

# Background paper on Chad

## Prepared by Oxfam International and International Medical Corps, July 2008

### Humanitarian situation and context

- Chad currently hosts more than **280,000 refugees** fleeing conflicts in neighbouring Sudan and Central African Republic.
- **Internal displacement in the east of the country has risen dramatically since 2006.** More than **185,000 people** have fled their villages as a result of inter-communal violence and cross-border attacks. Both refugees and internally displaced people (**IDPs**) are entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance.
- **Hostilities between the Chadian government and Chadian rebels continue to intensify**, with rebels regularly carrying out ‘hit-and-run’ attacks to temporarily seize major towns and cities in the east (including humanitarian bases such as Abéché, Goz Beida, and Guéréda) and threatening to take the country’s capital N’Djamena (which was briefly occupied by rebels in February 2008).
- The volatile political and security situation is exacerbated by **poor relations between Chadian and Sudanese governments**, both of whom accuse each other of using the neighbouring country’s rebel movements as proxy militias. There is also a lack of a comprehensive peace strategy that addresses the domestic political instability in Chad.

### Collective challenges

Humanitarian actors providing assistance and protection to populations affected by violence and insecurity (these include refugees, internally displaced people and host communities) face significant constraints:

- A **hostile security environment**, characterised by banditry and lawlessness, negatively impacts humanitarian actors’ ability to deliver life-saving assistance. More than 80 humanitarian vehicles have been stolen in eastern Chad in the past three years, and since the beginning of the year several dozen cases of attacks targeting humanitarians and partners (including two fatal cases) in eastern Chad have been registered. Chadian gendarmes who are tasked with providing security in camps have also been targeted in deadly attacks in both February and May of 2008. Furthermore, fighting between armed groups regularly causes humanitarians to evacuate/relocate staff, leaving beneficiaries without access to assistance.
- **Beneficiaries remain extremely vulnerable to violence** (including sexual and gender-based violence), with protection needs and the impact of negative coping strategies cutting across all humanitarian sectors.
- **Population movement within many of the affected communities is common**, making humanitarian needs dynamic and unpredictable. Provision of assistance also runs the risk of contributing to tensions between different communities (host population, internally displaced persons and refugees.) who are already straining to make do with limited resources such as food, water, and land.
- **Humanitarian activities remain critically under-funded.** In spite of demonstrable humanitarian needs, the 2008 CAP for Chad (which asks donor countries for US \$287 million) currently has a funding shortfall of approximately 70%. Recent months have also seen a new influx of Darfuri refugees, putting further pressure on already scarce resources.
- Coordination with other mandated protection actors such as the Chadian armed forces and two international missions (MINURCAT civilian and police presence, and EUFOR military force) require skilled **management of civil-military relations** and proactive efforts to preserve humanitarian space. International politico-economic

interests in both the regional Darfur conflict and internal Chadian crisis furthermore increase the threat of politicisation of humanitarian assistance.

- The **diversity of humanitarian actors** (according to latest OCHA contact list these include 17 donors, 18 UN agencies, 54 NGOs, the ICRC, IFRC and three national Red Cross societies) and national/local government officials involved in the humanitarian response makes coordination and common approaches on the provision of assistance across a sizeable geographical area quite challenging.
- An **absence of strong and capable national political and administrative structures** to comprehensively protect and assist affected populations living in an increasingly needy and lawless situation.

### **Successes and good practice on partnerships**

- Communication and relationships between major humanitarian NGOs has improved through the **creation of an NGO Co-ordination Committee**, through which 17 humanitarian NGOs participate voluntarily in weekly coordination and monthly strategy meetings. The NGO Co-ordination Committee has become a useful forum for sharing information and developing policy on issues around humanitarian response (including technical standards, security and bureaucratic matters, civil-military coordination, etc.)
- **Humanitarian actors have committed resources and expertise to the management of civil-military relations.** Both UN agencies (through OCHA) and NGOs (through the NGO Co-ordination Committee) have recruited Abéché-based experts to advise and train humanitarian actors on civil-military relations following the deployment of two international missions (MINURCAT and EUFOR) to Chad and Central African Republic.
- **Effective and responsible coordination between humanitarian agencies and national/local authorities** has helped to build confidence between actors, enabling humanitarian access to affected populations and avoiding the imposition of bureaucratic/political restrictions.
- **Sharing of humanitarian assets (in particular UN Humanitarian Air Service-UNHAS)** has allowed even smaller agencies to set up operations and access affected population in what is normally considered a logistical and geographically remote part of the country.
- **Humanitarian actors' engagement with Chadian civil society has strengthened analytical linkages between the current conflict and underlying causes of poverty and weak governance.** Field visits from N'Djamena-based human rights experts and women's groups to eastern Chad (funded and organised by NGOs and UN agencies) have contributed to a more comprehensive analysis of the problems behind Chad's humanitarian crisis.
- Major humanitarian agencies (including UN and NGOs) have created positions or **increased their presence in field locations.** The number of multi-agency and multi-sectoral initiatives (such as assessments and response strategies) has increased, and OCHA has stepped up its coordination role by regularly producing standard coordination tools such as sitreps, humanitarian updates and 3Ws.

### **Outstanding needs and partnership gaps**

- The **overall capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to increased humanitarian needs remains limited.** Despite the arrival of new actors and increased (but still insufficient) field presences, significant geographical and sector-specific response gaps are still apparent. The recruitment of high-calibre staff with sufficient experience and strong leadership skills to deliver humanitarian programmes remains difficult for UN and NGOs alike.

- The continued lack of a common policy framework for aid delivery has failed to resolve **long-standing inequities in the quality and quantity of assistance provided to refugees, internally displaced people and host communities**. The UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and UN cluster leads (especially UNHCR who officially holds responsibility for protection and site management) have been hesitant to assume leadership in finding joint solutions to common challenges, such as questions over how to respond to the rapid IDP influxes around refugee camps from 2006 onwards, or how to provide assistance to affected host communities. Decisions on major response policies (ie moving aid distributions from camps or ‘sites’ back to displaced peoples’ villages of origin) are often made in a unilateral fashion and without adequate contextual analysis.
- **Global policy directives and guidance remain poorly understood or** by some agencies or individuals, with some actions contributing to a blurring of the lines between political, military and humanitarian roles (ie developmental and humanitarian QIPs by MINURCAT, possible assistance to civilians by some EUFOR contingents, EUFOR communication centered on their support for the unfolding of humanitarian activities).
- **Policy dialogue within the humanitarian community could be improved** in order to develop stronger common messages to the international community. Whereas dialogue in country has been improving, it remains a challenge to ensure that common understandings in country are reflected between headquarters or advocacy networks - basically making it a challenge to ensure that relevant information as well as coordination is available and practised at all levels.