

Transitional Solutions Initiative Joint Program for Refugees and their Host Communities in Eastern Sudan Kassala and Gadarif States-Sudan

Annual Review and Planning Workshop Report

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Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/abbreviation	Explanation
CB	Capacity building
COR	Commission of Refugees
FDG	
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FNC	
GMFI	
MF	Micro Finance
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOAG	
MOSW	Ministry Of Social Welfare
POC	
TFA	A Japanese NGO
UNDP	United nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
VT	Vocational Training
WC	Water Corporation
WDAs	Women Development Associations

Incomplete list

Transitional Solutions Initiative Joint Program for Refugees and their Host Communities in Eastern Sudan Kassala and Gadarif States-Sudan

Introduction

UNDP planned to review TSI program for the achievements made on 2013 and plan for 2014. To achieve this dual task, UNDP organize workshops in Kassala and Gedarif, to ensure full participation of government line ministries in the process that was initiated at locality level involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders. UNDP commissioned a consultant to assist in moderating the workshop. This report is summarizing what has happened in the two workshops and at the same time, it extracted major issues that emerged during the process and received special consideration by the workshops participants.

Background

Eastern Sudan's history of asylum dates back to 1936 during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia while the first officially recognized refugees arrived in 1968. Thereafter, successive waves of people fleeing civil wars, generalized violence, political turmoil, repression, and famine in Ethiopia, Eritrea^[1] and to a lesser extent Somalia, sought refuge in the region. During the drought of the mid-1980s, Sudan provided safe-haven to over one million refugees along its eastern border, which represented a staggering 30% of the entire population in the region at the time. Similarly, in Kassala town, refugees outnumbered locals by a factor of four to one during the 1980s. (Dominik Bartsch and Mohamed Dualeh, March 1, 2011)

East Sudan is considered to be a protracted refugee situation in which refugees find themselves in a long-standing and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years of exile. While some live in acceptable conditions and have attained a degree of self-reliance, the majority continue to depend on assistance.^[2] Lack of free movement, access to the labor market and higher education as well as the right to own land have hampered refugees' ability to fully integrate in Sudan. (Dominik Bartsch and Mohamed Dualeh, March 1, 2011)¹

UNDP and UNHCR planned this program in an attempt to find a way out for the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan, some of who were there for decades.

¹ Dominik Bartsch and Mohamed Dualeh; *The Protracted Refugee Situation in Eastern Sudan*; March 1, 2011

Assignment objectives

The purpose of this work is to moderate and facilitate Annual Review and planning workshop of the TSI joint programme in Kassala and Gadaref states.

Specific tasks of the assignment:

- Facilitate and moderate a day Annual Review workshop in each Gadaref and Kassala states.
 - Conduct SWOT analysis.
 - Document lessons learned.
 - Collect recommendations for 2014
- Facilitate and moderate a one day Annual Planning workshop in Gadaref and Kassala states.
- Facilitate the discussion process
- Ensure the production of:
 - Annual Work Plan for 2014
 - Workshops Report.

Project objectives

The Joint Programme aims to deliver the following eight results to achieve self-reliance and support socio-economic development:

1. Enhance vocational capacities and business skills of the target population.
2. Improve community access to basic social services, specifically Health, Education and Water and sanitation.
3. Strengthen protection services and legal support to refugees and host-communities.
4. Diversify and improve rural livelihoods opportunities for refugees and host communities.
5. Enhance access to microfinance services.
6. Develop community and institutional capacities for environment management and energy conservation.
7. Promote women's empowerment, peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among refugees and host communities.
8. Improve institutional capacity for decentralized governance in the target localities.

Methodology followed

Secondary data composed of the project document, Mid Year progress report, draft localities work plans and proposed workshop tentative agenda.

2 workshops during November 10th-November 14th 2013, were organized following a preset agenda which was followed flexibly to allow for necessary changes due to either time element or adaptation to new realities dictated by the participants' expectations.

The Gadarfir workshop agenda was also amended based on lessons learnt from the Kassala experience. Amendments taken place were mostly of moving backward and forward some of the topics.

Techniques and tools used included; presentations, small focused group discussions guided by questions, open panel discussion and brain storming. Generally, the flexibility used in employing the appropriate tool at the appropriate time in the appropriate situation has helped a lot in achieving organizing the workshops on the allocated time.

Review and planning workshops

The workshop

The two workshops followed a similar format. It started by the formal opening where concerned authoritative persons addressed the participants.

In Kassala, in the opening session, a number of speakers addressed the participants.

Hafiz from COR said: "Kassala state took a leading role in hosting refugees, dictated by our religious morals and obligations. This program is an attempt to try and repay that favor, and today discussion is an opportunity for exchanging ideas. We are worried that, this initiative will mean additional load on the government. We support refugees' efforts but is not our responsibility. We look forward for recommendations that laid the burden off the state government."

The representative of the planning unit said that: "This is the most important project that focused on refugees issues; this is why the state government is so concerned about it.

We believe on commend efforts of shifting from emergency relief to pure development.

We think that, the technical government ministries together with the local communities should be the implementers at ground level which an approach that ensures ownership and sustainability. We need to plan well to serve the two targeted communities.

We ensure that the State authorities and the state legislative council (parliament) do care about the project. The Ministry of Finance agreed with the labour office that, refugees are given work permits."

Mr Mubarak Malik, the Chair of voluntary and foreign aid coordination council said that: "A committee was formed to look into the project feasibility and viability, which proved that the project feasible. The project deliverables are not alternative to the services provided by UNHCR. One of the project advantages is that, it is integrated and comprehensive. Attending this workshop will help us follow the implementation of the plan that will be agreed. We are ready to solve all problems that may emerge between the different stakeholders."

Ahmed Jemal, UNDP Program Manager stated clearly that this is a pilot project. The review and planning exercise that is going to take place has already been done at locality level and we are now meeting with you, the technical ministries staff to endorse it by undertaking this final step in the process at state level.

Mohamed Gasim, the UNHCR Representative also talked about the importance of the program to the refugees and to UNHCR who has been providing support for decades. He is worried about the situation as donors are no longer interested in funding refugees who have been there for half a century and an alternative sustainable means for livelihood have to replace the existing situation of dependency on UHCR aid. He explained his concerns regarding protection and meeting the rights of the refugees in the region.

Omer Ishag from UNDP Khartoum said: "The project is a pilot project and it is an international as it is being implemented in other countries in the world. I felt a commitment from those concerned that this project should proceed. I Hope we succeed to encourage donors to pay more"

Other people talked as well but along the same lines

In Gadarif, COR, UNHCR and UNDP repeated what has been said in Kassala.

Dr Mahajoub, the general manager of Gadarif Minister of Finance said:" We are going to review 2013 deliveries and plan for 2014. We started the review and plans in Alfashaga two weeks ago. We should consider all comments made by the locality and consider their concerns as well".

The commissioner of Alfashaga commented by saying: "We capitalize and count on this project. Although the implementation of 2012 plans went well, there were some shortcomings which attributed to the fact that, the nature of the project is new to the people. We hope this workshop helps in correcting our path as the local beneficiaries were involved in it. "

The workshops sessions then continued reviewing and planning as initially planned.

2013 review

After the formal opening described above, the followed workshop first day sessions focused on the review.

Review questions:

The participants were divided into six groups in Kassala and five groups in Gadarif (capacity building merged with MF & VT group), along the following results themes:

1. Rural livelihood and Environment/
2. Basic Service
3. Micro Finance and vocational training
4. Capacity building
5. women empowerment
6. Coordination and communications
7. Protection

The groups are asked to answer the following questions focusing on their result theme:

- What went well and what went wrong?
- What achieved the highest results?
- What do you think are the program strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the challenges faced by the program?
- How can we improve upon?

The outcome of the groups' discussion is summarized in a table in annex -5 and 6-.

Further questions were asked in a followed exercise in an attempt to respond to some of the QA review questions. The following questions were raised to 3 groups in Kassala and discussed in an open panel discussion in Gadarif:

- Do you see the program activities as **key priorities** for Kassala/Gadarif State?
- Does the program follow **innovative approaches**? What are they?
- Does the project show clear potential for **sustainability of results** and scalability?
- Does the project concept include **effective management and monitoring arrangements**? What are they?
- Does the project plan include considerations for **economically converting resources** (funds, time, staff, procured products and services, etc.) **into results** (outputs)? (cost effectiveness, timely delivered)
- Does the project plan include **producing results** (outputs) with **appropriate levels of quality** to support the achievement of targeted outcomes?

The participants responded to the raised questions as follow:

Strategic fit and key priorities

The participants in both Kassala and Gadarif believe that the program is very relevant to and in line with the state strategy for the following reasons:

- Eastern Sudan has the highest number of population of refugees in Sudan. Since the program targeted refugees and host communities, it is then touched a strategic base.
- The program has a component of capacity building that included line ministries and localities as recipient of CB support

- The program supports agriculture through provision of inputs and extension service including animal health. These interventions help in increasing production and productivity of agricultural/animal products which is a strategic objective for the two states.
- The program aims at increasing household income which will contribute to the strategic objective of poverty reduction.
- The program is focusing on basic services which were negatively affected by the influx of refugees into the region. The state strategy is putting emphasis on basic services, so the program is giving hand in trying to improve the quality of basic services and its deliverables to the beneficiaries.
- The refugees' utilization of natural resources has impacted negatively on the environment, namely in cutting down trees for use as biomass fuel and building materials. The program is giving some consideration to the rehabilitation and conservation of the environment.
- Gadarif and Kassala states economies are food based. They depend on irrigated and mechanized farming that require highly skilled workers. There is a severe shortage of skilled labor in the state as most of them migrated to Saudi and the Gulf. The vocational training interventions are relevant as it respond to this strategic need.

Innovative approaches

It has been observed by some participants, especially external participants that, there is little innovation in the program whether in terms of interventions or approaches. Despite this fact, the participants managed to mention a handful of examples:

- Involving community in project planning and management is considered an innovation as the conventional development approaches are very top down, especially with regard to those planned and implemented by the civil servants.
- The rural livelihood staff mentioned the use of the mobile phone by the CAHWs to communicate between themselves, their beneficiaries and the Ministry of Animal Wealth staff is an innovative way of utilizing new technologies in extension services.
- The application of water harvesting techniques whether for domestic use or irrigation is new to the area and a to the program
- Liquid petroleum gas (LPG) is being distributed to beneficiaries for use as a cooking fuel alternative to biomass fuel (wood and charcoal). This is an advanced technology being disseminated in the area. The subsidy approach used has encouraged beneficiaries to acquire the appliances (stove and cylinder) but in development terms, it is not recommended.
- The vocational training trainers followed a mobile training approach by going to the beneficiaries places and train them there on technical skills. This is considered an innovative approach.
- Micro-finance funding is considered innovative since it is practiced for the first time in the area, especially with refugees as they were not accessing any sort of formal credit.
- Solar energy is being used for pumping water as complementary to the water harvesting projects.

- Compact water filter are being used by the water corporation in place of sand filters. They are easy to manage and durable compared to sand filters.
- Drama, music, songs and poems are being use as means for transmitting messages to the beneficiaries such as agriculture extension messages or environmental conservation messages. Sometimes are used to attract people to gather then program staff address them and mention messages they want to say to them.
- Literacy classes are now applying the functional literacy approach known as REFLECT. Audience become literate quicker and captures new knowledge of his/her own profession.
- Children clubs is an innovative way of trying to help them gain knowledge through amusement activities. The experience needs to be further studied and improved as it seems very creative, but still a lot can be added to it.
- Micro finance is being delivered using door-step service or a comprehensive approach that allowed reaching more people with complementary activities to existing businesses generating quick impact on clients' livelihoods.

Sustainability of results

- Involvement of communities and government at all levels, especially technical ministries, set the foundations for sustainability of interventions delivery and its impact on people's livelihood.
- Following a bottom up approach that starts from grass-root level upward, ensures that community needs are well expressed by them, hence people feel the ownership of the program and they can participate in anyway. Application of this approach is mostly an important step towards sustainability
- Availing agricultural inputs allowed beneficiaries to cultivate, acquire food, gain income and get empowered with great probability that they will secure their inputs from their own sources.
- Provision of seed money for CAHWs to acquire animal drugs will lead to sustain the provision of community based animal health service by keeping the drugs regularly replenished from the sales of drugs to the animal owners and from the income gained by the Para-vet from the sale of the service in addition to the profit from sales of drugs.
- The integrated approach followed (farming, animal, health, micro-finance etc.) is tackling integrated problems in people's lives.
- The program targets the agricultural and animal production sectors which are the two major means of livelihoods for people in the region. Targeted communities will ensure the interventions in this sector are successful and they will work to enure relevant services are sustaining.
- The capacity building component is key for sustaining the program as it builds the capabilities of government ministries, localities and the beneficiaries association to manage their respective components when the program duration is over.

Effective management and monitoring arrangements

- Recruiting an monitoring and evaluation expatriate will assist in establishing effective monitoring system. Concerned staff are regularly visiting project sites in the field as part of their mandatory tasks.
- The availability of a logframe assists in monitoring progress as well as impact which will be part of the M&E expat, which is expected to mentor and coach ministry staff.
- The transfer of budgets to the following year pool fund for redistribution as per priorities is an effective way of utilizing resources, bearing in mind funding incomplete projects such as construction
- The flexibility in annual planning and implementation of program interventions
- The existence of grassroots committees at camps and locality levels provide good bodies for supervision and monitoring as a means of local accountability mechanism

Economically converting resources into results

There are certain activities which economic return could be calculated while others are not as it takes some time to materialize benefits. This is an area that requires regular monitoring. It has been noted that, the mainstreaming of basic services will make its delivery more cost effective by cutting off overhead that is going to implementing NGOs and profit that goes to their commissioned contractors.

Producing quality results

The following is being brainstormed by the workshop participants in response to this question:

- Undertaking proper bidding will ensure that qualified individuals or firms (contractors and consultants) are commissioned to provide good quality services or goods, especially with regard to construction.
- Proper handover with the involvement of technical staff ensures that what has been handed over is of the required quality
- Quality of outputs is ensured by engaging specialized entities as well as comprehensiveness as it spans various sectors in an integrative manner
- Quality is assessed and ensured by means of monitoring and control

Strengthens

Referring to the table in annex -6-, the workshop participants have listed a number of strengths and weaknesses, some of which are not suitable for labeling as neither strengths nor weaknesses. I would like here to focus on the strengths that are considered important by most of the participants:

- The program has secured funds and UNHCR and UNDP will continue securing money for the program till end of 2017.
- The program is tackling an important issue which is the problem of protracted refugees and their dependency on Aid in a difficult donor funding environment
- The program is capitalizing on the skills and wealth of accumulated experience of technical ministries staff.

- The program is matching country and state strategies by focusing on basic services
- The program is filling in real developmental needs as it is very relevant to the needs of people whether refugees or host communities
- The program is a pilot project which has great chances of replicating and scaling up successes met during this phase in its next phase

Weaknesses

- The program has a limited geographical coverage
- Delays in implementation due to so many reasons such as funds transfers and delays in COR approvals.
- Poor coordination and unidentified roles and responsibility
- No gender focal person in the program

Challenges

- Availing funds at the appropriate time
- Improving policy environment with regard to UNDP/UNHCR and beneficiaries to ease implementation
- Improved coordination mechanism at all levels

Mainstreaming basic services

The management of services in the camps is experiencing some difficulties as there is no consensus on the way it should be managed. Some of the refugees live in these camps for 40-50 years. They are still getting lots of the services from UNHCR and some from the government, but the ones delivered by the government are paid for by UNHCR. In the light of difficulty in raising funds for refugees stayed in camps for decades. This is being in question for sometime but during the review and planning sessions of this assignment, the issue was given a special consideration in trying to seek government partners' opinions. Accordingly, the workshop participants were asked to answer the following questions:

- What services needs to be mainstreamed?
- What are the roles and responsibilities;
 - Who should manage what?
 - Who provide what and in what terms and conditions?

Currently, the health services in the refugee camps are management as follow:

- Hospitals are managed under the auspices of MOH at state level.
- Clinics and hygiene services are managed under by the locality concerned authorities.

Education services for refugees are managed as follow:

- Basic education is managed by the locality authorities
- Secondary education is managed by locality authorities

- Teachers training, technical and material support are provided by the concerned state authorities

Water services in the camps are managed by local NGOs, but the water corporation is hardly arguing its right to manage water facilities in the camp. Their argument is based on the fact that; other services are provided by the different level government authorities, so why water is left for the inexperienced NGOs. They raise the case of the collapse of a water tank that killed one person due to poor erection and quality of service. They have also mentioned that, the involvement of NGOs makes the delivery extremely cost ineffective. It poses additional management (Overhead) cost in addition to the possibility of commissioning expensive contractor who in the end are supposed to be supervised and monitored by the water corporation engineers.

On the other hand, HAC, COR and NGOs (especially in Kassala) argue that, water should be managed by NGOs and the tank case was a one off and it is normal in such circumstances.

Coordination

Coordination is one of the issue emerged strongly in the workshop both in Kassala and Gadarif. It is almost mentioned as a weak area by all groups in their different presentations. The following table shows the current coordination forums and new recommended additions:

	The forum	Forum membership	Meetings times and dates	Forum TOR
Decision makers	Federal JP Board	Federal MOF, UNHCR, UNDP, State	Trimesterly (every 4 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve plans and budgets • Allocate funds • React on policies
	State Steering committee	Concerned State ministries GMs, Minister OF, COR, UNHCR, UNDP	Quarterly (every 3 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss plans and budgets • Monitor progress on implementation
Coordinators and mediators	State coordination committee	All technical ministries + locality commissioner	Once a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress against plans and recommend priorities
	State coordination committee	Ministries + Implementing NGOs	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate between NGOs and ministries. • Reviewing implementation and raise issues

Implementers	Locality committee	Locality concerned staff, refugee representative, host community representative	Bi-monthly (every two months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop locality plan • Follow implementation • Raise issue for discussion up the ladder
	Program committee	UNDP, UNHCR	??	• ??

Note: Row written in blue is a newly recommended forum added to the list

Piloting and limited geographical coverage

Two important questions always raised by participants from the government side, especially in Gadarif:

- Why only one locality has been selected for implementing project intervention in?
- Why the three camps?

Jemal repeatedly answered these questions:

- These specific camps chosen are those camps which accommodate protracted refugees
- As this is a pilot project, piloting requires a small sample to avoid maximizing failures in case of failures. When interventions proved successful, successes can be generalized at a larger scale in the following phase.

Gender

Gender is supposed to be a cross cutting issue. In this program, nobody is assigned to deal with gender issues and ensures gender requirements are met by the different interventions across the program results.

Environment

Environment is an important cross cutting issue but dealt with as part of livelihoods. There are number of direct environmental conservation aspects, such as tree planting and improved fuel efficient stoves. There are no measures in place that ensure program interventions are environmentally friendly that have no harm on the environment.

Partnership

Partnership with NGOs needs to be revisited. Instead of using some of them as contractors implementing some of the work, they need to be involved as direct implementers in all activities. This may mean involving other specialized NGOs (health, education, water, agriculture, vet, capacity

building, etc). Some community CBOs can be upgraded and used as implementing partners at grass root level. This approach will tackle issues of outreach and scaling up.

Protection issues

It continued to be raised. The most important issues at this time can be summarized in the refugees' access to:

- Productive land
- Access to employment. It has been mentioned that, labor office is advised to issue work permits to refugees
- Access to free mobility by issuing an ID card that allow them to move freely
- Access to higher (secondary and university) education
- Birth registration certificates

Concerns

1. Some government departments are concerned about the program approach. They are worried that the program will move the refugees burden off UNHCR to be the responsibility of the government of Sudan
2. They are also worried that, this approach may lead in the end to convert the refugees into Sudanese citizens. UNHCR and UNDP must have a clear answer for these concerns
3. The US dollar to SDG rate is changing in favor of the US dollar. Budgets set in US dollars are appreciating. Goods in the market are set based on the US\$ market value (parallel/black market rate). While UN and other NGOs monies in bank are exchanged based on the bank rate which is always 1-2 pounds less than the parallel market rate. This will cause huge budgets deficit that needs to be considered while undertaking budgeting for the plan in the making.
4. Delays in money transfers for program implementation caused delays in implementation and this may have other consequences.
5. COR has caused delays by keeping a contract unsigned for quite a time as they are not convinced with it. It is

General recommendations

1. Most of presentations made lack supporting figures. When compiling the 2013 plan, Program management must ensure that all planned activities are made SMART supported by figures.
2. There are too many planned constructions and hardware (equipment, furniture and fixture) which in some cases are not development priorities. E.g. building a clinic is not necessarily bringing health to people. Elements of sustaining the service should be carefully looked at.
3. There is a need for a learning and exchange of ideas forum that bring field implementers together to present their experience and discuss with other their successes and failures, what is the appropriate approach for the delivery of the concerned intervention
4. Reports produced needs to be shared widely among the different forums members and other concerned staff and authorities

5. Involving academic (universities), research and training institutions helps institutionalizing some of the interventions (e.g. water harvesting) and the methods and approaches employed (e.g. microfinance collaterals).
6. UNDP and UNHR need to work with government and communities on consensus building around the issue raised under concerns 1 and 2 above.
7. UNDP needs to work hard to ensure that monies are transferred at the appropriate time, on the other hand, ministries and other implementers have to liquidate their funds ahead of time to allow for finalizing the process to move smoothly and transfers are made on time.
8. The issue of the unsigned contract with COR needs to be discussed with them or raised up the ladder for the decision makers to take the necessary decision. An open and transparent discussion with them may solve this problem.

Problems and challenges faced organizing the workshops

- The consultant was contacted late and required to start soon. This has squeezed the time required to prepare for the planned workshops.
- The time allocated for the workshops actual work was too short. At least one more day was needed for each workshop.
- The time agreed for report delivery is also short bearing in mind the bulk of work done during the workshop that required time to read, type, carefully use and insert in the report.
- There were considerable time losses due to the late start as the punctuality of participants and senior government representative was very poor. In one case there was a change of venue that has also caused delays while participants trying to locate the new venue. This lost time required rescheduling sessions, changing of the initially prepared tools. It is worth noting that, the changing of tools in some cases has produced positive outcomes, e.g. using brainstorming instead of group discussion.
- Additional agenda was added to the schedule which was already designed to accommodate what has agreed upon to be the content of the workshop