

Assessment of Food Aid Interventions in North Darfur State, Sudan

Omer A. Hayati^(*)

Abstract: This research sought to analyze food aid interventions by Sudanese Red Crescent in North Darfur State during 2003-2007, to see how well they were carried out, how well they were targeted and what impacts do they have on food security. The main strengths of these interventions were alleviation of human hardship, reaching the remotest affected areas, training of staff and volunteers, efficient utilization of available resources and community participation. However, weaknesses were Lack of standardized procedures for targeting beneficiaries, weak follow up and incomplete assessment, as well as slow flow of information from Community Based Organizations. The author proposed participatory post-disaster "lessons learned", enhancement of information based - programs and improvement of disaster response activities to curb food interventions in north Darfur.

Key words: African sahelian belt, drought, conflicts, food Security, coping strategies, disaster management, non-governmental organizations.

تقييم المعونات الغذائية في ولاية شمال دارفور، السودان

عمر حياتي

المخلص: يهدف هذا البحث للتعرف على دور المنظمات غير الحكومية - بالتركيز على جمعية الهلال الأحمر السوداني - في توفير الأمن الغذائي في ولاية شمال دارفور - غربي السودان - في الفترة بين 2003 و2007. وذلك بتحليل نشاط الجمعية من خلال معايير تحديد المجموعات المستهدفة، وتسجيل المستفيدين، وتوزيع للمواد الغذائية، والطرق المستخدمة في تقييم نشاطات الجمعية. أوضحت نتائج البحث أن جوانب القوة لنشاط الجمعية تتمثل في نجاحها في تخفيف معاناة النازحين بسبب النزاع الدائر في الولاية وكذلك المتضررين منه، وقدرتها على توزيع المواد الإغاثية في معظم أنحاء الولاية خاصة النائية منها، وتركيزها على تدريب موظفيها والمتطوعين في نشاطاتها، واستخدامها للموارد المتاحة، وتحفيزها للمجتمعات المحلية للانخراط في نشاطاتها. بينما تمثلت جوانب الضعف في انعدام معايير تحديد المجموعات المستهدفة بالجمعية، وضعف المتابعة وانسياب المعلومات والتقييم. أوصى البحث بضرورة الاستفادة من التجارب السابقة في إدارة كوارث مماثلة، وتطوير تبادل وانسياب المعلومات بغية ضبط النشاطات المتصلة بمواجهة الكوارث في ولاية شمال دارفور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حزام الساحل الإفريقي، الجفاف، النزاعات، الأمن الغذائي، استراتيجيات التكيف، إدارة الكوارث، منظمات غير حكومية.

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1. Introduction

Natural disasters, with emphasis to frequent extreme weather-related disasters, have persisted Last decades, and led to major conflicts and need for humanitarian aid interventions. Food aid interventions made up the majority of humanitarian appeals and remain an important tool to responding to disasters (Paul et al, 2010). The World Food Program (WFP) has an increasingly significant role in providing international food assistance where in 2008 it assisted over 102 million beneficiaries (WFP, 2009a). However, for national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) targeting beneficiaries at disasters' hit areas, registering and distributing food still remain critical processes. In 2008, 1.1 million MT of food aid was channelled through NGOs (WFP, 2009b). Great part of it was freely distributed to targeted beneficiaries, where Sub-Saharan Africa incurred 51% and Sudan 54%, due to conflicts and people displacement in Darfur (WFP, 2009b).

Methodology: This research is an attempt to assess the experience of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in relief distribution in conflict situations in North Darfur State (NDS) during 2003-2007. Lessons learned and formulated recommendations to improve SRCS capacities to respond strongly in similar cases will also be highlighted. Different Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools were used for data collection. These tools included:

1. Document review: Relevant SRCS Disaster Management Department (DMP) at Head Quarter (HQ) and – NDSB.
2. Semi-structured interviews: With pre-prepared checklist, partners, SRCS staff in both HQ and NDSB, beneficiaries in El Fashir (Abu Shouk IDPs camp) and Kebkabia.
3. Discussions with agencies and key informants: with SRCS-HQ, NDSB - DMD staff, State Food Security Coordination Committee in El Fashir and Kebkabia (FAO, Humanitarian Aid Corporation (HAC), and OXFAM).
4. Field visits and observations: Kebkabia town, El Fashir town and Abu Shouk IDP Camp.
5. Stakeholders' meeting: one day workshop was organized in El Fashir to cross-check the information gathered from interviews and to assess food distribution adopting SWOT¹ analysis. 32 SRC- NDSB key staff and volunteers and other NGOs staff (WFP, HAC) were participated.

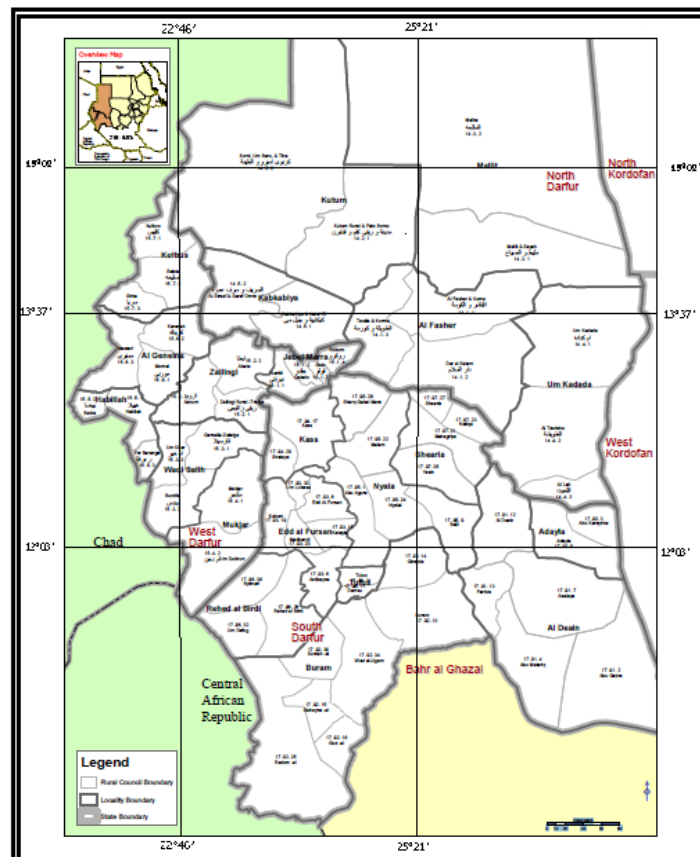
The research centred on relief food distribution (beneficiaries targeting, registration and distribution) and evaluating SRC experience in relief distribution in order to answer the following questions: (i) To what extent did the relief food distribution in NDS succeed in developing the general food security situation in the State?, (ii) What are the main strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats that surround the relief food distribution operation in NDS?, (iii) What needs to be done to improve food distribution performance in conflict situation in the future?

1 Strength, weakness, opportunities and threats.

Study area: North Darfur State lies between longitude 22, and 27, 30 East and latitude 11, 30 and 16 North (see Fig 1). The annual average rainfall is between 600 to 100 mm from south to north. Most of the State falls within the African Sahelian Belt "fringe coast", which is periodically affected by drought and floods, as a result of its high variability of rainfall in time and space. Severe periods of drought affecting the State were during 1967-1973 and 1980-1984. Although watercourses are seasonal and some of them flow for only a few days or hours after rain, they are violent and may lead to disastrous floods (Morton, 1994).

The state is hosting 1,552,000 people, 74% out of them are farmers and the rest are nomads (Mohamed, 2007). Historically, the yields of rain-fed cultivation were highly erratic due to unpredictable patterns of rainfall (1982/83, 1983/84, and 1984/85), pest infestations and the lack of appropriate agricultural implements. The livestock trade has been a crucial livelihood component with tens of thousands of livestock (pre-conflict) exported annually to the surrounding countries (Rivers *et al*, 2007). The State is severely affected and characterized by chronic food insecurity and malnutrition.

Fig. 1: Greater Darfur Administrative Units



Source: Humanitarian Information Center for Darfur (November, 2004).

Conflicts in Darfur: throughout history, the main cause of civil strife in NDS is the competition over natural resources. Poor rural households (60%) rely on natural resources as a source of income, as well as collecting grass, firewood and wild food etc.

Thanks to the traditional land tenure system "*Hawakeer*", which organize the relationship between farmers and pastoralists. This system has been created by Sultan Musa (1680 – 1700)². *Hawakeer* is the plural of "*Hakurah*", which is agricultural and pastures land (1500 – 2000 *feddan*) donated by the Sultan to some of the tribe leaders for the good services provided to the Sultanate. The person who has been donated the *Hakurah*, is responsible for cultivating the land with the help of the residents of the villages which are located in this *Hakurah*. He also gathers the taxes from their yield on annual bases on behalf of the Sultan (Mansor, 2003). The land, through this system, is divided among the tribes of the Sultanate in a way that permits all members, whether farmers or animal owners, to have access to the land for cultivating or pasturing. Animal roads, pastures, and farms have clear fixed territories.

The continuous years of drought in a hard and harsh environment of NDS in the last five decades, negatively affected the *Hawakeer* system, and hence, escalated the competition on the resources. In this environment, household survival strategies are generally based on gasping all available possibilities to maintain suitable food security for their livelihood. The period between 1970 to 1973 witnessed huge migrations from Northern to Southern Darfur due to drought and famine. It is reported that during this period, the inhabitants of 475 villages out of 804, in Dar Zagawa in NDS, migrated and established 100 new villages in the southern parts of the State (Ibrahim, 1983). This, beside other movements, raised the competition on resources, and hence, by time, sharpened the existing tribal conflicts.

Beside consecutive drought, competition on resources and food insecurity, there are other factors which led to the tribal conflicts in NDS. These included the desire of big tribes to dominate the small ones, armed robbery, regional and ethnic superiority between the tribes (Ahmed, 1998).

During the periods 1984 to 1998, GD witnessed more than 20 tribal conflicts (Takana, 1998). Tribal conflicts, tensions and ethnicities which deeply engraved in the tribe's heart, led to revenge response towards any intimidation or rumors. Government attempted to overcome such problems through tribal leader's reconciliation dialogue and agreed with some tribes to stop violence. Although more than 25 meetings of reconciliation were held during that period, the tribal conflicts continued in a more political organized way. In the late 1990, more than four main political movements were established. Power and wealth were the main political issues raised by Darfur rebels' factions in all negotiations with the government of Sudan.

The recent GD conflict emerged in 2003 between the government of Sudan and the two Darfur rebel factions, these are Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Fighting continued between the government and these military activists, and it worsened after splitting of SLA and JEM to more than 6 factions. The splitting into small armed groups had become a normal phenomenon among these movements especially after the signature of Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006 between Sudan government and one faction of SLA. However The signed factions continued fighting against government. And the recent security deterioration

² the founder of Darfur Sultanate (1680 – 1916)

and human rights abuse was a consequence of that. As a result, the government power shrank and is confined to the main State's towns (EL Fashir³, Kutum, Kebkabia and Um Kadadah).

The parties were involved in aggressions resulting in considerable life loss among the civilians, and thousands of people were displaced and settled in camps. In 2003, 18,000 people were displaced from Tawilla town to El Fashir. In November 2004, Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) estimated that the conflict displaced about, 403, 888 in NDS⁴. Practical Action (2006) estimates the conflict displaced in NDS with 409,000 people (69,000 household). The displaced were hosted in camps (Abu Shouk, El Salam, and Zamzam) and around small towns (Kebkabia, Tawilla, and Millet) (see Fig. 2). As well as about 271,300 from the hosting communities were directly affected by the conflict (SRCS, 2005).

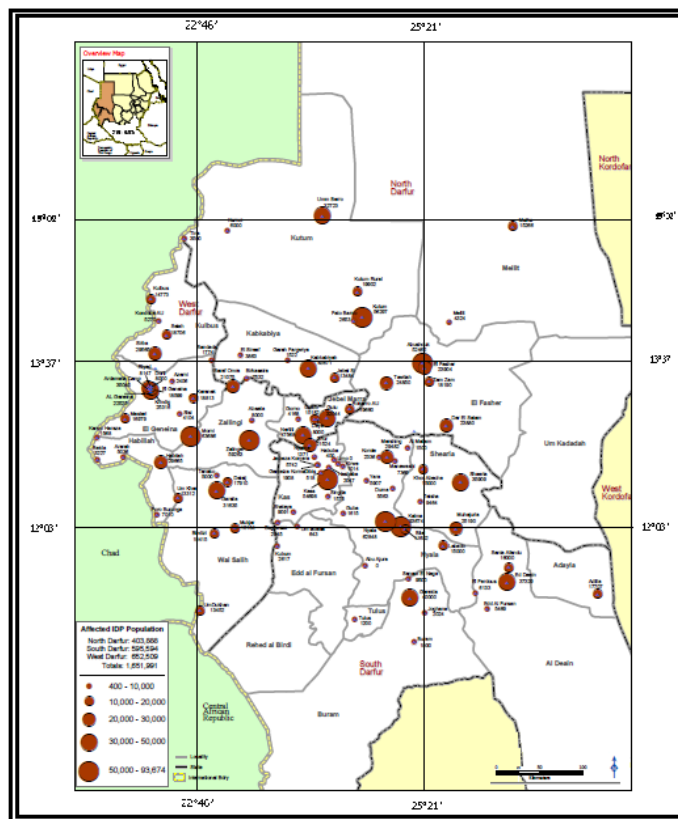
The on-going conflict in NDS has resulted in complete interruption of the life of most of the population in the State. There are huge losses in lives, human sufferings as well as losses of belongings and means of livelihood. The affected populations were subjected to food insecurity. Because they lost their stable food by burning, their livestock are looted and assets destroyed. Thus the IDPs in the camps, or those left in the rural areas "women, children, and elderly people" were left in critical food situation.

Since 2003, the International Community and United Nation agencies provide humanitarian assistance to the conflict-affected people. The WFP is considered as the main relief agency, while NDSB is playing a tangible role in food distribution. Although, aiding process is still going on since 2003, and its program is now mature, there has been little return in Darfur, as the causes of the displacement remain unresolved (WFP, 2010). Reviewing the experience and food distribution lessons learned from this disaster is one of the key focus areas in Disaster Management.

³ The capital of NDS

⁴ And about 595, 594 in South Darfur State (SDS), 403, 888 in NDS and 652, 509 in West Darfur State (WDS).

Fig. 2: IDPs Camps in Greater Darfur



Source: After Humanitarian Information Center for Darfur (November, 2004).

The project: Sudanese Red Crescent was established in 1956, and is a member of the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Its vision is to assist the vulnerable individuals by raising their capacities, to alleviate the humanitarian suffering as well as improving the quality of life of vulnerable population. SRSC – NDSB was established in 1976 in El Fashir town with an overall aim of increasing the food access and availability on an impartial basis to the people of NDS, saving lives, maintaining the health and nutritional status as well as protecting the remaining assets of the IDPs in the camps.

During the 1984/85 famine crises, the branch undertook the role of managing large relief operation in GD in collaboration with IFRC. During the 1990s, the branch embarked in activities of rehabilitation, development and food security. When Darfur disaster started in 2003 with the influx of displaced people to the towns, the branch was the first humanitarian organization which embarked in provision of assistance to the affected people⁵. The branch has over 200 staff and volunteers well trained in emergency operations especially food distribution since 1984/85.

⁵ It was SRCS – NDSB who rescued the injured victims, and provided food and shelter to the women and children. In all these humanitarian interventions, branch's volunteers in different villages were took the lead.

Famine Vulnerability: “The Geography of Vulnerable Food Systems” is a new approach in the field of human geography created by Bohle in 1995. Which deals with a deep analysis of the food disasters and groups’ vulnerability and focuses on the interface between food systems and their socio-cultural and political-economic deterrents (Fig. 3). Famine disaster occurs when an event of continuous growing destabilization tendencies triggered by sudden disaster situations "civil war" or natural disasters "drought, floods"(Bohle, 1995).

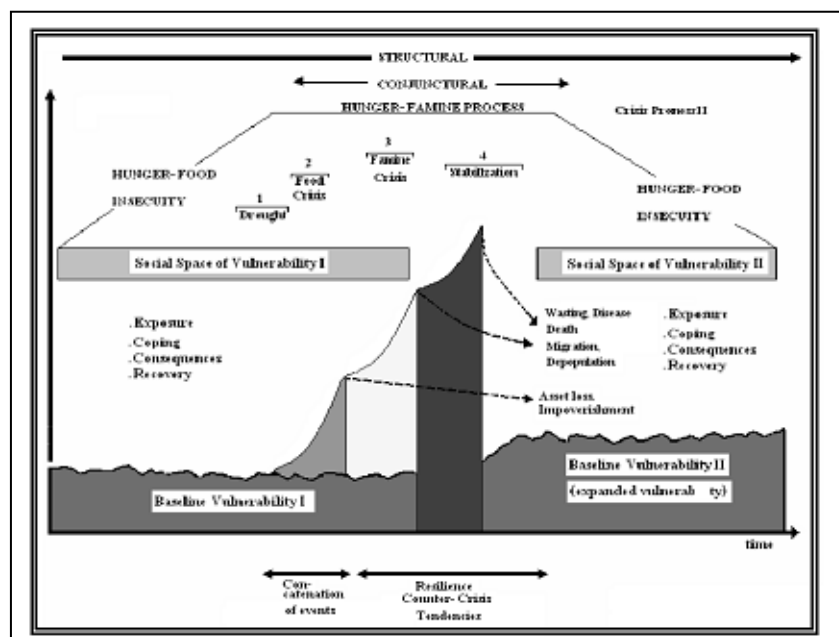
The Dynamic model of vulnerability is based on the idea of food crisis and famine in critical regions. There are no short term critical events, but that they must be understood as emanating from longer-term process, in the course of which the threat to certain groups of human increases and the possibilities for successful crisis management becomes more and more limited (Bohle, 1995).

Food is obtained through production, exchange, or donation (e.g. charity, food aid). The entitlement of a person stands for the set of different commodity bundles that person can acquire through the use of various legal channels open to someone in his/her position’ (Sen, 1987; Curtis, 1988; Dreze and Sen, 1989).

During the last four decades, food aid, as external intervention, in Sub-Saharan Africa, in general and in Darfur in particular, played a recognized role in filling the food gaps, decreasing the potential threat and human vulnerability.

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Fig. 3: A Realist Framework for Drought – Famine – Vulnerability



Source, Bohle, 1995.

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2. Results and discussion:

To gain its objectives NDSB in close collaboration with WFP, established relief operation since 2003. The operation covered six administrative localities, including Mellit, Kutum, Fashir, Dar El Salam, Um Kadadah, Kebkabia, where the following IDPs camps and IDPs in towns exist. These are Abu Shouk, El Salam, Zamzam, Kebkabia, (Fig. No. 2). Relief food distributed during the study period, (June - July 2006) will be analyzed through targeting registration of beneficiaries, food planning, and distribution.

Targeting and Registration: The general NDSB's purpose of targeting and registration is to provide a comprehensive and statistically reliable count and profile of displaced populations in NDS in order to (i) assist all the interested parties; (ii) exchange information on all related aspects; (iii) plan for their activities and programs; and (iv) eligible receive supplies and services.



One of SRC NDSB gathering information from conflict affected family (registration process).

According to the NDSB Regional Director, the registration process in each area/location was conducted in a 'head-account' process followed by interviews and data entry into secured sites in the computer (database). Since Sheikhs are playing a tangible role in Darfur's social life, the lists with the names of Sheikhs on the registration sites were prepared. In each list, members under Sheikh's supervision were listed.

After processing the registration forms and cross checking all data entered, the verification of the survey takes place in the camps that have been registered to ensure that the people who are registered are visible in camps, through verification lists,

which included head of the household name, tribe, Sheikh's name, number and the names of family members and their names.

In view of Darfur complex disaster situations visa-a-vis the large number of beneficiaries, targeting becomes an important and challenging issue, especially for those who were not directly affected by the conflicts. Unfortunately, neither vulnerability measures advocated by Downing et al (1996), nor vulnerability situation analysis determined by IFRC (1997) were applied as tools for targeting by NDSB Emergency Department, or by other involved NGOs. However, all those who have been registered in IDPs camps, IDPs squares around towns, receiving communities, and returned IDPs were considered as target beneficiaries groups, regardless of the significant changes in their level of living since 2003 (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution site and total beneficiaries planned for July 2006.

Distribution site name	Total benefi. planned	< 5	5 - <18	Male - >18	Female - >18	Total
Abu Shouk	51570	10311	15467	18193	33521	51570
El Slam	26876	5363	8045	9386	17469	26876
El Slam NR	7752	1550	2325	2713	5038	7752
Zamzam	31895	6379	9568	11163	20732	31895
Zamzam N.A	8470	1743	2614	5665	3050	8470
Kebkabia	63413	12682	19024	22194	41318	63413
Total	189976	25346	38019	47070	79810	189976

Source: SRCS – NDSB (2006).

The total beneficiaries planned by NDSB in July 2006 shown in Table (1) were 189,976 people. This number represents 72% of what has been planned in the operation objectives shown above (263,947 people) whereas the total beneficiaries planned in March 2006 was 272382 people, which represents 103% of the planned number. The continuing change from month to another in the total beneficiaries' number could be attributed to high mobility among the beneficiaries between camps and nearest towns. This mobility could also be seen as coping strategies, because the displaced persons and families generally look for reunification and kinships for more personal security as well as seek for more commodities and services provided by the NGOs. Moreover, the ongoing tribal strife, in Jabal Si and El Sayah town western El Fashir, at the study period, provides camps with more IDPs.

After three years of living in camps, the IDPs have created new economic coping strategies. Small scale local markets, managed by IDPs are dominated in each camp, where vegetables, firewood and charcoal are main commodities, while some of them are joining local economy in the nearest towns such as El Fashir and Mellit.

Firewood is the main source of energy for households in GD. The per capita consumption is above the national average of 0.27 cubic meters. The North, West and South Darfur States have per capita fuel wood consumption of 0.62, 0.60, and 0.55 respectively (Ministry of Agriculture, 1995). The consumption of 1.2 million people, concentrated in specific areas with limited mobility, will lead to an alarming result of clearance of vegetation cover and other related implications. Due to the conflict, so

many IDPs left their villages and concentrated in camps. The immediate areas around the camps have been cleaned of vegetation cover.



Displaced women carrying firewood - Abu Shouk displaced camp.

Although Kebkabia beneficiaries show the highest number among the rest of the distribution areas (Table 1), there is no existence for IDPs camp, and IDPs shanty squares were only established inside and around the town. The Table also shows that the number of females is more than males in all camps except Zamzam (N.A). The limited number of children under five years, shown in the Table, reflects low women fertility rate which could be contributed to poor health and nutrition situations during the last 6 years.

Planning for Distribution: Planning for quality and quantity of needed food items for the beneficiaries was made according to the Sphere Project Guidelines (2000), which determined the following indicators:

- (i) Planning for food should consider the local available food items, food habits, beneficiaries' sources and level of income, wild foods and agricultural seasons.
- (ii) Planning for food rations should be based on general food assessment, the special needs for most vulnerable groups, and food alternatives.
- (iii) Planning for food items should consider people's acceptability for food items distributed, the effects of distributed food items on local markets, the availability of food for cooking, and sufficiency of food quality and quantity.
- (iv) The minimum amount of calories per head per day should not be less than 2100, which should include 10% - 12% protein and 17% fats.

On the basis of the above mentioned indicators, NDSB determined that the daily ration of food per person should include 450 gm cereals, 50 gm pulses, 50 gm corn soya bens (CSB), 30gm vegetable oil, 10 gm salt, and 25 gm sugar. Accordingly, the total food planned for distribution sites is based on the total number of beneficiaries assisted (Table 2). The NDSB and other NGOs staff involved in the current food distribution operation in the State are generally satisfied with the planned food items and they highly believe that it is within the Sphere Project food relief standards for arid lands.

Table 2: Total food planned and received for July 2006.

Distribution site name	Total benefic. Assisted	Total food planned	Food received						Total food received.
			Cereal	pulses	CSB	V. oil	salt	sugar	
Abu Shouk	51,570	829,21	697,2	19.35	57.545	39.192	3.885	11.62	828,792
El Slam	26,876	431,37	362,75	10.13	30.06	20.33	2.027	6.061	431.368
El Slam NR	7,752	124,32	104,75	2.916	8.69	5.74	0.573	1.769	124.437
Zamzam	31,895	512,00	430,6	11.96	35.68	24.162	2.4	7.2	511.997
Zamzam N.A	8,470	135,26	114,45	3.2	9.47	6.333	0.65	1.92	135.373
Kebkabia	63,413	1,102,29	855.85	47.58	95.71	65.71	9.53	28.48	1,102,.290
Total	189,976	3,134,45	2,564.95	93.14	236.59	161.47	19.063	57.047	3,134.26

Source: SRCS - NDSB (2006).

Distribution: As far as food distribution is concerned, beneficiaries received their food ration on monthly basis in each distribution site. Determined daily food ration per head mentioned above, was calculated according to the needs of the members of the household in one month. The food distribution for the beneficiaries was also based on well-designed distribution card, which includes family numbers, composition and mobility between IDPs camps.



Food aid distribution - Kebkabia

The total food distributed for the beneficiaries in distribution sites shows that the beneficiaries near big towns received 82% of the total food distributed, e.g. the camps near El Fashir (Abu Shouk, Zamzam and Zamzam N.A.) received 47%, and IDPs around

Kebkabia received 35%. Huge gathering of IDPs around and inside big towns in NDS reflects the IDPs coping strategies in relation to social strife and lawlessness in the area. However, big towns secured food distributed by NGOs as well as its more protected by government army (Table 3).

Table 3: Total food distributed in July 2006.

Distribution site name	Total food received	Food distributed						Total food distrib.
		Cereal	pulses	CSB	V. oil	salt	Sugar	
Abu Shouk	828,792	697,20	19,35	57.545	39,192	3,885	11,62	828,792
El Slam	431,368	362,75	10,134	30,06	20,33	2,027	6,061	431,368
El Slam NR	124,437	104,75	2,96	8,69	5,74	0,573	1,769	124,437
Zamzam	511,997	430,6	11, 96	35, 68	24,162	2,4	7,2	511,997
Zamzam N.A	135,373	113,8	3,2	9.47	6,333	0,65	1,92	135,373
Kebkabia	1,102,9	853,35	47,33	94.55	65, 68	9,66	28,38	1,098,942
Total	3,134.26	2,562.45	94,89	235,995	161,44	19,190	56,,95	3,130,909

Source: SRCS - NDSB (2006).

The distributed amount of food in July 2006 was in line with what had been planned and received. This may be attributed to the highly precise food relief distribution system created by NDSB and WFP in 2003, as well as the cease of conflict and peace period during this period, (Table 4).

Table 4: Percentage of Total food planned, received and distributed in July 2006.

Distribution site name	Total benefic. Assisted	Total food planned	%	Total food received	% out of food planned	Total food distributed	% out of received
Abu Shouk	51570	829.21	100	828,792	99,94	828,792	100
El Slam	26876	431.37	100	431.368	99,99	431.368	100
El Slam NR	7752	124.32	100	124.437	100,9	124.437	100
Zamzam	31895	512.00	100	511.997	99,99	511.997	100
Zamzam N.A	8470	135.26	100	135.373	100,08	135.373	100
Kebkabia	63413	110,229	100	110,229	100,00	109,894	99,69
Total	189976	3,134.45	100	3,134.26	99,99	3.130,909	99,89

Source: SRCS NDSB (2006).

Relief food distributed by NDSB and other involved NGOs saved human lives and alleviated, to some extent, a large number of target groups suffering from hunger since 2003, and considered as main source of food. Moreover, the food grain distributed decreased the average grain prices during and post conflict period. Millet and Sorghum prices reported much lower than the price during normal time. Despite the low price of food grains, it was observed that the number of people purchasing food items from the market is low (Oxfam, 2006).

However, the food security situation in the State is generally subjected to shocks and instability. Food distribution operations are affected from time to time by the current conflicts situation in the State. In late June and mid July 2005 Seeds and Tools Project, run by Practical Action Organization, was negatively affected. Two of the Program

vehicles were hijacked in SLA areas, two of program staff were detained for three weeks, and two of the staff were detained for one night and then released; however the program equipment were confiscated⁶. Field work was suspended since this incident. The program used community alternative approach to implement the project activities. That was a very successful mechanism requiring minimal supervision and technical support. When technical support was required it was provided with less traveling since last July 2005.

In February 2006, armed conflicts between Darfur factions and government took place in the southern borders of the State⁷. During the same period, the Health Center in Zamzam IDPs camp was attacked as well as the NDSB cars and medical equipments. As a result, the movements and food distributions to Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps were stopped for almost one month. In addition, the IDPs food situation and health were negatively affected. Lack of communication and attacks on relief convoys were the main problems that hindered SRCS and Practical Action ND to reach war-affected areas immediately.

Since the start of the social strife, the main roads in GD have often been too dangerous for travel, preventing not only NDSB's staff and volunteers but also essential equipment and supplies from reaching the camps as well as rural areas. More than 300 trucks and vehicle were hijacked in NDS including 15 NGOs' vehicle.

Although the movement of people and trucks between towns and rural areas goes under secured government convoys, the price trend of commodities and materials reached 200%, during the rainy season, when most of the roads are closed. Lack of security is the main cause of the high cost of transportation in State. Also, looting has become one of the characteristics of the State. Traveling to or in the State is very risky. Sometimes, the owners of the truck bargain high transportation costs or even refuse due to the high risk of travelling outside the town (Practical Action, 2005).

This insecure situation affected the flow of relief distribution. As a result, the average price of food grains during February and March 2006 increased due to the lack of supply and stopping of relief operation. Although people, to some extent, were able to purchase food, food was not accessible in most cases.

According to the NDSB reports in August 2004, an estimated 62% of the conflict-affected population was provided with food; 53% of the IDPs received shelter assistance, 36% of them had clean water and 18% were covered by sanitation interventions. The situation in 2005 and 2006 shows increase in the percentage of the above mentioned areas of assistance.

Despite the above mentioned problems, NDSB was able to reach the beneficiaries and provide them with the needed relief food. Without this assistance, there would have been a food crisis in North Darfur.

⁶ two vehicles, one satellite phone, digital camera and staff pocket money.

⁷ In Haskanietah, El Tiweshah, and Um Kadkud.

Evaluating Emergency Food Distribution: The outputs of individual and group discussions as well as the workshop's shows that despite the complexities such as tribal tension and difficult security situation, the NDSB has succeeded remarkably in achieving its operational goals, and it has laid strong foundations for further progress. Using SWOT analysis, the gathered data from the above mentioned stakeholder (workshop) can be analyzed in the following points:

Strengths: The success of relief food distribution operations in the study area could be attributed to the following areas of strength:

1. Enhanced Red Crescent image assisted in facilitating the NDSB to achieve its mission and vision.
2. The immediate deployment of NDSB members to the Darfur crisis contributed positively in alleviating a gruesome humanitarian situation.
3. NDSB is better known than other relief players in Darfur. This fact played a tangible role in reaching the remotest and most vulnerable areas.
4. Well planned relief response on the basis of SRCS Disaster Response Policy and Plan – 2003.
5. NDSB has a very early presence at the site of crisis, often ahead of other agencies.
6. Previous training of staff and volunteers had helped them to be efficient and dedicated.
7. Optimum and efficient utilization of available resources at all levels, local communities, other NGOs and governmental authorities.
8. Community participation from beneficiaries in most of relief cycle activities eases and minimizes time and efforts of the operations.
9. External support from IFRC and other Red Cross Red Crescent Societies.

Weakness: There are, however, specific points of weakness which have not seen adequate progress. They threatened to significantly slow or even stall the NDSB's ability in relief food distribution operations to modernize and improve, these are:

- (i) Lack of standardized procedures for targeting beneficiaries, and criteria for follow up and assessment. Moreover the current distribution plans and assessment process need further refinement on the bases of new lesson learned.
- (ii) Volunteers were required to work very long hours, sometimes into the night during distributions, reflect the lack of clear shift time table.
- (iii) Weak coordination and inadequate notice given to both local communities and other NGOs about assessment and distributions reflect that lessons from previous disasters had not been learned.
- (iv) Slow information flow from NDSB units and camps, on one hand, and from other NGOs, on the other, shows a weak information system and a communication problem in most locations. This highlights the need for more networking.
- (v) The general logistic preparation in NDSB as well as other NGOs in NDS shows inadequate resources and lack of central storage/warehousing immediately available.
- (vi) NDSB registration system and methodology in relief distribution was not participatory in most cases.

- (vii) Huge and continuous increasing number of NGOs involved in relief and development activities in NDS (54 NGOs) with its continued need of qualified staff, on one hand, and the NGOs staff interests in satisfied and secured jobs on the other, negatively assisted in staff high turnover from NGOs to another NDSB Emergency Department during the last 6 months is lacking of qualified staff and there is a need for in service training program.

Opportunities: The complex disaster situation in NDS provides lessons and experiences in all process of disaster management. The NDSB's has many opportunities which need to be gasped for better profile, these are:

1. To build upon the enhanced profile and positive image of the Red Crescent and its volunteers to develop a comprehensive plan for post-war recovery activities.
2. Experience gained by the NDSB and its volunteers in the relief distribution operations will help in developing future peace building activities within the general SRCS approach of "from relief to development".
3. On bases of SRCS international recognition, the NDSB should use the relief distribution operation for establishing fund raising campaigns for small scale development activities and build up NDSB capacities.
4. Enchasing the general NDSB network and developing the weak coordination through creating links with other national and international NGOs.
5. Develop and utilize newly identified volunteer base and develop their abilities in the field of disaster preparedness (traditional early warning systems).
6. To build upon the experiences of other NGOs in the area through developing data base program, this will provide updated data for future development recovery projects.
7. To build up on WFP interest in continuing general food distribution in Darfur in 2010.

Threats: Some internal and external points are seen as real threats to food relief distribution operation. These are as follows

- (i) Delays in food arrival and distribution led to critical food situation, raised the vulnerability of the beneficiaries and led to a poor public perception.
- (ii) Enhanced NDSB profile seen as a threat by other new and some old organizations in the State.
- (iii) Encouraging dependency on limited experience displaced beneficiary communities in systematic relief operation may have a negative impact on future NDSB profile.
- (iv) Raised expectations of future assistance among displaced beneficiaries and some local organizations may promote the enhanced profile and positive image of the NDSB and its volunteers.
- (v) International political influence and food donor preconditions made the regular continuity of the operations more difficult.
- (vi) Sacking for sustainability and recognized work created a competitive environment amongst NGOs.

3. Conclusion:

In spite of the continuously worsening security conditions in Darfur and travel restrictions, the NDSB successfully operated the operation of relief distribution in conflict situations during 2003-2007 by achieving its operational goals and laid strong foundations for further progress.

Moreover, during the on-growing tribal conflict, the NDSB was the first among the major organizations to reach affected people and to collect information through its good network of units, members and other volunteers. The NDSB used its optimal capacity to respond to war-affected areas by mobilizing its own financial, material and human resources, and demonstrated its capacity and determination to do more and better.

The good image of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement enabled the NDSB to access conflict-affected areas and implement relief operations based on standard procedures in place for needs assessment, ration cards, distributions, procurement, warehouse management and reporting. The established system also enables checking of potential misuse of relief items.

Disaster response training and activities implemented before the conflict has a significant impact in response and coping capacities of the communities. During the operation, the main area for coordination was information and resources' sharing. Many organizations, such as WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, and Save the Children collaborated with NDSB and after the conflict the NDSB had a good opportunity to scale-up the community peace building and post-war recovery activities in cooperation with other agencies in NDS.

Weak communication, high turnover of staff and attack on food convoys were the main problems that hindered SRCS to reach war-affected areas immediately.

The lessons learning exercise not only engaged people in capturing what things need to be improvement, but also identified recommendations with the intention of improving future interventions. Key recommendations for improving relief and food distribution at NDSB and units level are to: ensure food commodities supplied are appropriate and in correct proportion; NDSB should develop a comprehensive system for the recruitment, motivation, management and the sustainability of volunteers and take the initiative to develop stronger linkages with other NGOs to share experiences; carry out participatory post-disaster "lessons learned" exercises following each disaster and use the information to develop programs and improve future disaster response activities; more evaluation of the benefits of NGOs interventions in Greater Darfur is highly needed, because that might in-depth the understanding of the current conflict and humanitarian crisis in the region of African Sahelian Belt.

The NDSB, as external coping strategies, has played a recognized role in filling the food gaps, decreasing the potential threat and human vulnerability and successfully managed the food crisis situation during the last four decades in NDS. Despite the civil strife and critical situation in the region and harsh and hard environment as a part of Sub-Saharan Africa.

However the displaced people in NDS obtain food only through donation (food aid) neither by production no by exchange. Hence, the displaced people's food insecurity levels will be increased unless various legal food entitlement channels will be obtained (Sen, 1987; Curtis, 1988; Dreze and Sen, 1989).

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