

On the recommendation of Francois Boher, a Darfur WaSH Coordinator with *Action Contre la Faim* (ACF), I conducted some preliminary research on two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in peace-building linked to water and other basic services: Oxfam and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Both of these NGOs have been and are continuing to set up inter-tribal committees to reinforce the local traditional authorities' capacities to solve and prevent local conflicts linked to basic necessities.

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

The humanitarian relief provided by DRC addresses the underlying causes of conflict in Darfur, namely the ongoing competition for scarce resources such as water and agricultural land, combined with deforestation and the lack of adequate services and poverty, which has led to tension between nomadic and agro-pastoralist communities in Darfur.¹

In contrast to other humanitarian organizations, DRC's efforts are focused on helping to promote durable and environmentally sustainable solutions for the rural populations living outside of the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps. DRC strives to protect the livelihood of the conflict-affected population by the rehabilitation of schools and water supplies and distribution of non-food items to particularly vulnerable groups, among other activities.² At the core of these activities lies DRC's constant promotion of active participation of the local people through development of community action plans and community councils.

As outlined in a report written by Robin Bovey, one aspect of the work of done by DRC is centred on building a cooperative relationship between pastoralist and farming communities. DRC is concerned with pastoralist communities because they are often mistakenly portrayed as belonging to the Janjaweed militia groups and thus receive little to no assistance from humanitarian aid groups.³ Due to the ongoing conflict between Arab tribes and cycles of revenge, many of the pastoralist communities have become impoverished. Rebel conflict has rendered the seasonal migration of these groups more difficult because the routes they can safely take are limited. Moreover, since migratory routes often follow water ways, pastoralist often come into conflict with the farmers who also rely on these areas to grow crops.⁴ Conflict has

¹ Danish Refugee Council, "Sudan-Darfur," http://www.drc.dk/Sudan_Darfur.2833.0.html.

² Danish Refugee Council, "Sudan-Darfur," http://www.drc.dk/Sudan_Darfur.2833.0.html.

³ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 4.

⁴ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 2.

also forced many semi-nomadic pastoralist groups to settle in temporary damras outside of farming villages and town. However, since many villages have been destroyed and the people relocated to IDP camps, many pastoralist groups have been deprived of access to essential services that were once provided by the villages.⁵

Deforestation also has an adverse impact on sedentary pastoralist communities, who rely on forest cover for fuel, building materials, soil conservation, water retention and grazing for camels and goats.⁶ Bovey frames deforestation as the single biggest issue in the long term sustainability of livelihoods of all communities in Darfur. Since lack of forest cover has forced pastoralists to encroach on farmland, leading to crop destruction, reforestation is vital in order to ensure that conflict between pastoralists and farmers does not continue to increase. The viability of reforestation is dependent on the successful cooperation between the pastoralist and farming communities and this is where the work of DRC becomes very valuable. DRC is engaged in activities that help promote reforestation because it is seen as a long-term project towards sustainable pastoralist and farming communities and long-term peace-building.⁷

DRC's involvement with pastoralist communities began in 2005 with a food and livelihood programme in Darfur, specifically South Zalingeli and has since expanded to other areas. Some of the concrete activities developed by the DRC include the creation of a community councils consisting of peace and confidence workshops between African communities living in villages and Arab pastoralists and nomads living in the damras in the surrounding areas.⁸ The objective of these community councils is to assist both groups to recognize and prioritize each other's needs, such as irrigation for farmers, and access to health care and education facilities for pastoralist groups.⁹ Cooperation between these two groups is also significant for ensuring that pastoralist communities can more easily access water sources without causing farming communities to shield their scarce water supplies against pastoralist

⁵ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 2.

⁶ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 3.

⁷ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 3.

⁸ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 5.

⁹ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 5.

livestock.¹⁰ Thus, the problem of increased marginalization of pastoralist groups can only be reversed through greater engagement with these communities. In summary, the engagement of DRC with pastoralist communities reflects the notion that a peaceful solution to the conflict in Darfur cannot be achieved if the problems of unequal access to basic services like water, health care, education and the right to a livelihood are not adequately addressed.

Oxfam

One of the largest humanitarian operations conducted by Oxfam is in Darfur, where the organization provides over 400, 000 people with relief primarily in camps, but also in rural communities. Engineers working for Oxfam provide clean water for the people of these communities by drilling hundreds of wells and building latrines and washing facilities.¹¹ A key characteristic of the projects initiated by Oxfam in Darfur is that the majority of the work is done in partnership with the Sudanese communities. For this reason, 90% of the 500 Oxfam staff members are Sudanese.¹² By training local volunteers to help implement their work, Oxfam is able to lay the pathway toward long term sustainable development, even after the organization leaves the area.

Since much of the conflict taking place in Darfur is due to a lack of resources, the provision of health services, safe water and education by organizations like Oxfam can help to sustain peace agreements and reduce resource-based tensions. To accomplish this goal, Oxfam provides practical support by allocating resources to support the implementation of recommendations emerging from inter-tribal meetings.¹³

Not only is a lack of water and access to clean water supplies a source of conflict, but conversely conflict can limit the access to water. For example, armed groups often target water sources, planting landmines around them, poisoning the water and wrecking the pumps.¹⁴ Moreover, conflict also forces civilians to either move to areas without water or to areas where the water is in scarcity. Thus, migration by pastoralists to find water can bring them into conflict with other communities whose water resources are already strained. For this reason, the work

¹⁰ Robin Bovey, "Engaging with Nomadic (Pastoralist) Communities in EWD (East/West) Darfur," Report for the Danish Refugee Council, November 2008, 7.

¹¹ Oxfam, "Oxfam's work in Sudan in depth," <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/countries/sudan.html>.

¹² Oxfam, "Oxfam's work in Sudan in depth," <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/countries/sudan.html>.

¹³ Interagency Paper, "The Key to Peace: Unlocking the Human Potential of Sudan," May 2002, 10.

¹⁴ Interagency Paper, "The Key to Peace: Unlocking the Human Potential of Sudan," May 2002, 30.

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done by Oxfam to encourage communication and cooperation regarding resource allocation through inter-tribal meetings is essential.

Disclaimer: In relation to the report referenced for the section on the DRC, the report reflects the thoughts of Robin Bovey and does not necessarily reflect official DRC policy.