



## SUDANESE REFUGEES IN CHAD: PASSING THE BATON TO NO ONE

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Front cover: A boy and his donkey carry supplies, including cooking oil, on food distribution day in Am Nabak refugee camp.  
This page: A mother and daughter living in Treguine refugee camp.

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## INTRODUCTION

More than ten years after first arriving in Chad, over 360,000 Sudanese refugees are now dealing with a new reality. In the face of dramatic food ration cuts, and after years of shrinking support from the international community, aid agencies are pushing these refugees to become self-sufficient and more deeply integrated with their Chadian hosts. With the global humanitarian system overstretched, a more sustainable and targeted assistance strategy for this population would seem reasonable. But the early stages of this transition have encountered serious problems. These ration cuts, now in place for 18 months, have been devastating for already vulnerable households. Humanitarian funding has dried up and not been replaced by desperately-needed development activities. It is unrealistic to expect refugees to become self-sufficient in a place where livelihood opportunities are hard to find, government services are limited, cost of living is high, host community tensions are increasing, and most crucially, little development funding exists. It is time for the international community to recommit itself to this long-suffering population, and to do so in a sustainable way.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ Donors and the World Food Program (WFP) must immediately increase food rations to 2,100 kilocalories per day for vulnerable Sudanese refugees, until such time as assistance can be adjusted in line with region-wide household economic assessments.
- ❑ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and WFP should closely monitor the food security situation of Sudanese refugees after food assistance is adjusted. After 12 months, UNHCR and WFP should commission a full Joint Impact Evaluation to identify any necessary adjustments and to more fully understand and address coping mechanisms.
- ❑ Donors – especially the United States Agency for International Development, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the European Union’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank – should provide dedicated funding for development and resilience initiatives in eastern Chad that benefit both Sudanese refugees and Chadian host communities. Donors should also work with the Chadian government to make sure these populations are prioritized in the country’s National Development Plan.
- ❑ The UN Development Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Children’s Education Fund, and the UN Population Fund should deploy additional program staff to eastern Chad in accordance with their respective responsibilities under the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and should work with UNHCR to implement development and resilience initiatives on the basis of need.
- ❑ In refugee-hosting areas, donors and development agencies should prioritize efforts to improve water management, agricultural inputs and techniques, land management and dispute resolution, and women’s empowerment.
- ❑ UNHCR should freeze its budget for core refugee protection and assistance in eastern Chad. Further cuts should only be considered once refugees begin receiving long-term support from development actors.
- ❑ The Chadian government should strengthen healthcare services in refugee-hosting areas. In particular, the government should accelerate the hiring process for healthcare workers with foreign qualifications and pay incentives to healthcare workers who accept postings in underserved areas.
- ❑ The Chadian government must pay for all necessary salaries and equipment for the Detachment for the Protection of Humanitarians and Refugees.

# BACKGROUND

Though its most recent civil war ended in 2009, Chad shares more than half of its borders with conflict-affected countries: Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Libya. After years of conflict between the Chadian President Idriss Déby and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, the two reached a rapprochement in 2010 that stabilized the country's eastern border. Yet regional counterterrorism efforts, particularly with respect to Boko Haram, remain a primary focus of the Chadian government. The June 15, 2015 suicide bombings in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, which targeted both the police academy and the police headquarters, have heightened security protocols in and around the city.

In addition to these security concerns, Chad faces both long-term development challenges and recent, acute economic concerns. Chad ranks 184th out of 187 countries in the UN's Human Development Index. Living conditions for both refugees and host communities alike are very difficult, with food insecurity and a lack of livelihood opportunities just a few of the challenges they face. The price of oil, the country's main export, has fallen roughly 40 percent since last year, and trade routes into Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Libya have been largely cut due to conflict. As a result, the World Bank reports that government spending on services and development will decline significantly in 2015, and could fall even further if Chad's military campaign against Boko Haram expands.<sup>1</sup>

At a time when the international community is shifting its focus to new refugee flows from both the Central African Republic and Nigeria, Chad's Sudanese refugee population has struggled to stay on the radar. The Sudanese refugees' exile has become protracted, and their chances of achieving durable solutions are low. Permanent return to Sudan is unlikely, as the security situation inside Darfur

**“In the past, people from the outside helped us and there was a lot of assistance. Now, you don't come anymore.”**

-Sudanese refugee, Ouaddai



remains extremely volatile and internal displacement has risen to levels not seen since 2004.<sup>2</sup> Resettlement of Sudanese refugees remains limited to the most vulnerable cases, despite appeals for broader, group resettlement. Local integration, meanwhile, has not proved attractive for many refugees,<sup>3</sup> and RI was told that bureaucratic roadblocks also prevent interested refugees

from gaining Chadian citizenship. In the meantime, the extremely large numbers of refugees – as much as half the total population of some Chadian departments – continues to put great strain on services and natural resources.

Despite appearances of being an unchanged population, the number of Sudanese refugees in Chad continues to increase. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), roughly 70,000 Sudanese have been born in exile and 36,000 new refugees arrived in 2013. The shifting conflict in Darfur, and the possible withdrawal or drawdown of the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), could eventually lead to increased refugee flows into Chad. Indeed, during a May 2015 mission to the country, a

Refugees International team met one refugee who had arrived in Chad just one week prior, having never been displaced before.

## FOOD RATION CUTS: FIXING THE MISTAKE, FINDING A WAY FORWARD

In early 2014, the World Food Program (WFP) made a dramatic 50 percent cut (up to 60 percent in some areas) in food rations for Sudanese refugees in Chad: from the previous allotment of 2,100 kilocalories a day to around 800.

RI saw first-hand the effect of these cuts at a food distribution inside Am Nabak refugee camp. In addition to reductions in legumes, sorghum, oil, and cereals, no sugar or salt were available to the refugees. Soap happened to be part of the distribution that day but that had not been included in months, according to the refugees.

While there were some attempts to warn the refugees of the impending cuts, the refugees that RI spoke with were clearly still in disbelief about this change, and they explained that access to food remains a key challenge in their daily lives. After the ration

cuts began, one humanitarian worker said that the most vulnerable in the refugee camps had to begin “begging to their neighbors.” In Touloum refugee camp, RI spoke with two female refugees in their 30s who said it was difficult to get their children the necessary nutrition, particularly since the food rations began, as local food is expensive and items such as fruit or meat are not provided by WFP. Humanitarians that RI spoke with said women often cannot afford essentials such as milk for their children. One local NGO spoke to RI about malnourished children having to share their nutritional supplements with their families since the ration cuts began, prolonging their recovery time.

Even households who are manifestly unable to support themselves have not been spared the cuts. RI spoke with Kaltuma, whose husband was killed in Darfur. Her mother is too weak to work so she must care for her, along with three orphans she has taken into her home. She said she had no way to support them and was worried about her future.

Both refugees and aid workers told RI that refugees – particularly women and children – had responded to the cuts with worrying coping mechanisms. Women RI spoke with left camps to find what little work they could, often farming or making bricks. Sometimes these trips would last for days or weeks at a time, with children being taken out of school either to work or care for younger siblings while their parents were gone. An operational NGO worker that RI spoke with noted an increase in cases of sexual violence and exploitation against the Sudanese refugee women since the ration cuts began. Petty crime has increased in some areas as well.

These ration cuts occurred at a time when the Sudanese refugee population was also dealing with major cuts to other longstanding support – including for non-food items and firewood. Aid officials told RI that the refugees had long worked to build up their

savings and to buy household items. But they noted that since the ration cuts, refugees had to work in order to eat, regardless of how vulnerable they might be or what kinds of services (such as education or healthcare) they might forgo in order to earn money.

**“Sometimes we have just one meal a day because we know we will need to save something for tomorrow.”**

-Sudanese refugee, Wadi Fira

In 2014, UNHCR conducted a nutrition survey to look at the impact on the population after the food ration cuts occurred. Though at least three camps showed Global Acute Malnutrition rates at critical levels (above 15 percent), the results indicated that malnutrition rates for the entire refugee population had decreased slightly since 2013. This assessment was

not entirely shared by some aid workers RI spoke with, who said they had seen a modest rise in malnutrition cases presented at health clinics. Refugees, too, disputed this claim, telling RI that malnutrition had increased in some camps and that children were often sick for months at a time. “When mothers aren’t well, children also suffer,” one female refugee told RI. “Our sisters and mothers look in the mirror and in their own eyes, they see the effect of the ration cuts.”

Despite the nutrition survey results, it was clear to RI that the consequences of food ration cuts for the most vulnerable households have been unacceptable. A short-term increase in food assistance for those households is absolutely essential. Therefore, donors and WFP must immediately increase food rations to the 2,100 kilocalories per day for vulnerable Sudanese refugees.

**“My children don’t understand what is happening. They cry and cry and ask why can’t you feed me?”**

-Sudanese refugee, Wadi Fira

WFP and UNHCR are in the process of executing a new approach to food assistance for the Sudanese refugees – one in which aid is targeted on the basis of need. The two agencies are conducting economic assessments that will divide households into four

groups, from very poor to relatively wealthy. Full rations would only be provided for poorer households – roughly 60 percent of all refugees, according to preliminary data. Wealthier households would receive more limited amounts of food or non-food assistance (such as food-for-assets and access to microcredit) according to



The amount of fortified cereal mix, typically used for porridge, that each refugee receives per month.

their means. UN officials project that the transition to this new approach will be completed by the end of 2015.

Aid officials admit that this change was driven, in part, by a lack of funding. “We have to shift to a vulnerability-based approach to assistance instead of a rights-based approach,” one said. “We don’t have the resources to do the latter.” If well executed, this vulnerability-based approach could give some refugees greater economic opportunity, as well as more freedom to purchase the kinds of food that they prefer. However, some officials whom RI spoke to feared that donors were reluctant to fund certain parts of the plan – particularly the assistance for middle-income or wealthier households. They expressed concern that if the most vulnerable refugees were the only ones receiving aid, or if the population experienced a shock like drought, more households could become impoverished due to neglect.

**“I’m not a doctor, but I am a mother. And if a mother is not getting enough food, her children will suffer too.”**

-Sudanese refugee, Ouaddaï

To ensure that this new approach to food aid is successful, UNHCR and WFP should closely monitor the food security situation of Sudanese refugees after assistance is adjusted in line with region-wide household economic assessments. After 12 months, UNHCR and WFP should commission a full Joint Impact Evaluation to identify any necessary adjustments and to more fully understand and address coping mechanisms.

## A HAPHAZARD SHIFT TO SELF-RELIANCE

For most of their 12 years in exile, the Sudanese refugees in Chad were treated by donors and aid agencies as a purely humanitarian concern. UNHCR, WFP, and other organizations provided the kinds of direct assistance that any refugee population might expect: food rations, shelter, non-food items, water, healthcare, education, and protection. Seemingly little thought was given to the sustainability of this aid, or to ways of making the refugees more self-sufficient. During RI’s visits to four Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad, the physical evidence of this was plain to see: camp schools, not built for the long-term, are now in disrepair; gas-powered generators brought in to power water pumps are now breaking down. Just as disconcerting is what humanitarians see as the population’s dependence on aid. With limited livelihood opportunities available in eastern Chad, and few attempts by aid agencies to create new ones, refugees naturally grew to rely on emergency assistance. This was reflected in RI’s discussions with

refugees about the ration cuts discussed above: when asked what could be done to address the problem, a typical response from a refugee would be, “You need to make things the way they were before.”

In the last two years, however, the humanitarian community in eastern Chad has begun to move toward a self-reliance approach for the Sudanese refugees. This self-reliance approach has four main pillars:<sup>4</sup>

1. Pursuing an “Alternatives to Camps” policy by providing assistance to refugees who choose to settle in nearby communities, and carrying out quick impact projects in support of those communities.
2. Pursuing socio-economic “solutions” for the refugees, including land access for refugees and broader support for agriculture in refugee-hosting areas.
3. Replacing the Sudanese curriculum with the Chadian curriculum in refugee primary and secondary schools, and bringing refugee schools under the oversight of the Chadian Ministry of Education.
4. Integrating health services for refugees into the Chadian national health system and requiring wealthier refugee households to pay for healthcare.

In principle, this transition is laudable. It follows years of research suggesting that displaced people lead more dignified lives if they are self-sufficient and integrated with host communities. However, in eastern Chad this transition faces a major – and potentially fatal – obstacle: the communities that refugees are meant to join are some of the poorest in the world, with extremely weak institutions, markets, and social services. In the words of one humanitarian whom RI spoke to, “Everybody is talking about socio-economic integration...but how do you integrate refugees into an area where people are starving?”

Of the roughly 360,000 Sudanese refugees resident in Chad, about 75 percent live in the Sahel, the eco-climactic zone just south of the Sahara Desert.<sup>5</sup> As described by the UN, the Sahel’s 100 million residents face “recurring food and nutritional crises caused by climate change, environmental degradation, drought, floods, poorly functioning markets, low agricultural productivity, poverty and conflict [which] have seriously eroded the ability of households to withstand repeated and increasingly frequent shocks.”<sup>6</sup> The region is also exceptionally vulnerable to climate change, with a temperature rise of between 7 and 10 degrees Fahrenheit expected by mid-century.<sup>7</sup>

The comprehensive humanitarian assistance given to the Sudanese refugees has insulated them from these harsh conditions, but their Chadian neighbors have not been so fortunate. According to one official RI spoke with, 15 of Chad’s 32 Sahelian departments currently face emergency-level rates of global acute malnutrition, with rates as high as 21 percent in some refugee-hosting areas.<sup>8</sup> Agricultural production is seriously insufficient due to poor soil



A mother, daughter, and her children in Farchana refugee camp. The family is often forced to skip meals due to lack of food.

quality (aggravated by progressive deforestation), limited use of modern farming techniques, and rapid population growth. Water shortages are chronic, with host communities often having less access to potable water than the refugees. Both refugees and Chadian villagers told RI that they frequently had to collect untreated water from seasonal rivers, where water-borne diseases are common.

Though these problems have been obvious for years, the Chadian government and foreign donors have failed to address them in a comprehensive, sustainable way. President Déby has won praise abroad for establishing stability and growing the economy, but aid agencies point out that poor Chadians – in the Sahel zone and elsewhere – have been left behind. According to the UN, more than 80 percent of health clinics in the country are “non-functional” or lack the necessary equipment and personnel,<sup>9</sup> with the eastern regions especially underserved. More than 75 percent of teachers receive no compensation from government sources,<sup>10</sup> and RI was told that in the Sahel, many children are only able to attend school because of WFP-supplied school meals. One father living in the eastern village of Foyou, not far from Treguine refugee camp, told RI that his children attend school “under the tree.”

**“Everybody is talking about socio-economic integration...but how do you integrate refugees into an area where people are starving?”**

-Donor government official, N'Djamena

In such a difficult context, integrating refugees with their host communities without providing substantial aid to both groups will not lead to self-reliance. UNHCR, WFP, and their humanitarian partners can provide a safety net for the most vulnerable, but eastern Chad’s chronic problems actually require development solutions. RI was therefore dismayed by the severe weakness of the UN’s development agencies in eastern Chad, and particularly the Sahelian regions thereof. Of these agencies, the most troubling were the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), whose two small offices in the east have recently been downsized, forcing the agency to shut down key projects intended to serve refugees and locals alike; and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which recently closed its only office in the east due to lack of funding. One senior humanitarian RI spoke with described UNDP’s feebleness in the region as “a great source of frustration.”

The lack of development actors and activities in eastern Chad has already critically undermined efforts by the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and humanitarian agencies to build resilience in the east – for refugees and their hosts alike. In the Sila region, for example, the RC/HC and the regional governor approved a four-year regional resilience strategy in June 2013 that was intended to



Women chopping wood at firewood distribution location in Farchana refugee camp. The bundle of wood, at left, is what three families are expected to share for one month.

address the needs of both refugees and local residents. UNDP was charged with leading or supporting 18 of the strategy’s 37 tasks, but the UNDP staffer dedicated to implementing the strategy was withdrawn in early 2015.

In the absence of development actors, UNHCR and its NGO partners have attempted to fill the gap with their own resilience and development programs in refugee-hosting areas. In doing so they have received commendable (if limited) support from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration; and GIZ, the German development corporation. However, UNHCR cannot and should not lead the UN’s development response in the east. The organization’s humanitarian focus, lack of technical expertise for development, and its year-to-year budget cycle make it unsuitable for development activities. This has been proven during decades of failed attempts by UNHCR to create development solutions for refugee populations on its own.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, other UN agencies have the necessary mandates and capabilities to carry out this work in eastern Chad. The UN Security Council itself acknowledged this when it endorsed the

UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in July 2013 – a strategy that established specific responsibilities for each UN agency working in the region.<sup>12</sup> Confusing these responsibilities in Chad would set an unhelpful precedent for the UN system both in the Sahel and worldwide.

Humanitarian officials in Chad whom RI spoke to – including donors, UN officials, and international and local NGOs – were unanimous in their demand for greater involvement in the east by development donors and agencies. Even one development official admitted to RI that “the transition from relief to development in the east has failed.”

RI therefore believes that in line with their respective responsibilities under the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, UNDP, FAO, the UN Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) should deploy additional program staff to eastern Chad, and should work with UNHCR to implement development and resilience initiatives on the basis of need. Since these agencies have so far not prioritized eastern Chad



within their country strategies, RI also believes that donors who have already expressed some interest in the region – especially the United States Agency for International Development, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the European Union’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank – must provide dedicated funding for development and resilience initiatives in eastern Chad that benefit both Sudanese refugees and Chadian host communities.

This report does not endeavor to present a full-fledged development and resilience strategy for eastern Chad; indeed, a national resilience strategy for Chad is already being drafted under the auspices of the Global Alliance for Resilience (also known as AGIR). In addition, there are existing guidebooks for resilience programming that could help donors and aid agencies plan their responses.<sup>13</sup> However, RI’s numerous interviews with aid officials, refugees, and Chadians did uncover a few priority interventions that donors and aid agencies should consider: water management, agricultural inputs and techniques, dispute resolution, and women’s empowerment.

Particularly in eastern Chad’s Sahelian zone, access to water is a major challenge. Groundwater collection is difficult, with existing wells built by humanitarians requiring regular and costly maintenance. Seasonal rainwater flows out of the region quickly, with not enough captured for use during the lengthy dry season. The resulting water shortages have impacts well beyond the lack

of water for household use: the amount of arable land, and the ability of families to farm year-round, is limited; and the constant search for distant water sources puts women and children at risk. Sudanese refugees living in the region also told RI that eastern Chad’s water problems were unlike those they had faced in Darfur, so the population has a clear need for water management training, tools, and infrastructure.

Agriculture was an economic mainstay for most Sudanese refugees before they went into exile, and it has remained their primary livelihood in Chad. During the planting and harvest seasons, it is typical for more than half of the refugees to leave their camps in search of farm work, often for months at a stretch. However, both the refugees and their hosts face a scarcity of arable land. Refugees told RI that in return for land access, they typically

must pay Chadian landowners either half of their harvest or the equivalent in cash. This has been a major source of frustration for the refugees. “We hosted these people back when they were refugees in Sudan, and we did not treat them this way,” one refugee told RI. Yet their Chadian hosts are also under pressure. “The refugee camp sits on land that we used to farm,” one villager

living near Treguine camp said. “We also have to share pasture land with the refugees, so many of our cattle have died from hunger.”

To enable both refugees and their hosts to earn a living from the land – and to continue doing so as temperatures and rainfall shift due to climate change – efforts should be made to both

increase the amount of arable land (potentially through the use of irrigation or soil rehabilitation) and increase its productivity through improved farming inputs and techniques.

A related and critical area of concern is dispute resolution between refugees, their Chadian neighbors, and local authorities. Though many of the refugees and locals share an ethnicity and language, resource scarcity has pushed them into conflict. For example, refugee women told RI that they often face abuse when collecting firewood or farming outside their camps. “People say, ‘You’re a refugee! What are you doing here?’” one said. “Women can be raped, and then they are so ashamed that they do not report it.” Refugees also complained that nomadic herders graze animals on the land they were farming, often leading to violence between the two groups.

Both refugees and Chadians spoke approvingly of “mixed committees” formed at the initiative of UNHCR and its NGO partners, where elders from both communities gather to address disputes. But they added that certain problems (such as the demarcation of land for farmers and herders) remained unresolved and required further discussion and help from aid agencies. In

addition, one humanitarian familiar with the mixed committees told RI that donor support for the project was being cut, despite a need for more engagement. Land disputes in the resource-limited Sahel are commonplace, and have previously contributed to devastating, broader conflicts – including in Darfur itself. Therefore the need for dispute resolution and peaceful coexistence in eastern Chad should be obvious. Donor support for dispute resolution should increase, with Chadian authorities providing support as needed.

**“The soil here isn’t good, so having our rations cut is very difficult. If there was water, we could do a lot for ourselves.”**

-Sudanese refugee, Wadi Fira

**“The response to the refugees was badly planned from the start, and hard choices about integration were postponed for many years. Now the transition to self-reliance is happening suddenly when we should have sown the seeds at the beginning.”**

-Aid worker, Wadi Fira

A final, overarching priority for development donors and agencies must be women's empowerment. Sudanese refugee women and girls suffer from a low social status, with limited rights and economic power. This contributes to gender-based violence (including rape, domestic violence, and early or forced marriage), poor maternal health, high fertility rates, and the vulnerability of women-headed households. Any long-term strategy for eastern Chad must address the consequences and causes of women's disempowerment. For example, the recent decree by President Déby fixing 18 as the legal age of marriage in Chad provides an important opening for programs that promote girls' social rights, girls' education, and sexual and reproductive health.

Unfortunately, it is hard to imagine that eastern Chad's development challenges will be addressed quickly, so it is essential that humanitarian assistance continue for both refugees and host communities. In this regard, RI is deeply concerned about repeated, deep cuts to UNHCR's budget for eastern Chad. Refugees, NGOs, and Chadian authorities whom RI spoke with universally echoed one observer's frustration: "The needs here are still high, and even increasing. How can UNHCR possibly keep cutting?"

***“The situation in the surrounding villages is the same as in the camp. Aid to the local community might help resolve the tensions between us.”***

-Sudanese refugee, Ouaddaï

Already, UNHCR's cuts have encouraged – if not forced – various international implementing partners to leave eastern Chad. Those who remain have seen their grants from UNHCR reduced by as much as 40 percent in the last two years. International NGOs still working in the east told RI they could not meet UNHCR's programmatic expectations with the funding it provides. Local NGOs, whose role has grown significantly in recent years, are

almost exclusively funded by UNHCR in the areas that RI visited in eastern Chad.

UNHCR's budget is, of course, under enormous strain globally. Yet, as this report has made clear, UNHCR cannot step back from eastern Chad if development actors do not step forward. UNHCR should not make further cuts to its budget for core refugee protection and assistance in eastern Chad. Further cuts should only be considered once refugees begin receiving long-term support from development actors, and even then UNHCR support to the most vulnerable must continue.

## CHAD'S CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Chadian government has welcomed Sudanese refugees onto its territory for more than a decade, and it has allowed humanitarians to operate in the east without serious interference. But what the government has not done is make significant investments toward developing the east. Until now, this has not had a major impact on the lives of the Sudanese refugees, since their needs have been addressed by humanitarians. But it has affected their Chadian neighbors, who receive substantially less international assistance and are, as a result, often more vulnerable than the refugees.

As noted above, any effort to make the Sudanese refugees self-reliant, or to integrate them with their Chadian hosts, will have to address this glaring gap. And it will require the Chadian government to provide policy direction and funding. Three priority areas for government action emerged from RI's research in the east: development planning, healthcare, and security.

First, the government should prioritize the east – and especially refugee-hosting areas – in its National Development Plan, and ensure that this is further reinforced at the regional and local levels. It should also endorse the specific development and resilience activities outlined above. Together, these measures

Touloum refugee camp.



would give development agencies and donors a clear mandate to intervene on behalf of Sudanese refugees and their hosts.

Second, the Chadian government must strengthen healthcare services in refugee-hosting areas. As part of its self-reliance strategy, UNHCR and the Chadian authorities decided that Sudanese refugees would no longer receive healthcare at separate facilities but would instead be served through the Chadian national health system. Though a fine idea in principle, in fact health services in the east's refugee-hosting regions have been critically weakened by a lack of state healthcare workers. Aid agencies told RI that in many parts of the east, Chadian state clinics are almost entirely staffed by NGO workers paid by UNHCR and its partners. These aid agencies claim that many state-funded healthcare posts at these clinics remain vacant. They also note that when state healthcare workers are deployed, many quit because their salaries are too low or, in some cases, not paid at all. One aid worker went so far as to say that without UNHCR and its implementing partners, many state clinics in eastern Chad would be defunct.

The Chadian government can address these problems in two relatively modest ways. First, the government should create – and implement – a system of financial incentives for healthcare workers who accept postings in underserved areas. This would be particularly helpful in the refugee-hosting eastern regions, where the cost of living is high and living conditions are difficult compared with other parts of Chad. In addition, the government should accelerate its hiring process for healthcare workers with foreign qualifications. RI was told by one aid agency that the accreditation of foreign-trained healthcare workers by the Chadian Ministry of Health had stalled, creating a large backlog of potentially qualified doctors and nurses. The government should work through this backlog without delay.

Third and finally, the Chadian government must demonstrate that it is serious about creating a secure operating environment for humanitarians, development actors, and the people they serve. Due to banditry and other security concerns in eastern Chad, UN staffers are not permitted to travel beyond the region's main towns without an armed escort. And since July 2013, a gendarme division, the Detachment for the Protection of Humanitarians and Refugees (DPHR), has been charged with providing that service. Yet numerous humanitarian and security officials told RI that despite repeated requests, the government has failed to provide the DPHR with the equipment and salaries it needs to operate. As a consequence, UN agencies are forced to pay and equip the DPHR if they want to reach their beneficiaries. In the words of one official RI spoke to, "The government knows that humanitarians will pay in the end, so then they don't have to."

Clearly, this arrangement will not bring lasting security to the east, nor will it encourage development donors and agencies to direct their scarce resources to this region. The Chadian government must therefore shoulder its responsibility and pay for all necessary

salaries and equipment for the DPHR. It should also ensure that DPHR personnel are made available to aid agencies irrespective of whether they are assisting host communities or refugees, and whether or not those agencies are humanitarians.

## CONCLUSION

How to best assist a long-term refugee population such as the Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad is not a new problem. Development and self-reliance initiatives, combined with a strong safety net for the most vulnerable, appear to be the best options in the absence of durable solutions. But without the necessary funding and leadership, this population's suffering will only increase. The Sudanese refugees deserve more than an empty promise, and the international community must refocus its efforts to meet this challenge.

*Michael Boyce and Ann Hollingsworth visited Chad in May and June 2015. They met with refugees, host communities, humanitarians, development actors, and government officials in the regions of N'Djamena, Wadi Fira, and Ouaddaï.*

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