

ACT - CARITAS NCA DARFUR EMERGENCY PROGRAMME MONTHLY BULLETIN — February 2009

SECTION 1. Political developments and the general situation in Sudan

On 17th February, the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Government (GOS) signed an agreement of good intentions in Doha, Qatar. The agreement is a pledge to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Darfur and to address “the root causes” of the crisis. Both sides agreed to facilitate the access of humanitarian aid and the exchange of prisoners of war, and to end attacks on camps for IDPs. However, other rebel groups are still refusing to talk to the government, and the result of the proposed indictment by the International Criminal Court of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir for alleged crimes looms over this agreement. In spite of the lack of substance in the agreement, it is still considered a positive sign that two warring parties are talking to each other

On 19th February, clashes broke out between government forces and JEM forces during which at least 17 rebels and 11 soldiers were killed in the Donki area near El-Fasher. Then on 21st February, two Sudanese aid workers working for the French NGO Aide Médicale Internationale were killed in an attack on a bus near the village of Khor Abeche, approximately 80km north-east of Nyala, South Darfur. The attack was carried out by a group of about 20 unidentified gunmen on camels and underlines the continuing lack of security in the region.

The ICC has indicated that an announcement will be made on the proposed indictment of President al-Bashir on 4th March. In anticipation of this, the UN agencies and NGOs have prepared contingency plans in case of an emergency or other possible developments. UN has also announced that unauthorised dependents of UN Staff should leave the country. NCA has ensured supplies of food and water and will gather all international staff in Nyala by 4th to monitor the situation and avoid travels to the field these next few days. The evacuation scenario devised by the UN in January is still valid: international staff would be required to assemble at a central point in each ward of Nyala town and to be escorted from there to the UNAMID base. However, NCA does not wish signal any intention to leave Darfur at the moment as this would undermine confidence among national staff and might affect the programme's standing with the authorities.

NCA reports that Nyala has been quiet over the past few weeks, although some peaceful demonstrations have taken place without having impact on the delivery of humanitarian services. INGOs have very limited access to the Muhagiriya area east of Nyala, where violence erupted in January and many people were displaced because of fighting.

SECTION 2. Activities by the NCA Darfur Programme during February 2009.

- The focus of work this month has been the final preparations of the Technical Agreements (TAs). The current TAs expire on 28th February but the new formats were only received in mid-February. They now have to be completed in both Arabic and English, which adds to the workload. Once the TA has been agreed with the state or “line” ministry, it is taken to the local HAC office for approval and from there to the federal HAC office in Khartoum for endorsement.
- Preparation of the UN report on the UN workplan has also been undertaken in January. John Birchenough, Country Funding Coordinator, has returned to Khartoum and is supporting this piece of work.
- The annual programme audit is now being undertaken in Nyala.
- Requests for extensions to work permits and stay visas will be submitted to the authorities at the end of February.

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- NCA is about to sign contracts with the partners Sudanaid and SCC.
- In the case of SUDO:
 - NCA has offered a contract for designated life-saving activities only (health and nutrition, camp management, and some of the office costs in Nyala and Zalingei) for the first six months of 2009. A management letter has been sent to SUDO by the programme.
 - SUDO's annual report for 2008 has been received and this has to be incorporated into the consolidated annual report.
 - SUDO's international finance manager has not yet been able to take up his post due to visa problems.
 - The verification exercise of SUDO in 2006 is expected to begin soon. Many of the relevant documents have been gathered.
- Partner self-assessments have not been completed and this is holding back the conclusion of the partnership agreements.
- Logistics training for NCA and partners was carried out successfully by DanChurchAid.



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Girl school in Nyala finalized by Sudanaid and supported by the NCA Darfur Program.

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SECTION 3. Activities planned for March 2009.

- A monitoring visit by DanChurchAid is planned for the start of the month. The visit by Développement et Paix (Caritas Canada) due to begin on 4th March had to be postponed due to the limited program activities in the event of the announced date of the ICC's verdict. A monitoring visit by Trocaire is planned for the end of March.
- The Sudan Ecumenical Forum Core Group meeting scheduled for 11th and 12th March in Khartoum has been postponed to 31st March and 1st April.
- The next NCG meeting will take place on 16th March at the CAFOD office in Khartoum.
- HIV mainstreaming training for NCA and partners, facilitated by CAFOD's HIV Adviser, will take place in Nyala from 17th to 19th March. This will be followed by a programme of psycho-social training facilitated by Church of Sweden, from 21st to 25th March.

SECTION 4. Human Resources Issues.

- NCA's new Country Representative for the Sudan, Elizabeth Mustorp, should arrive in Khartoum in the last week of March. She was expected in the beginning of March after a long wait for visa, but had to postpone further a few weeks due to an unexpected medical surgery.
- The newly appointed Head of Finance is expected to take up his position at the end of March after an orientation with NCA in Oslo.
- The new Head of HR and Admin, Gro Eikeland, is expected to arrive during March.
- Recruitment for a Deputy Head of Programmes has been re-started as the successful candidate turned the offer down.
- The recruitment process for the Organisational Development and Capacity-Building (ODCB) officer and Security Manager has started.
- As announced in the previous bulletin, Michelle D'Arcy has arrived in Nyala and has added greatly to our capacity in the Donor Liaison Department.
- All staff has responded positively to the challenge of working under the current conditions. There has been a wider sharing of workload and responsibility as a result of the contraction in the number of international staff.