

Alert

Ethiopia

Emergency Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Ethiopia

Geneva, 02 February 2012

1. Brief description of the emergency

Since September 2011, there has been increased fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and other Sudanese armed groups (mostly SPLM-N) in Blue Nile State and in South Kordofan in Sudan.

According to UNHCR, air attacks in areas within Sudan's Blue Nile state (including Bau, Sali and Dinduro, all located between Kurmuk and the Blue Nile capital, Damazine) have driven a large number of Sudanese civilians to cross the border and seek shelter in the Kurmuk area of western Ethiopia. In addition, the Sudanese community are leaving the area for safety in Ethiopia in fear of a possible ground offensive.

UNHCR estimates that about 23,000 refugees have been registered and accepted into the transit camp in Adamazine (that hosts approximately 4,500 refugees), and Sherkole and Tongo camps (each hosting more than 9,000 refugees) in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. Both Sherkole and Tongo camps have been declared full.

2. Impact

This offensive has led to population movement and displacement with a possibility to trigger a further influx of refugees into Ethiopia.

On the Ethiopian side of the border, there are no reported security problems. Relationship between refugees and host communities along the border has been cordial to date. There are committees, including the district authorities, to monitor the security and safety of refugees residing amongst the host communities. In addition, unlike other camps in the country (e.g Dolo Ado), Sherkole, Tongo and Bambasi are accessible and are well connected by road to Assosa and to Addis Ababa. Good road access makes it easier for the security personnel to patrol the area. Assosa is the capital town of the Benishangul-Gumuz region.

However, overstaying with the host community could increase pressure on their meager resources, including water and food. Hence, relocation of refugees is urgent, before tensions develop.

3. National and international response

ARRA and UNHCR have planned to close down the transit camp in Adamazine, Ethiopia in order to relocate up to 4,500 refugees. To accommodate new arrivals, a new site has been selected and is now pending approval. The new site in Bambasi district of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State has a carrying capacity of 22,300 refugees.

Nine humanitarian organizations are currently providing various kinds of assistance to the refugees including: food, shelter, medication, core relief items or NFIs, water supply and sanitation, protection and other services in the two camps (Shirkole and Tongo), and in the reception and transit centers. These organizations are: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), IOM, IRC, RaDO and World Vision.

ARRA and UNHCR are spearheading the overall planning and implementation of humanitarian response. They are also directly responsible for a number of activities including camp management, provision of core relief items or NFIs, temporary shelter, registration and the provision of protection related services in the camps.

UNHCR, ARRA and IOM have been active in moving people to the camps, which consequently helped to reduce the burden of care from the host communities.

4. ACT Alliance response

LWF/ DWS-ET was formally requested by both UNHCR and ARRA to intervene in this refugee assistance program. UNHCR and ARRA initially undertook a needs-assessment which identified that there were gaps in the provision of basic humanitarian services and/or provision below minimum standards. The LWF/DWS needs assessment also confirmed that potable water and sanitary/hygiene facilities are inadequate. There is also a need for livelihood activities to augment the minimum ration received which can be addressed by enabling the refugees to produce garden vegetables to meet the current demand in the area.

The status of the environment within and around the camps is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Subsequently, LWF is in the process of drafting an ACT appeal to address the identified needs on WATSAN, livelihoods and the environment.

5. Planned activities

LWF-DWS Plans to provide:

Immediate

- Water trucking to Bambasi II for the newly relocating refugees,
- Toilet facilities and waste pits.
- Environmental intervention through provision of fuel-saving stoves.

Intermediate

- Borehole drilling for permanent supply of water to replace the water trucking as soon as possible.
- Livelihood Activities in the form of backyard gardening.

- Environmental rehabilitation through provision of tree seedlings and tree planting.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (jbi@actalliance.org)

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