee encourages them, and they feel safe with us. Families are making their own contributions, helping to pay for volunteer teachers who don't have a government salary."

The contributions made by UNICEF, and by local non-governmental organizations, are matched by residents who see the opportunity to build a stronger community that will prosper in stability. The mix of inputs creates a sense of ownership and ultimately increases usage of the services. More important, as the conflict in Darfur still affects some 4.7 million people, the initiative is keeping communities focused on the need for development, with children at the heart of the agenda.

"This programme works because it provides the right support for the right people, and we can create structures – like the school – that bring people together," explains Mr. Khalil. "When a community welcomes children from all families, and shows that everyone can get an education in safety – that type of gesture really brings people together." At this, an elderly man adds: "You ask what brings people together? There are no disparities amongst people with nothing. We all share the same lack of things. That makes us equal."



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Hamdan (left) from a nomadic family in South Darfur, has remained in Yara to attend school under an arrangement between his parents and village elders.