ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DARFUR: AN ADVOCACY AGENDA



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Thank you to Andrea Lari, Senior Advocate at Refugees International, my friend and colleague who encouraged me and reminded me that "the best thing you can do for the displaced women that we meet with is to listen to them. And then do your best to take their voice to the world."

Finally, thanks to the Save Darfur Coalition which provided financial support for this report.

NOTE ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs in this report are meant solely to illustrate the women in Darfur in their daily lives. They are not meant to depict victims of sexual abuse, unless specifically noted. All photos were taken on Refugees International's assessment missions.

Cover photo: These women were displaced by a rebel group in North Darfur in 2006. One of them told Refugees International that the rebels entered the houses of her village, shot the men, and beat or raped the women and girls. She escaped with her four children, but her husband was killed in the attack.

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ABOUT REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sexual violence defines the conflict in Darfur, but international efforts to prevent and respond to the issue have been insufficient. While this report critiques the international response, the primary obstacles to preventing rape and assisting survivors are the perpetrators and the Sudanese government officials who actively block the work of international agencies. From police officers who arrest raped women to the harassment of humanitarian organizations, the Sudanese government has shown itself unwilling to treat the issue of sexual violence seriously. Nevertheless, the international community has also failed to do everything within its power to meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence in Darfur. This report summarizes Refugees International's work on sexual violence in Darfur through 2006 and includes recommendations for improvement in the international community's response.

After years of denying the rapes, Sudanese officials claim they are actively trying to prevent them and help rape survivors. These claims are false. The government of Sudan bears the primary responsibility to provide protection for the women of Darfur, and it is their responsibility to provide assistance to its citizens. But, they are failing to do so and are often the perpetrators of the violence. Refugees International believes that the government of Sudan lacks the political will to stop the violence or respond effectively. Instead of protecting the women of Darfur, the government of Sudan actually oppresses them, punishing those who bring cases forward.

Sudanese forces have used intimidation to threaten local civil society and local staff who work for international agencies, and have stepped up their attacks on international personnel. In addition to arresting or deporting international staff who dare to speak out, the government of Sudan is widely believed to have infiltrated most humanitarian agencies in Darfur, leading to suspicion and distrust. As the security situation deteriorates, many aid agencies have had to suspend operations and many threaten to withdraw completely. This will make it even more difficult to provide services to rape survivors and to build the needed trust within communities that would allow more survivors to come forward.

Sexual violence in Darfur affects not only the individual, but also her family and community. For the rape survivor, the physical consequences can be life threatening. Socially and culturally, the stigma associated with rape destroys lives -- women have been abandoned by their families, forced into marriages, and suffer from mental trauma. Some have even attempted suicide. Little is known of the welfare of children born of rape. Sexual Violence also victimizes men — both as victims and as family members of survivors. Yet programs designed to address sexual violence in Darfur often ignore the needs of men.

In response to the charges of genocide, the international community deployed a small, under-resourced peacekeeping force — the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). AMIS' efforts to protect women must be reviewed in order to improve the performance of UNAMID — the incoming African Union/UN hybrid force. Although AMIS's attempts to establish "firewood" patrols were sporadic, limited, and ultimately ineffective, AMIS was successful in recruiting experienced female police officers, although much of the added benefit was lost by the lack of female translators.

Responding to the needs of rape survivors is also sporadic and insufficient — often because of government intimidation. Until 2005, women who were raped in Darfur were threatened with imprisonment when they sought healthcare. Both international and Sudanese health providers

The government of Sudan lacks the political will to stop the violence or respond effectively. risked imprisonment if they treated these women. Although laws have changed, rape survivors remain reluctant to seek care and humanitarian agencies remain reluctant to provide treatment.

International response to sexual violence has focused disproportionately on legal response. "Laws Without Justice," a Refugees International report, documents Sudan's failure to provide justice to rape survivors in Darfur. UN agencies have been training police and judges with varying degrees of success. The large number of rapes has not decreased in spite of these trainings and the Sudanese police consistently impede justice. Yet, some female police officers have shown willingness to assist survivors of sexual violence and could become a valuable asset.

Responding to sexual violence in conflict is difficult, requiring effective coordination of the various agencies involved. Unfortunately, the international community's ability to coordinate the response to sexual violence has been weak. Researching and documenting sexual violence is extremely challenging, particularly in a time of war. Reliable and accurate numbers remain elusive. UNFPA, who is mandated to coordinate prevention and response to gender-based violence, has been overly focused on data collection at the expense of developing programs to support survivors. Meanwhile, the rapes continue and women are not receiving even basic care and treatment in many places. Policy makers should not ask "How many women are raped?" but rather, "How can we prevent sexual violence?" and "How can we improve services to those who have been raped?"

An Advocacy Agenda on Sexual Violence in Darfur

The only solution to ending rape in Darfur is to find a political solution to end the conflict. Until such a solution is reached, the international community must continue to bear witness to the suffering of the women, provide what care and support they can, and renew efforts to provide protection.

- Any peacekeeping force in Darfur must prioritize and devote resources to the issue of sexual
 violence. It must continue to confront the UN's history of sexual exploitation and abuse of
 vulnerable women and actively enforce a protection mandate. The force should also follow the example of AMIS and recruit female officers and provide security within camps by
 deploying large numbers of civilian police.
- At the national level, Sudanese activists and some members of parliament are working to
 change the laws related to rape that have unrealistic and discriminatory standards of evidence to prove an assault has taken place. These laws leave survivors vulnerable to charges
 of adultery if they bring the case forward. Discrete international support to these efforts
 would be valuable, through technical support and funding. It is critical to involve Muslim
 women activists from outside Sudan in this effort.
- Darfur-based humanitarian agencies should continue to press for implementation of the change in Form 8 policy to ease women's access to health care.
- UNFPA has been hamstrung financially for several years by the US government's political decision not to fund their activities, contributing to their weaknesses in Darfur. Donors must support all attempts to address sexual violence and continue to fund programs including income generation and psycho-social programs aimed at recovery and reintegration as well as programs for men. Efforts should be made to increase funding for programs for children of rape to integrate them into the community.

The international community must provide what care and support they can, and renew efforts to provide protection.

ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DARFUR:

AN ADVOCACY AGENDA

"The violence that women experience in times of peace is exacerbated during conflict: rape is being used as a weapon of war on a large scale. Women's and girls' bodies have become the battleground."

- Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM

Rape is used to terrorize individuals and communities and break down the social fabric of the Darfuri people.

INTRODUCTION

The rape of women during war is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history women have been seen as "spoils of war" and as vulnerable assets that the enemy tries to protect. Sexual violence during war systematically breaks down societal taboos and undermines cultural values to demoralize the targeted population. Rape almost always occurs in connection with other forms of violence or abuse against women and their families and violations of international humanitarian law. Men may be forced at gunpoint to rape female family members or other men, as part of the use of rape to terrorize and humiliate people. Moreover, "the harm inflicted by rape may be compounded by other concurrent violations against either the rape victim or those close to her."2

In Darfur, Sudan this is entirely intentional. In Darfur, the government of Sudan forces and their proxy militia, the Janjaweed, are using rape as a strategy in their brutal counter-insurgency campaign. Rape is used to terrorize individuals and communities and break down the social fabric of the Darfuri people. However, the changing nature of the conflict and the face of gender-based violence in Darfur is also a result of the patriarchal culture in Sudan that treats women as lesser beings with few rights and as chattel to be taken during a conflict.

The purpose of this report is to summarize Refugees International's experience witnessing the effects of sexual violence in Darfur and advocating for effective measures to reduce it, and to present key issues and recommendations for future policy advocacy and campaign work on the issue. Costs associated with preparing this report were provided by the Save Darfur Coalition. Refugees International is grateful for its support.

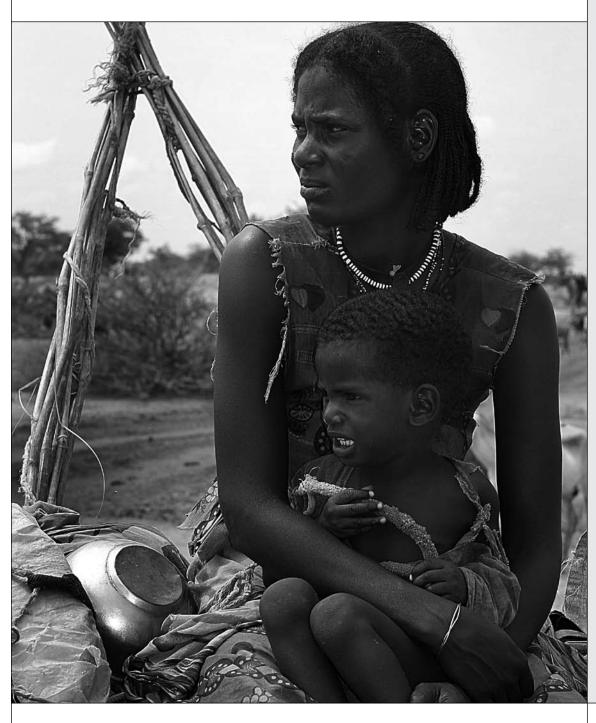
OVERVIEW OF THE CRISIS

Since 2003 fighting in the northwestern state of Darfur, Sudan between rebel groups and the Sudanese government and its allied militia, the Janjaweed, has destroyed hundreds of villages, and displaced 2.2 million people. Estimates of deaths resulting from this conflict range from 200,000 to 400,000. The United States government concluded that the government of Sudan is committing genocide in Darfur. The European Parliament said that the actions of the Sudanese government in Darfur were "tantamount to genocide." Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006, the government of Sudan, Janjaweed militia, and rebel groups continue to attack civilians with impunity. Darfur remains one of the largest human rights and humanitarian crises in the world.

One of the dominant characteristics of this conflict has been the extensive use of rape of women and girls and other gender-based violence to intimidate and threaten the people and the international humanitarian community that is trying to assist them. As Darfur is a predominantly Muslim area, the stigma against rape, strong in any context, is particularly so there. While the use of rape as a strategy of war is not new, the rapes in Darfur seem intended to break down the Darfuri culture and pollute the population. Whereas in the 1994 Rwandan genocide a raped woman was more often than not killed,³ in Darfur in

the majority of the rape cases the rapists have kept the women alive and sent them back to their community, often pregnant and literally scarred to mark them as raped.

According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the majority of the victims of sexual violence now are women and girls who live in camps for internally displaced people (IDPs). Most of the rapes and attacks take place when victims are outside the confines of the IDP camps collecting firewood or grass or merely traveling into town or to their lands to farm. However, the attacks have taken place in many different forms throughout the conflict.



This woman and her son were forced from their homes by the fighting in Darfur and are living in a camp for displaced people. Fighting between rebel groups, the Government of Sudan, and its allied Janjaweed militia have displaced 2.2 million people. Untold numbers of women have been raped.

© Deborah Terry

The government
of Sudan police
officers and military
harassed and
attacked the women
when they left
the camps.

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DARFUR

This section describes the violence against women* in Darfur as documented by Refugees International and other agencies.

Rape and Genocide: Attacks on Villages

Armed conflict between the government of Sudan and rebel movements in the Darfur region of Sudan has caused widespread displacement.4 The government of Sudan and their sponsored militia, the Janjaweed, as well as the rebel movements, mainly the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), are responsible for widespread and systematic violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law throughout Darfur. In particular, government forces and militias have conducted indiscriminate attacks, including the killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement.

The early days of the conflict were characterized by government troops, along with the Janjaweed, sweeping into villages, killing the men and raping the women. There was evidence that the rapes were racially motivated with women reporting that the rapists would tell them, "We are making you a lighter baby." A displaced woman named Almina told Refugees International in July 2004 that she begged, "As you have raped me, please don't leave me alive... kill me with your gun." The Janjaweed militiaman who raped her replied, "May shame kill you." No women were safe: the old, the young, the pregnant were targeted and assaulted.

From 2003 until 2005, government of Sudan forces and the Janjaweed attacked many villages. While most of the men were killed, many of the women were lined up and raped, often publicly, while being jeered and taunted. Women fled the villages, separated from their children and tried to find safety

in camps for internally displaced, across the border in the refugee camps and informal settlements in Chad, and in the urban centers near their homes. Many of the women miscarried or died along the way from the brutality of the attacks. A midwife working in Abushouk camp in 2005 told RI that she had tried to help the women who were raped during their flight through the bush. "Some were pregnant and having a miscarriage, so many were bleeding and hurt. I even had to perform abortions for some of them."

The Firewood Phase: Attacks on Internally Displaced People

As more and more Darfuris moved to the teeming IDP camps seeking safety, attacks and rapes did not stop. Far from providing the displaced women with security, the government of Sudan police officers and military instead harassed and attacked the women when they left the camps. The Sudanese police have also used intimidation and threats to prevent rape survivors from receiving legal or medical assistance. When rape survivors have come forward to report attacks to the police, they have been turned away or threatened.

The people of Darfur have insisted that rather than protecting them against attacks by the government and the Janjaweed, the police were using their positions to terrorize the population. In 2004, when the government of Sudan increased the police forces in North Darfur to "protect" the people against the Janjaweed militia, the incidence of sexual violence against women perpetrated by the police and the army rose. In 2005, UN human rights observers reported, "In the vast majority of [assault] cases, where the perpetrators have been identified, they were either members of the Government armed forces, law enforcement agencies, or pro-Government militia."8

The greatest problem for most of the displaced women of Darfur came when they

^{*} There is a tendency to use the terms gender-based violence, sexual violence, and rape interchangeably. This paper focuses mostly on sexual violence, which is a form of gender-based violence. Rape in turn is one of the primary forms of sexual violence. There are other forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation and infanticide, that are occurring in Darfur and are also discussed in this paper.

REPORTING TO THE POLICE

A young girl and her grandmother went to the market from our village. On their way home, they ran into the Janjaweed. The old lady ran away but the young girl was caught. They held her for one day. She tried to resist them and they broke her teeth. Then they dumped her in the street. She is in the hospital now being treated.

We went to the police department to complain about the Janjaweed but the police told us that we were all toraboras [Sudan Liberation Army supporters]. Three days ago, the police came to our village. We were happy there — we grow vegetables and sell them in the markets. The police told us that we are in a 'safe area' and no one may have guns in this area. They then searched our village and took our guns. They told us not to be afraid.

That night at 4:00 am, the Janjaweed came to our village. They set fire to our village and killed women, men, and children. They came in with camels and guns. We ran away as fast as we could. We slept under the trees and in the wadi [riverbed]. Some of us had donkeys. The rest of us lost all of our animals. We walked here to Kalma camp two days ago where we can be safe. I know the Janjaweed that attacked us. Why did they not take away the weapons of the Janjaweed? They did not take their weapons, they took ours.

— "Refugee Voices: An Attack on Barbarh Village in Darfur, Sudan," Refugees International, October 2004

went outside the camps to collect firewood, gather food for their animals, work on their farms or go to local markets. Women told RI in 2004 of being harassed and raped by government of Sudan police officers and soldiers posted at checkpoints, but also of attacks by Janjaweed and other Arab herders who they encountered outside the camps. To collect firewood for cooking fuel and to generate income for their families, women in IDP camps throughout Darfur travel for miles through this arid region. Trees are scarce, and overpopulation in camp areas is causing rapid deforestation. In 2004 and 2005, women told RI that the hardship of traveling long hours was nothing compared to the fear that they felt about being raped while out collecting firewood.

In October 2004, RI documented accounts in Zam Zam camp in North Darfur where seven girls who had been collecting firewood were held at a police checkpoint until well after sunset. Fifteen minutes after being released, they were attacked. Three women were raped and abducted for more than two days. They were forced to walk back to their camp without any clothing.

In an attempt to protect the civilians of Darfur, the international community appealed to the African Union (AU) to send troops. The government of Sudan accepted African Union troops in the fall of 2004 with a very limited mandate to monitor the ongoing ceasefire. One of the ways that the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was supposed to protect women was to provide security during 'firewood patrols.'

From the beginning, however, there were problems with the firewood patrols. Many commanders refused to conduct them and others did not work in collaboration with the displaced people or humanitarian community. When RI traveled to South Darfur in December 2005, the RI team accompanied a firewood patrol that left around 10:00 am, many hours after the women would have left from the camps to set out to get firewood. The firewood patrols consisted of a car of AMIS civilian police observers, a car of Sudanese police officers, and two trucks filled with armed protection forces from AMIS.

After driving to a point several kilometers from the camp, the protection forces moved

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FACING ATTACKS WHILE GATHERING FIREWOOD

Friday, the day of rest in Sudan, is the worst day to collect firewood, as this is when all the policemen gather around and there was less traffic to protect the women. Little girls are kept out of school on Thursdays so they can gather wood then. Also, one policeman told them, "You can't gather firewood. It is because you are here that the [international] people are here. Let them give you firewood."

Sadly, the rule seems to be that men get killed, younger women get raped, and older women only get beaten or run off so families prefer to send older women. The police offer no protection and sometimes cause the problems they are supposed to prevent. Previously, the police were more trusted than the military but after the government in Khartoum strengthened police forces in Darfur, many are rumored to be Janjaweed and many others are Arabs who are also rumored to be in support of the Janjaweed. The trust between the people and the police is gone.

— "Field Notes from El Fashr, North Darfur, Sudan," Refugees International, September 2004

RI interviewed an older woman in Abushouk camp in North Darfur. "This story is not as well known as the Janjaweed," Fatima began, sitting with us in a small hut that serves as a kindergarten in the camp of Abushouk, North Darfur where 50,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently live. "I myself did not see this but my daughter and three other girls went out to gather firewood for us. The soldiers at the camp [which the girls must pass] shouted at them and chased them. They beat them, looted their axes, and tried to rape them. Luckily the girls defended themselves and escaped."

— "Sudan: Security Forces Attacking Women Seeking Firewood," Refugees International, October 2004

Displaced women and children must travel for miles through this arid region to collect firewood for cooking fuel and to generate income for their families. During such forays, they are frequently targets for rape.

© Refugees International/ Sarah Martin



their vehicles about 300 meters from the AMIS and Sudanese police officers. The Sudanese police officers and their AMIS counterparts sat under the tree. At no point were they ever in view of any women who were collecting firewood.

RI interviewed the police officers about the effectiveness of these patrols. One AMIS officer was disgusted and said it was a waste of time. He said that they never actually patrolled around the women so they would have no idea if a woman were attacked. Another officer admitted that the patrols were rare and suggested that this patrol had been set up for RI's benefit. The government of Sudan police officers were more interested in the patrol. One of the female police officers said that she had requested to be sent on the patrols because she wanted to help women who had been raped.

After a few hours, they set off back to the camps, having never seen a woman gathering firewood. The convoy came across some women gathering grass for their animals. When the RI team asked them where the women were that were gathering firewood, they said that there were no firewood gathering trips that day because it was a food distribution day in the camps so all of the women were there.

Sudanese activists have been deeply critical of the efficacy and sustainability of the firewood patrols as presently constituted. The director of an organization dedicated to improving women's rights observed that in one camp, where AU troops provided patrols only on certain days, women were attacked even more fiercely on the days the AU was not present, in retaliation for the patrols. "The response to the irregular patrolling has been to make the attacks worse, as if [the Janjaweed] are saying to the women, 'You want to show us you're protected by the AU, but nobody can protect you," she noted. "The AU doesn't have the resources to be present in all the places they need to be, and their mandate is too weak to provide real protection."

Third Stage of War: Low Intensity, High Vulnerability

In early 2005, the dynamics of the conflict changed and there were fewer direct attacks on civilians. Approximately one third of the Darfuri population was living in camps and urban settlements throughout Darfur, with another 300,000 living in Chad. At the same time, increasing splits in the rebel groups led to an increase in banditry and looting incidents and a general decline in security throughout Darfur.

In July 2006, Refugees International interviewed Darfuris who told of members of the Sudan Liberation Army controlled by Minni Minawi — the only rebel group to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement — who came to one woman's village to fight a rival rebel group and its supporters. They entered the houses one by one, shot the men, and beat or raped the women and girls. They stole anything they could find: clothing, shoes, money, and animals. One woman told RI of escaping with her four children, but her husband was shot in the attack. She was forced to leave his body behind, but she later returned at night to ensure that she could give her husband a proper burial. Another woman said that hundreds of Minawi's soldiers entered her village and started shooting. They went inside the houses one by one shooting the men, including her husband, and beating or raping the women and girls. Her story is remarkably consistent with thousands of others in the region that detail targeted executions of men and violent, forced displacement.10

Meanwhile the attacks and rapes of IDP women living in camps continued." Opportunistic bandits attack women who have ventured outside of the camps to collect firewood or grass or to access their farmlands. Inside the camps, things are not much better. Far from finding a safe haven, women in the camps have reported domestic violence and attacks by strangers within the camps. While less frequent than the attacks that take place outside the

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camps, they are just as vicious. Some women reported that people hide in the latrines at night, break into the homes of women who don't have husbands or whose husbands are traveling. There are also attacks in the streets of the camps. Since most of these attacks happen at night, women have a hard time knowing who the perpetrators are.

In addition to increased violence against civilians on the part of rebel groups, the period from 2005 to the present also saw a marked deterioration in the effectiveness of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and a near-complete loss of confidence in their capacity and willingness to protect civilians on the part of the people of Darfur. AMIS is mandated to "contribute to a secure environment" and "protect civilians whom it encounters under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity, within resources and capability, it being understood that the protection of the civilian population is the responsibility of the Government of Sudan."12 It is this part of the mandate that has caused frustration for AMIS, displaced civilians, and the humanitarian community. A strict interpretation of this mandate does not allow AMIS to protect civilians from imminent attack unless the AMIS troops are present at that very moment. But even if AMIS had the will to interpret its mandate more flexibly, it has been continuously hampered by lack of resources to carry out its mission.13

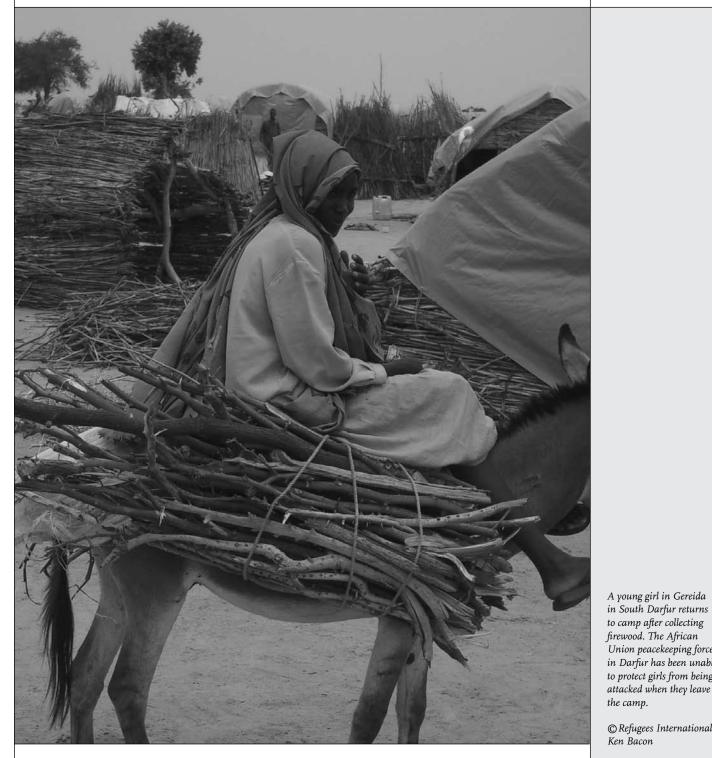
AMIS has therefore been vulnerable to attack and most commanders are reluctant to actively move to protect civilians. In May 2007, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, threatened to withdraw the 2000 Rwandan troops in Darfur to "ring an alarm bell" and draw attention to the fact that they are under resourced. "What is the purpose of having them there just to sit in the sun and not do what they are expected to do, to support the people in Darfur that are suffering?" 14

The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously on July 31, 2007 to pass Resolution 1769, which authorized and mandated the establishment of a joint African

Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur, to be called UNAMID. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon hailed Resolution 1769 as "historic and unprecedented." UNAMID has an initial mandate of 12 months and will incorporate the existing AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which has been deployed across Darfur since 2004. It is the first joint AU-UN mission, and the largest UN peacekeeping operation currently authorized in the world, with the Council agreeing to up to 19,555 military personnel, including 360 military observers and liaison officers, a civilian component including up to 3,772 international police, and 19 special (formed) police units with up to 2,660 officers.

While the passage of Resolution 1769 is an important step towards protecting the vulnerable people of Darfur, its language is vague on the force's actual mandate to do so. As in all peacekeeping missions, much will depend upon the Rules of Engagement and how the Force Commander decides to interpret the mission. It will also depend on the extent to which the government of Sudan will allow UNAMID to be effective, or whether it will impede the mission in the same way it has impeded AMIS. Ultimately, the real issue is whether or not UNAMID's Force Commander, General Martin Luther Agwai, and the troop contributing countries will have adequate resources and be willing to risk the lives of their soldiers and police officers in order to proactively prevent the killing of civilians and end the gross abuses of human rights in Darfur.

One weakness of the mandate is that the mission does not have Chapter 7 authority to seize illegal weapons — it can only monitor. This power had been granted to the mission that was authorized under 1706, the one rejected by the government of Sudan. The recent appalling attack on an AMIS base in South Darfur by rebel groups and the killing of ten AMIS peacekeeping troops is one more indication of how difficult it will be for any peacekeeping force to create stability in Darfur in the absence of an inclusive peace agreement.



Union peacekeeping force in Darfur has been unable to protect girls from being attacked when they leave the camp.

Even in the best of circumstances the full deployment of the force will take many months. The recent history of international dealings with Sudan suggests that further stalling by the government is likely. In the

meantime, sexual violence continues, while the staff of UN and non-governmental organizations are subject to harassment by both the Sudanese government and rebel factions. © Refugees International/ Ken Bacon

IMPACT OF RAPE IN DARFUR

The impact of the mass rapes of Darfur's women is evident in displaced camps in Darfur and in the refugee camps in Chad. Survivors have expressed fear and a lack of desire to return to their home communities even after safety is restored because community members are aware of their having been raped.

As Refugees International reported in 2004, "Their only hope for the future, many feel, is in establishing themselves in a new community where their past experiences will not be known. The injustice of being cut off from their home communities, families and friends — the things that give life meaning and joy — compound the physical trauma of the rape act and possible unwanted pregnancies and exposure to disease."15 In many instances, rape is seen as less grave than murder, an unfortunate side effect, but not as horrific as the killings. Many of the women have also internalized this feeling by minimizing the consequences of the rapes saying, "Men will be killed but women will only be raped." However, the impact of the rapes on Darfuri women's physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as the fabric of their society, will reverberate for years to come.

Health Impact

Rape is a physically violent crime that can directly and indirectly cause death. The health consequences of rape in a land where women are subjected to female genital mutilation (or "circumcision") are immense. In addition to the physical injury inflicted during the attack by the sticks, whips, and axes, the assaults are particularly brutal. Several victims recount that family members or friends were severely beaten while witnessing or trying to intervene during the assault. Four percent of rape survivors reported to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) with broken bones or burns after the assaults. "Through infection with sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, it [the rape] puts

their lives in danger and endangers the lives of their children."¹⁶

The physical damage caused by rape is exacerbated by the fact that an estimated 89% of women in the Darfur region have been subject to circumcision (also known as female genital mutilation or infibulation). While accurate estimates are hard to find. some believe that up to ninety percent of all women in Darfur have been circumcised in the most severe manner (pharaonic circumcision, which removes all external genitalia and stitches the vaginal opening into a small hole), thus making penetration physically brutal. The physical aftereffects of rape often result in extreme trauma to the woman's reproductive organs and childbirth is difficult and sometimes deadly without a practiced midwife. For these women, rape is therefore more likely to result in medical complications, including internal bleeding, fistulas, incontinence and infection with sexually transmitted diseases such as Hepatitis B and C and HIV. There are also reports that women are trying to have their daughters circumcised at earlier ages, further endangering their health, in order to protect their chance at marriage and their hymen — the symbol of virginity.

Because of the fear of stigma, some women avoid health care treatment after the rape and the immediate damage caused to her body can be life threatening. Sexually transmitted diseases and sepsis can also take their toll. Women pregnant by rape have also attempted self-abortions, sometimes bleeding to death in private. Those unlucky enough to be far from international health facilities are especially vulnerable as many of the local health clinics are unable to perform surgeries and women cannot afford to pay for treatment.

Fistulas are another humiliating reminder of the rape. Fistula is a health problem that occurs when the wall between the vagina and the bladder or bowel is ruptured and women lose control of the bladder or bowel

The impact of the rapes on Darfuri women's physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as the fabric of their society, will reverberate for years to come.

functions. Women who suffer from fistulas have been abandoned by their husbands and families and sometimes cast out of their communities. According to UNHCR, two-thirds of the Sudanese refugee women undergoing fistula treatment at Abeche Regional Hospital in eastern Chad, including a 10-year-old girl, have been raped by Janjaweed militiamen in Darfur.¹⁷

But even with their knowledge of the prevalence of rape, health providers continually talk about their inability to get women to come forth for treatment. This is not a problem confined to Darfur — stigma around rape is worldwide and serves as a huge barrier to health care. Operational agencies who must rely upon national staff, often from the same communities as the survivors, struggle to create a confidential, safe environment that is necessary for survivors to come forth.

Social-Cultural Impact and Stigma

In 2004, when Refugees International brought up the subject of rape, every woman the teams interviewed talked about the issue of stigma and the fear that they had about being gossiped about within their community and ostracized. Many families see the women or girls who have been raped as worthless and refuse to allow them to go to the hospital for treatment. Men reported to RI in 2004 that they would be very reluctant to marry a woman who has been raped. "A woman who has been raped is like a piece of spoiled meat," said one man, "Who would have her?"18 Fathers have kicked girls out of the family home as punishment and the raped women have reported being beaten by their husbands. There have even been cases of married women being brought to court by their husbands and accused of adultery and divorced.19

The stigma of rape is particularly difficult to address in the Muslim communities of Darfur. According to an RI report, "Compounding the trauma of the physical abuse of rape is the loss of identity and the imposition of a new, dishonored identity. Ironically, the act of freeing themselves from the burden of shame

and perhaps starting the process of healing by naming the offense is guaranteed to cement their rejected status in their societies. These rapes are occurring in areas where Islam regulates both the political and social lives of the citizens. Rape is happening among those who shared Arabism and Islam. The women of Darfur report feeling betrayed by their Islamic government, which has formed an alliance with Muslim and Arab rapists rather than protecting its own civilians."²⁰

In Darfur, marriages have traditionally been arranged through the payment of a 'bride price' from the groom to the bride's family. Traditionally arranged marriages are seen, in part, as a means by which families can socially protect their daughters. Such a marriage engages both extended families and is often preceded by an extended period of discussions between the families. The breakdown of traditional marriages will severely limit the ability of women in Darfur to thrive. Unmarried women in Darfur are also socially and economically vulnerable and previous experience in other conflicts suggests that some may resort to prostitution to survive.

In Chad, Amnesty International documented that the bride price in the camps had greatly decreased.21 In 2004, RI interviewed internally displaced women in Darfur who said that a raped woman could "probably get married" to a much older man if she were his second or third wife, but her opportunities would be severely limited. Even with a decreased bride price, many will never be able to marry. "My daughter has no opportunities left in life," the mother of a raped girl who tried to commit suicide told RI. "We have sent her to Khartoum for medical treatment, but she does not want to live."22 In West Darfur, RI heard reports of single women being thrown out of their family homes by outraged families who considered the raped woman as having dishonored the family.

In both Darfur and Chad, there have been increasing signs of early marriage. According

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This young girl in
Kass, South Darfur was
attacked by Janjaweed in
2004 and branded on the
arm. She urged Refugees
International to share
her story so that the world
would take action and stop
such violence against other
women and girls.

© Refugees International/ Mamie Mutchler

to Amnesty International, "Parents fear that, being in refugee camps, it will be impossible for them to 'control' their daughters, and they will try to 'marry them' hastily, in order to save the honor of the girl and the family."²³ Early marriages in the context of refugee camps may be arranged hastily and may place girls at risk of abusive spouses.

Pregnancy and Children of Rape

In the Bosnian and Rwandan conflicts, rape was widely used to impregnate women as a way of disrupting the ethnic bloodline. In Rwanda, where between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped, the children born of those rapes are known as "les enfants mauvais souvenirs" (children of bad memories). Many of these children were abandoned by their mothers and live as unwanted children. In Bosnia, where the children born of rape are entering their adolescence, programs

for children born of rape have been largely non-existent. There have been reports of problems as these children enter adulthood having been disenfranchised by their communities.

As noted above, women in Darfur have reported that they were taunted and threatened during the rapes with Janjaweed men telling them, "We will make a lighter baby" or "I will give you a light-skinned baby to take this land from you." Abortion is not a culturally accepted practice in Darfur and by law is only permitted if it is to save the life of the mother, within 90 days of a rape, or in the case of the death of the fetus.²⁴ In 2004, RI met with midwives and traditional birth attendants who told of raped women who have been resorting to traditional methods to bring on miscarriages after the rapes. One midwife spoke of performing abortions in the bush while fleeing from attacks. Women's agencies report that desperate women have

tried to abort with the help of medicine purchased from the market or having their mothers help them. These abortions often cause serious and life-threatening complications for the women. Few agencies were prepared with equipment to do appropriate post-abortion care.

In Darfur, humanitarian agencies have already documented that children born of rape are more vulnerable than other children. According to some agencies in Darfur, there are many children born of rape in the camps, as women don't go to clinics after an attack to receive emergency contraception. There also have been instances in which women who were trying to get rid of children born of rapes left newborn children in the street or in latrines.²⁵

While some women seem to accept the children, there are fears that the children will be stigmatized as they have been in previous conflicts. Some Sudanese women say that children born outside of matrimony will not be allowed to inherit land and will always be treated as the 'last born' child. In the resource-poor homes of the displaced camps of Darfur, it is not inconceivable that the children of rape will be the last to receive needed nutrition, access to education, and healthcare.

RI documented mothers of babies born of rape rejecting their child and either refusing to nurse or actually trying to commit infanticide. In 2004, RI interviewed women in the North Darfur IDP camp who told of a woman who had been raped and gotten pregnant. A midwife found her trying to deliver her child alone, something life-threatening for circumcised women. She denied repeatedly that she was pregnant or had given birth. After a while she began to accept her child and started to nurse. But then she became depressed and withdrawn and refused to nurse the baby. Finally, she tried to drown the child in a bucket and other women intervened, saving the child. She went to live with the sheikh of her village and her baby was sent to a therapeutic feeding center.

Psychological Impact

Psychologically, surviving a sexual violence attack is very difficult for any woman. A survey conducted in June 2005 showed that one third of the interviewed female IDPs living in camps surrounding Nyala in South Darfur met criteria for major depressive disorders and two thirds expressed symptoms of depression. ²⁶

Studies (largely into the effects of child sexual abuse) have shown that the impact of sexual violence on mental health can be just as serious and long lasting as the physical effects. Suicide and murder have both been seen to occur following sexual violence. One British population-based study showed that the presence of signs or symptoms suggestive of a psychiatric disorder was 33% in women with a history of sexual abuse as adults, as against 6% in non-abused women.²⁷ Depression and post traumatic stress disorder have been shown to be related to sexual violence, especially where there is physical injury during the assault.28 Sleep difficulties, psychosomatic problems, alcohol and tobacco consumption, and behavioral problems were found to be more common in adolescents who had been raped.29 Without counseling, negative psychological effects have been known to persist for at least a year following rape.3° In normal contexts even with counseling, around half of female rape survivors retain symptoms of stress.

There are healthy ways for people to adjust to extreme stress and trauma; not all people confronted with traumatic events develop mental health disorders. While humanitarian agencies such as Médecins Sans Frontières provide mental health services in some of the camps, most women and girls and their families are unable to access help to cope with the emotional and psychological aftermath of the sexual violence and their consequent pregnancies. There are too few agencies available to address the debilitating effect of the conflict on the lives of the displaced. Additionally, the concept of Western-style therapy is alien to the Darfur culture. Women are more likely to request

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income-generation assistance so they can provide support to their families and "get on with it" than they are to see the need for a referral to a mental health counselor. Yet the needs are urgent.

In addition to trauma from the gruesome events that displaced them in the first place, many women and men in Darfur are also suffering from the effects of the harsh conditions of their displacement, the prolonged encampment and dependence on humanitarian assistance to survive, the struggle to meet the basic needs for themselves and their children, and hopelessness about their future. The added insecurity that women face in the increasingly unsafe camps and when they venture out to collect firewood makes it unsurprising that such a large number of women are exhibiting symptoms of depression.

In 2004 and 2005, RI interviewed women who told us of their daughter's suicide attempts and hopelessness after the attacks. According to service providers in Darfur, some of the women who learned that they were pregnant after being raped would go to women's centers in distress and very depressed.31 The social and economic implications of these unwanted pregnancies can be devastating for both the mothers and children. Women who become pregnant as a result of rape are at risk of being abandoned by their husbands, rendering both the women and their children extremely vulnerable. Some infants may be abandoned or neglected by their mothers due to attitudes within the community or the response from local authorities.32 Women and girls who delivered babies born of rape reported that they felt disconnected from them. Sometimes the mothers were shunned by family and friends. Some agencies reported husbands arriving in women's clinics with newborn children that they didn't know how to care for because the women had abandoned the child to try to find a new life elsewhere.

Impact on Men

Men are the other victims of this epidemic of rape. In addition to sometimes being victims of rape,33 their identities are undermined by the loss of the ability to provide for or protect their families. As the fathers, sons, and brothers of the raped women, they know that the rape has been targeted towards them as well. In order to help women become reintegrated into the community, men need to address their own feelings of powerlessness for failing to protect their families and to address community attitudes towards survivors of rape. "These men are supposed to protect their families," a Sudanese woman told RI. "Instead, the women are turning against them for failing to help them. They will not respect them."

In accessing most humanitarian services, men tend to have more options than women, but the same is not the case in gender-based violence programs. There are few programs targeting men in particular in Darfur, and none for men to encourage them to change their attitudes towards women who have been raped. Most of the initiatives that are male-oriented are income-generation projects or general education programs, not programs focused on responding to the needs of partners and family members of rape survivors.

In post-conflict Darfur, men and women will have to adjust to and renegotiate their changed roles and situations, with some finding difficulty in reintegration. It is essential that there be programs focused not only on the survivors of rape but their partners and families as well as the community to overcome the barriers to supporting survivors.

EMERGING ISSUES

Physical Protection for the Women of Darfur

The Government of Sudan

The primary responsibility to provide protection for the citizens of Darfur falls upon the government of Sudan. At an individual level, its commanders and members of its armed forces and police have the personal responsibility to stop violations of the law. It is the government of Sudan that is required to train the armed forces, control their conduct, and prosecute all those who breach Sudanese and international laws. When protection has failed, it is the government of Sudan's responsibility to provide assistance to its citizens. But, as in many wars, the same state authorities who bear the greatest responsibility for protecting and serving the citizens are the ones that are failing to do so. The consensus of Refugees International and other international and Sudanese human rights groups is that the government of Sudan lacks the political will to stop the violence and is indeed one of the major perpetrators of the violence.

The government of Sudan has refused to take the issue of rape seriously, even denying that it was happening for years. In 2004, a government minister of Culture and Social Welfare visited El Fasher in North Darfur and said that since there were no charges of rape recorded at the police station, there could not be any rapes in North Darfur. She maintained that any women who might be pregnant must have committed adultery and should go to jail, with their children placed in an orphanage in Khartoum. After much pressure from international agencies and governments, in 2005 the government of Sudan finally acknowledged publicly that there had been rape in Darfur.

Contradicting reports from almost every international NGO and the United Nations, however, Sudanese governmental officials continue to claim that there are adequate means in place to prevent rape and adequate

services for rape survivors. In a January 2007 meeting between Sudanese President President Omer Al-Bashir, the Minister of Justice, and a Save Darfur Coalition delegation including RI President Ken Bacon, a senior Sudanese official, Dr. Attiat Mustapha Abdel Halim, stated that the government of Sudan had attempted to address the needs of rape survivors in Darfur. She and President Al-Bashir claimed that Sudanese law is sufficient to prevent rape and protect rape survivors by allowing access to justice, but that because of the war witnesses are unwilling to come forward with claims that would allow the investigation and prosecution of cases.

The Sudanese officials further stated they had empowered the Human Rights Departments of both the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to investigate all allegations and turn over the evidence to the relevant prosecutor to pursue the case. However, the government of Sudan stated it has been unable to prosecute rape cases because of a lack of witnesses who are willing to come forward, even to the UN agencies. Refugees International's recent report, "Laws Without Justice," however, describes in detail how impossible evidentiary standards and the very real possibility that rape survivors will be charged with fornication and adultery under Sudanese law prevent survivors from bringing cases to the authorities.34

The majority of the attacks that UN human rights monitors were able to document involved some sort of armed actor, with many being in military uniform — including policemen, soldiers, Janjaweed militia — and in one case a rape in an unofficial military detention facility. MSF-Holland's report also noted that 81% of the victims reported that their rapists were militia or military who used their weapons to force the assault.³⁵ But as RI has documented, all Sudanese uniformed personnel have blanket immunity, which can only be waived by the alleged perpetrator's superior officer, which is not occurring.³⁶

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For any force to be able to prevent
Darfuri women from being raped, a clear and strong mandate to protect civilians is essential.

The African Union Mission in Sudan

With the deployment of a new peacekeeping mission a possibility by 2008, it is time to review the African Union Mission in Sudan's efforts to protect women.

First, for any force to be able to prevent Darfuri women from being raped, a clear and strong mandate to protect civilians is essential. But even with the right mandate, there may be operational pitfalls. In the case of AMIS, international organizations complained that the turnover of AMIS commanders and the lack of effective communication with the humanitarian community left AMIS vulnerable to manipulation by the government of Sudan. Health organizations and women's groups have complained that AMIS has demanded confidential health records of rape survivors at the request of the local authorities and has actually sought to investigate trumped up charges against humanitarian agencies for the local police.

AMIS initially tried to work with rape survivors. African troop contributing countries enthusiastically responded to the need for female police officers to be stationed near IDP camps to provide a sympathetic police officer to whom women could report violations. RI interviewed South African female police officers with experience in investigating rape and working with rape survivors who had volunteered for the duty out of their concern for what was happening in Darfur. In 2005, Refugees International documented that about a quarter of the AMIS Civilian Police were female, a much higher percentage than the 4% in UN peacekeeping missions.

The added benefit of having female police, however, was lost because of the lack of female translators. With only one female translator for the Nyala camps in South Darfur, the female Civilian Police were forced to use male translators when speaking with women on patrol or when the women came with complaints. As most women speak local languages and do not necessarily speak Arabic, AMIS needed local women who could speak

the local language. The AMIS recruiting policy, as explained to a translator for RI who was seeking a position with AMIS, is that they only hire through Khartoum and then deploy translators where they need them.

It was not only the AMIS female police officers who needed translators; many of the AMIS police officers came from Francophone African countries such as Mauritania. These officers also needed English and Arabic translators in order to work with both their colleagues and their local counterparts.

The lack of translators generally has greatly hampered AMIS's capacity to either provide additional protection for displaced women in Darfur or to mentor government of Sudan police officers effectively, an important lesson for any future peacekeeping force. In 2005, RI was told of an AMIS police officer who was 'patrolling' with his government counterpart. The AMIS police officer did not speak Arabic and therefore walked smilingly through the camp as the Sudanese police officer systematically insulted and threatened the displaced people. While AMIS is also supposed to be mentoring the government of Sudan police, they themselves often don't understand Sudanese law or know about important changes in those laws, such as the Form 8 amendment that allows women to get medical care after rape without a police report.

Civilian staff within AMIS also played an invaluable role in coordinating activities and in sharing information between AMIS and the humanitarian community. Unfortunately, the civilian component of AMIS has been seriously understaffed. For example, in December 2005, it had only one civilian Human Rights Officer responsible for the whole of South Darfur. Her job was to liaise with UNMIS human rights officers, protection working groups, and other international coordination bodies as well as ride along with AMIS patrols and document human rights abuses. This was an impossibly broad set of tasks.



African Union (AU) troops escort a humanitarian aid convoy from El Fasher to Nyala to protect it from possible attack.
As a new UN-AU hybrid force is deployed, it is important to review the shortcomings of the under-resourced AU force.

© Refugees International/ Jonathan Morgenstein

Reports of internally displaced people in Darfur actively protesting against AMIS for failing to protect them are very troubling. While the under-resourced AMIS is obviously not able to provide the protection that they should, the deployment of UNAMID will not resolve the issue of trust overnight. UNAMID must make an effort to improve their relationship with the people. The local people and most international humanitarian organizations complained that in AMIS there was no transition between the old and the new staff. There must be proper handover between people that are leaving and newly deployed, so that efforts to create rapport with the displaced population aren't lost every time a new contingent comes through.

Firewood and Fuel Efficient Stoves

The most well known example of the efforts of the African Union mission in Sudan's attempts to protect women from rape is the initiation of firewood patrols. Women leave the IDP camps in the early morning hours to gather firewood. They travel together for the first part of the journey, but quickly disperse. In 2005, women in Kalma camp in South Darfur told RI, "If we stay together, we risk attracting Janjaweed or even the police. We try not to travel on Friday, a holy

day, because there are fewer people traveling to market who might be able to help us. Many girls miss school on Thursday. If that brings extra safety, it's a sacrifice we are willing to make." For many women, it is a relief to return home safely. But they live with the constant anxiety that in a few days they will have to go out again and face possible attack. For them it is just a matter of time. The next time, they may not be able to run or hide from their attackers. In some camps, two to three rapes are estimated to occur each day.

An AMIS firewood patrol, in theory, would consist of AMIS police monitors along with their Sudanese counterparts and a contingent of force protection soldiers accompanying women to a designated area, patrolling around them within earshot as they gather their firewood and then accompanying them back to the camps. There were some early reports that in areas with pro-active AMIS commanders, firewood patrols did take place and were fairly successful. In particular, in the early stages of the conflict, Zalingei was held up as an example of successful coordination between AMIS and the humanitarian community.

FUEL EFFICIENT STOVES

In an effort to reduce attacks against women who leave the relative safety of the IDP camps, humanitarian organizations began investing in fuel-efficient stove programs. The reasoning was simple: "By reducing the need for wood and emission of smoke, a switch to simple, more fuel-efficient stoves could reduce the time women spend collecting wood, a task that exposes them to the risk of rape and other forms of gender-based violence." ³⁷

The programs seemed to respond to the reality that as the displaced gathered in the camps for safety, the environment surrounding the area was becoming increasingly depleted, forcing displaced women to venture further and further in search of firewood and therefore more at risk for attack. At the Kalma camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Darfur, women must walk about fifteen kilometers to find and carry back wood, a chore that can take about six hours or more to complete. Also, in order to cover the fuel needs of an average household, this task must be repeated five or six times per week. Women and older children bear the primary burden of collecting wood.

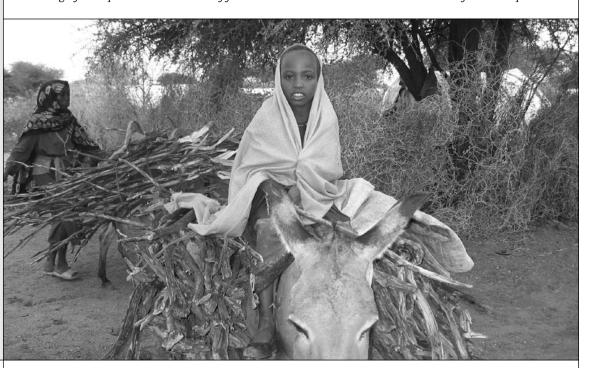
The fuel-efficient stove program became very popular and many agencies began implementing programs. In 2005, the UN issued an inter-agency report in which it called for the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves "on a massive scale" in an attempt to try to stem the attacks against displaced women. USAID also promoted the idea and a number of NGOs increased their programs. As a result, approximately 50,000 women in Darfur have been trained on how to make fuel-efficient stoves and are using those stoves for all of their cooking needs.

The program approach differed from organization to organization and from region to region. Some organizations used indigenous materials and promoted a training of trainers method while others imported materials abroad for their stoves. Some organizations made the stoves and distributed them.

While there was very little systematic monitoring and evaluation, Refugees International consulted with several humanitarian workers in Darfur who concluded that fuel efficient stoves did not appear to significantly reduce the amount of firewood that women needed nor the amount of times they

This young girl from Kutum, North Darfur, has left the safety of the camp to gather firewood. The use of fuel-efficient stoves has not reduced the need for women to collect firewood, but it has improved the quality of life for displaced people in other ways.

© Refugees International/ Mamie Mutchler



ventured out of the camps. There was the typical duplication of effort when so many agencies jumped onto the same bandwagon. Some of the projects were unsustainable with stoves so technologically advanced that replacement parts had to be brought in from Europe. Also, women in local towns collect firewood and sometimes face the same problems outside their towns and villages that displaced women face.

Humanitarian agencies that invested in the program saw no real evidence that the programs were working and began to abandon them. While USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance commissioned a report to review the effectiveness of the stoves and to determine some best practices, the report was suspended because of insecurity.

While there is little evidence that producing fuel-efficient stoves reduces violence against women, the best fuel-efficient stoves did produce other benefits for women including:

- Improving the quality of life for Darfuri women and their families by reducing expenditures for fuel and freeing up time for income generation and other activities;
- Reducing the amount of smoke that is emitted during the cooking process and, thereby, the incidence
 of acute respiratory infections and other smoke-related diseases, which is one of the leading causes of
 morbidity throughout Darfur;
- Reducing the risk of injury to children, who can burn themselves when they fall into the open fire
 and, likewise, decreasing the risk of fire to nearby structures, a particularly serious concern in
 congested camps;
- Potentially slowing the desertification in the Darfur area.

Given the quality of living benefits that fuel efficient stove programs may bring in relation to their cost, the international community should continue to promote them but not solely — or even principally — as a protection measure against sexual violence but as a vital part of a holistic response to the urgent environmental and humanitarian issues confronting the conflict-affected peoples of Darfur.



This woman from Kalma camp in South Darfur told Refugees International about the danger she faces when she collects grass for her donkey and to sell in the market: "One time bandits chased us, took our donkeys, hurt us... It would be good if the African Union were near us when we collect firewood."

© Refugees International/ Sarah Martin When the women are attacked, they are often robbed of their donkeys, axes, and money, making it even more treacherous to collect wood and grass.

With the continuous turnover of personnel and no clear directives on how or why to do firewood patrols, however, these early gains were quickly lost. Firewood patrols seemed to be entirely left to the discretion of the sector commanders. Many didn't see this as a part of their mandate. The African Union command exacerbated this problem by refusing to order their troops to carry these out. Humanitarian agencies complained bitterly that AMIS refused to cooperate with them either. "AMIS commanders either didn't send someone to planning meetings to discuss how to conduct the firewood patrols or they sent someone different each time," said one humanitarian project manager in South Darfur. The firewood patrols are low on the priority list for the under-resourced AMIS.

But even effective firewood patrolling would not provide adequate physical protection for IDP women. Women face harassment from many different sides. Government officials in Darfur claim that they must manage the firewood collection done by displaced women because they want to prevent further environmental damage. In Kass in 2006, an escorted group of women out gathering firewood was stopped by government officials who claimed that they needed forestry permits from the national government in order to collect wood.

The women also face obstruction from 'land-owners' who claim that the women are trespassing and are collecting firewood on their land. Anecdotal reports claim that these so-called landowners are mostly Janjaweed who have been given land by the government in repayment for their services as militia. The women often have to pay bribes to government of Sudan police officers and soldiers in order to pass checkpoints. When the women are attacked, they are often robbed of their donkeys, axes, and money, making it even more treacherous to collect wood and grass.

In areas like around Abushouk camp in North Darfur, there is little reason to restart firewood patrols, as the area is so heavily

deforested that most households now resort to buying firewood from the markets. As firewood becomes more and more scarce, women have to take bigger risks in order to survive. "It took three months for Fatouma Moussa to collect enough firewood to justify a trip to sell it in the market town of Shangil Tobayi, half a day's drive by truck from here. It took just a few moments on Thursday [May 11,2006] for Janjaweed militiamen, making a mockery of the new cease-fire. to steal the \$40 she had earned on the trip and rape her. Speaking barely in a whisper, Ms. Moussa, who is 18, gave a spare account of her ordeal. 'We found Janjaweed at Amer Jadid,' she said, naming a village just a few miles north of her own. 'One woman was killed. I was raped."38

One strategy to protect women was to provide them with fuel-efficient stoves to stop them from having to leave the camps as often. Such an intervention has many drawbacks. First, the promotion of such programs as a remedy to the attacks implies an acceptance of the status quo and disregards the fact that women have the right to freedom of movement outside of the camps. By trying to reduce the amount of time women spend outside the camp, the programs inadvertently suggest that women assume some responsibility for their attacks because they ventured out where it was unsafe. There has been little research to suggest that the fuel-efficient stoves even reduce the number of times that women leave the camps. The focus on firewood gathering also ignores the many other reasons women leave the camps, when they are equally at risk. The fundamental issue is that the Darfuri women's freedom of movement is being violated systematically.

Some women work on their own farms or are employed on the farms of others, sometimes in exploitative conditions. According to a humanitarian worker in South Darfur, women have started to go to their farms in groups, which they say provides them more protection from the organized attacks and banditry that has been increasing in the past

months. Women have to make many different risk assessments in the different parts of Darfur. In 2006, women in South Darfur said that now, they don't travel on market day, because there are more people moving around and coming into the main towns, putting them at even more risk of attack.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by AMIS troops

While there have been allegations of AMIS troops sexually exploiting and abusing Sudanese women, there is no clear documentation.³⁹ Allegations of soldiers paying for sex, women becoming pregnant by peace-keepers, increased prostitution around areas of AMIS deployment and the rape of young girls are disturbing, but for a number of reasons, it is impossible to say how widespread such behavior is.

Nonetheless, it is imperative that the African Union put in place ways to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable women, especially as AU forces are likely to remain the backbone of any hybrid force that is deployed in Darfur and will likely continue to intervene as peacekeepers throughout Africa. While the United Nations began to seriously address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable women by its peacekeeping troops in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia in 2004, the African Union did not have any infrastructure in place to deal with complaints when Refugees International met with them in December 2005. While the UN has worked to ensure that UN peacekeeping troops are being properly trained and that disciplinary standards are in place, similar attention and training are not currently being provided to AMIS.

RI repeatedly warned the African Union that they needed systems in place both to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in the first place, as well as to address any charges of misconduct that might occur. In July 2005, RI issued a bulletin calling on the United States to provide more support to the African Union on this issue. In November 2005, RI

released an extensive review of the challenges facing the African Union Mission in Sudan and one of the key recommendations was for the AU to establish a Conduct Discipline Unit and to ensure that all soldiers were aware of its Code of Conduct. After visiting Darfur in December 2005, RI issued a second bulletin cautioning the African Union that they must implement a mechanism to receive complaints directed against their troops for sexual exploitation and abuse.⁴⁰

Allegations of UN peacekeepers sexually abusing street children in south Sudan came out in December 2006 and should serve as a reminder that any protection force in Darfur must make efforts not to further traumatize the people. Increased attention to pre-deployment sensitization and training on sexual exploitation and abuse should be in place well before soldiers are actually deployed. UNAMID must make a strong effort to implement UN conduct and discipline standards and troop contributing countries must make it clear that they will not allow any sexual misconduct, and take strong disciplinary action for those found guilty of abusing their power in order to prevent any future abuse.

Health Response for Rape Survivors

When Refugees International visited Darfur in 2004, staff members in the few clinics that had services for rape survivors complained of not seeing recent cases because women were unable and unwilling to use health services. While clinics are packed with patients seeing treatment of malaria or respiratory illnesses, very few women are coming in for medical treatment after being raped. Many of the women said they did not know that services such as the "morning after pill" were available. Since rape often results in extreme trauma and childbirth is difficult without a practiced midwife, access to health care is vital in order to save women's lives.

Until 2005, women who were raped in Darfur risked arrest and imprisonment if they

countries must
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misconduct, and
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for those found
guilty of abusing
their power.

Troop contributing

sought out post-trauma medical assistance without filling out a police report. Article 48 (I)(c) of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1991 instructs police to fill out a document called Form 8 to record findings of medical examination and to serve as evidence for legal proceedings. As documented by RI in November 2004, this requirement has meant that many women have decided not to seek life-saving treatment because of fear of reprisal; not only are the rapists often the Sudanese police themselves, but the Sudanese government has been quick to equate rape with adultery which is punishable under shari'a law. This threat is very real: in February and March 2007, the criminal court of Al-Azazi, Managil province, Gazeera state sentenced two women to death by stoning for committing adultery.41

Many humanitarian agencies have openly admitted their reluctance to provide health

care for survivors of rape because of their concerns about drawing attention of the Sudanese authorities. Providing health care in Darfur has been challenging both for international health providers and for local Sudanese doctors, nurses, and health assistants. Many health workers told RI in 2004 and 2005 that they do not advertise health services to rape survivors because Sudanese law prevents doctors from treating rape victims without a referral from the police department. Some health care providers have been threatened with arrest to prevent them from providing services and there are rumors that some Sudanese health staff have been jailed. Using the excuse that they are following the law, the police have threatened and intimidated healthcare providers, even going as far as to arrest doctors, nurses, and others who could not produce the form while treating a survivor. The arrest of MSF-Holland's head of mis-

Kalma camp in South Darfur is one of Darfur's largest camps for internally displaced people, with more than 90,000 inhabitants.

Photo Credit: Refugees International/Sally Chin



sion and Darfur project coordinator after the release of a report on rape in 2005 also cast a chilling shadow over the efforts of organizations that had to make the choice between remaining in the country and providing some care or working openly to support survivors of sexual violence. Many believed that the arrests were part of a wider campaign to control NGOs. There have been dozens of arrests of expatriate aid workers — some accused of falsifying rape charges. Many times, national staff members are required to stand bond for them, leaving conscientious humanitarian agencies, unwilling to put their staff in harm's way, reluctant to take actions to speak out about the abuses that they see.

In 2005, after months of international pressure and high-level advocacy, the government of Sudan finally admitted that rape was a problem in Darfur. Additionally, the Governor (*Wali*) of South Darfur issued a circular stating that the law no longer applied; women could now legally seek medical care without filing a Form 8. Yet many people — both the displaced and service providers — remain unaware of this critical change in the law.

In effect, not much has changed for survivors of rape in Darfur. According to a humanitarian worker in South Darfur in 2007, more women are now seeking treatment without Form 8 but there is still a lot of general confusion for women and within communities. International agencies are also confused. There is purposely little clarification from the government of Sudan because the confusion allows for the further isolation of survivors.* There have even been reports of some government-run hospitals making women pay to get a Form 8 but this practice was supposedly discontinued in South Darfur after complaints.

There still remains much work to be done around the Form 8 issue. The government of Sudan has shown itself to be extremely

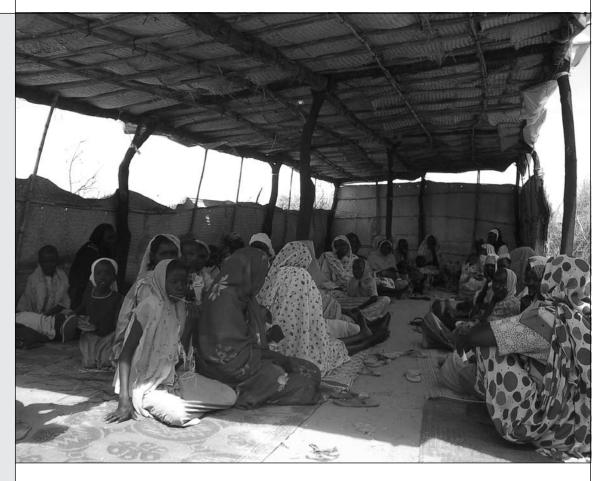
reluctant to move forward to promote this change. In 2005, when the South Darfur State Committee tried to implement its Plan of Action (which includes the dissemination of the Form 8 amendments), it became obvious that government parties were un-engaged. Members of the State Committee agreed to start informing police officers of the Form 8 changes, but some key government officials failed to turn up at the meetings.

Humanitarian agencies in South Darfur insisted to RI that the dissemination campaign must come from the government, otherwise the police and health workers would not believe that anything had changed. "We need to spread the news, we told them it had changed but none of them believed us," one health care agency told RI. It is clear that the government of Sudan has been waging a procedural war of attrition on the humanitarian community. It has thrown up roadblocks and dragged its feet at every turn hoping that gradually the community would be so worn down that it would give up on the issue of eliminating the Form 8 requirement and establishing effective State Committees.

Sudanese police officers are also uninformed about the changes in the law, or at least they claim that they are. "Police officers say that they are waiting for orders from their commanders in capital cities or Khartoum until they can take any action on the Form 8 issues," claimed one humanitarian worker. While on a firewood gathering patrol with the African Union near Otash camp in December 2005, RI interviewed government of Sudan police officers about the problem of gender-based violence. When shown the new circular and asked about the amendment regarding Form 8, the police officer said. "I try to help women who have been attacked. However, I do not know about this law or form."

The police have threatened and intimidated healthcare providers, even going as far as to arrest doctors, nurses and others.

^{*} Some of the confusion is over how binding the circular is as it was issued by the Governor of South Darfur and does not cover North or West Darfur, nor is it law – just advice on how to apply the law.



These women and children wait to receive services in a health clinic. Health providers are routinely threatened and harassed by the Government of Sudan if they provide services to raped women and children.

© Refugees International/ Ken Bacon

> More worrisome was that African Union Civilian Police officers, even at high levels, who were mandated to monitor and mentor government of Sudan police officers, were also ignorant of the changes in the policy. When RI staff met with the new regional commander of the AU Civilian Police in South Darfur, we had to inform him of the changes. If the AU Civilian Police are to do their job effectively, they must be aware of these changes and include them in campaigns and strategies to educate the police forces. Despite claims of 'numerous trainings' being undertaken by UN agencies such as the UN Fund for Population Activities and the UN Development Program, in actuality, most humanitarian workers have received very little training on this issue. In rural areas or areas where there are few international actors, there is even less confidence that police officers will be informed.

Documenting the Problem: Reporting Rape and Gathering Statistics

Existing data show that violence against women is widespread across the world. As the knowledge base about gender-based violence interventions has grown, so has information about its prevalence in many regions of the world. Researching and documenting gender-based violence, however, are extremely challenging due to the complex ethical issues and potential for life threatening safety concerns. It is, therefore, difficult to obtain reliable and accurate numbers about gender-based violence, especially sexual violence. Most rape survivors worldwide never disclose their experience. 42 Of those few who tell someone, only a small fraction reports the incident to the police or legal authorities. There are many valid reasons for this under-reporting, including fear of retaliation, prevailing social attitudes that

blame the victim, social stigma, and limited recourse for justice.

In Chad, where presumably there is a less hostile environment in which to provide gender-based violence support services, there have been few officially reported cases of rapes. There are even fewer services for raped women in Chad than there are in Darfur. A medical officer told Refugees International, "We believe that not all women who have been raped are coming forward. We have only seen three cases of rape in the past four months. We assume that rates are higher than this." Darfuri refugees told RI that they would not know who to go to if they were raped or what services would be available to them.

In Darfur, where there is a larger and more organized humanitarian presence but a more hostile environment, it is also difficult to quantify rape. While initially very few women came forward, more women are doing so but in nowhere near the numbers that humanitarian workers say that they've seen.⁴³ Rape is reported in some instances but organizations do not share this information for reasons of confidentiality and for fear that the government of Sudan will use the information to further terrorize the survivors. In time of conflict, it is even more difficult to ascertain numbers of women raped. In conflict situations, given the breakdown of social institutions and rule of law, it only stands to reason that women and girls are at greatly increased risk of sexual violence.

In an environment of dwindling resources for humanitarian emergencies, however, policy makers demand proof that programs are needed, leading to a thirst for numbers to show exactly how many women have been raped. But there is already sufficient evidence in countries with ongoing humanitarian emergencies to show the high prevalence of sexual violence. The UN Development Program conducted a post-conflict survey in Liberia that showed that 60 to 70% of women had suffered some sort of gender-based

violence. UN officials note that gender-based violence is "like a cancer" in the Democratic Republic of Congo and have called it "endemic" and a sad reality for thousands of women throughout the Congo.

While the conflicts and the numbers vary, one thing remains constant — women are raped in conflict. And it is clear that not enough is being done to prevent rapes from occurring or to meet the needs of survivors, whether the number is in the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands.

There are very few reasons why women might report a case of rape and many reasons why they should not. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee "Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings" state that "Any available data, in any setting, about GBV reports from police, legal, health, or other sources will represent only a very small proportion of the actual number of incidents of GBV."44 Collecting data on prevalence of rape is different than tracking incidents of other crimes or health problems. Trust between the service provider and the survivor is extremely important. Data in non-conflict countries have shown that when genderbased violence programs are implemented, there is an increase in reports of rape as the community begins to trust the service providers and begin to come forward. This is also true in refugee settings and countries in conflict.

Researching sexual violence is also very difficult for entire communities. The sensitive nature of violence against women demands that safety concerns be considered paramount before conducting research is even proposed. Similar restrictions exist for treating violence survivors.

Many victims have stressed that their number one concern about rape is confidentiality. Confidentiality is particularly difficult to maintain in the hothouse environment of a refugee or internally displaced persons'

Not enough is being done to prevent rapes from occurring or to meet the needs of survivors, whether the number is in the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands.



This woman in Al Salam camp in North Darfur was living among thousands of people who were newly displaced in July 2006 and waiting for more permanent shelter within the camp.

While they waited, they made their homes under these makeshift shelters and tarps.

© Refugees International/ Megan Fowler

camp. The risks associated with field research to the women who have been raped may very well outweigh the benefits of added knowledge. Particularly in a repressive environment such as Sudan, the potentially threatening nature of the subject matter increases safety and ethical concerns exponentially. There have been reports in Darfur that domestic violence has increased in the households of women who have been raped. The health and safety of these women must be the primary concern; invasive investigation procedures could compromise both.

While the international community debates the best way to gather data and ways to encourage women to come forth and be counted, the rapes continue and women are not receiving even basic care and treatment in many places. The current question should not be, "How many women are raped?" but rather, "How can we prevent gender-based violence?" and "How can we improve services to those who have been raped?" Money and human resources currently being used to determine accurate numbers of rape survivors could be better used in creating and implementing sexual violence programming and intervention mechanisms.

Lack of Access to Those Willing to Pursue Legal Justice

Much of the international response around sexual violence is focused on legal response, despite the low numbers of women who choose to try to access the formal legal system. Refugees International's latest report, "Laws Without Justice," examines the legal aspects of Sudan's failure to provide justice to survivors of sexual violence in Darfur. The analysis concludes that Sudan's laws governing rape expose victims to further abuse, mainly by defining rape as the offense of zina — intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married to each other. A woman unable to prove lack of consent is at risk for being charged with the crime of zina. Further, prosecution of rape is often functionally impossible because Sudan grants immunity to individuals with government affiliations.45

RI has repeatedly interviewed Darfuri women who report that they don't trust the police and accuse them of often refusing to accept rape complaints. They say that the police sometimes accuse the rape survivor of adultery so as to intimidate them out of filing a complaint. The actions of the government of Sudan's police in obstructing justice and harassing survivors of violence have been well documented by human rights monitors in Darfur. According to OHCHR, "In the vast majority of cases of rape that they have documented, victims and their families will not approach the police or other authorities for fear of reprisal. Women have talked about the futility of reporting given the lack of action for sexual violence."

The Sudanese police have a consistent pattern of impeding justice. In West Darfur, out of 39 complaints brought to the human rights monitor, 18 had been previously lodged at the police station but no action was taken and the police denied having received the complaints. In West Darfur, in 8 of the cases, the police received the complaint but refused to investigate despite medical evidence. In South Darfur, where there were

27 complaints presented in the same time period, 13 complainants were turned away because the police deemed the medical evidence they did have as insufficient.46 Operational agencies also confirmed that victims said that they were even more afraid to report their cases to the police or to the local authorities than to their families. Women fear that, rather than receiving help and support, they will be punished for illegal pregnancy. According to MSF-Holland, "On several occasions, pregnant women report that the police arrest and punish them for illegal pregnancy. Women who are already 8 months pregnant account that they have been guarded in prison at night whilst forced to do exhausting daily labor until they can pay their fine."47

Sudan has female police officers who have shown some readiness to assist with protecting women from sexual violence. In December 2005, RI interviewed female police officers that participated in firewood patrols. RI learned that many of the female police officers in South Darfur were administrative or clerical staff but were being deployed on firewood patrols with other police officers. At Otash camp in South Darfur, two of the five Sudanese police officers that conducted the firewood patrols were women. RI interviewed one of the police officers. "I have not received any formal training [in how to help a rape survivor]." She told RI, "I do this work from the experience I have and I would like more training. There have been attacks here even just a few weeks ago. I take women to the hospital and try to get them assistance if they have been attacked."48 As global experience has shown, the use of female police officers can be an extremely positive tool in building trust between raped women and police authorities. These women police officers should be trained in how to do their jobs.

In response to the displaced population's lack of confidence in the authorities, different UN agencies have been involved in training police in the rule of law with varying

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"More interna-

degrees of success. The large number of rapes has not decreased in spite of these trainings and police intimidation and harassment have continued.

Intimidation of Humanitarian Personnel

Within this climate of violence and impunity, government of Sudan forces have continued to use intimidation and threats to attack local Sudanese in civil society in Darfur and local staff who work for international agencies trying to address the rapes.

The government of Sudan continuously sows the seeds of fear into the international community to further disrupt the humanitarian effort. UN agencies and international organizations are being silenced and the humanitarian space to operate in Darfur is shrinking every day. In addition to arresting or deporting international staff that dare to speak out against the government of Sudan (including the UN's former Special Representative to the Secretary-General Jan Pronk), the government of Sudan is widely believed to have infiltrated most international NGOs by demanding that its personnel review new hires and by forcing organizations to hire its own people. The government has also set up its own NGOs so that their personnel can attend coordination meetings and report back to the government, which is particularly worrisome in the case of protection working group meetings and gender-based violence coordination meetings where sharing information confidentially is vital.

Operational agencies face the choice of choosing to speak out against the government of Sudan's tactics and risk being expelled from the country or staying and keeping silent, hoping to make a modicum of difference in the lives of the Darfuris. While national staff have long borne a disproportionate burden of the physical violence and intimidation, the physical violence is now extending to the international aid workers who have come to Darfur to provide assistance. Attacks on humanitarian workers

are increasing and in December 2006, in an attack in Gereida, an international female humanitarian worker was raped.⁴⁹ "More international humanitarian workers have been arrested than perpetrators of violence have been prosecuted by the government of Sudan," one humanitarian worker told RI. But Sudanese health workers — doctors, nurses, and health attendants — are the ones that risk the most to help the people of Darfur and still are the most vulnerable to intimidation and threats by the Sudanese government.

Many humanitarian organizations have had to suspend operations or halt staff movements to field sites due to ongoing security threats due to the conflict. This makes it difficult for health and legal organizations to provide ongoing services to survivors of rape and to build the needed trust within the communities that would allow more rape survivors to come forward.

Obstacles to Coordination

Thanks to the government of Sudan's refusal to acknowledge that rape and gender-based violence are a problem in Darfur, any agency attempting to address the needs of the survivors has come under intensive scrutiny and additional harassment by government authorities. In this difficult climate, all humanitarian agencies have struggled to provide confidential survivor support and assistance. Nevertheless, a constant complaint from all agencies trying to respond to gender-based violence has been the ineffective leadership from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the agency mandated by the UN Country Team to coordinate prevention and response to gender-based violence in Darfur.

UNFPA first deployed in Darfur in 2004 with ambitious plans to introduce psychosocial support services and provide emergency contraception to clinics. In October, however, they were given the mandate to coordinate prevention and response to gender-based violence on behalf of the UN

Country Team. From the beginning, the agency faced challenges of recruiting and maintaining qualified staff to carry out the coordination role.

In March 2005, Beth Vann of the Genderbased Violence Global Technical Support Project, a project of the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium, was commissioned to review the prevention and response to sexual violence in Darfur.50 She noted that appropriate medical management of sexual violence was available only in health clinics run by two humanitarian agencies, Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde. Her report stated that "UNFPA lacks capacity to fully assume this role [of lead agency], in terms of both staffing levels and expertise." It goes on to note, "as a reproductive health organization, UNFPA's strengths lie in its expertise in health care and some parts of psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence. UN-FPA, however, should not be expected to lead all aspects of an integrated, interagency, and multi-sectoral prevention and response strategy." In order to improve its performance in the coordination role, UNFPA sought to cochair gender-based violence working groups in the three Darfur states with UN agencies more experienced in conflict settings, such as UNICEF and UNHCR.

But lack of financial and human resources continued to plague them.* The 2007 UN strategic review on gender-based violence prevention and response in Darfur confirmed the continuing difficulties, noting that lack of resources has contributed to them.⁵¹ The review called for other UN agencies to take greater responsibility for GBV prevention and response and for the roles and responsibilities of UNFPA to be more clearly articulated.

Lack of resources does not account for all of UNFPA's problems fulfilling the coordination role. NGO staff are especially critical of the agency's lack of understanding of the importance of confidentiality and discretion when discussing the issue of sexual violence, with such discretion being all the more important given the dangers that operational agencies faced in treating rape in the Sudanese political, legal, and cultural context. "As you know, rape is a highly sensitive topic so NGOs don't feel comfortable speaking about it publicly," said one member of an operational agency. "That's why no interesting information is exchanged during the GBV working group meetings. If NGOs could expect some good support from UNFPA, they would surely collaborate more with this UN agency. However, we have chosen to stop attending the working group meetings because they are a waste of time." Another noted, "There is an official SGBV committee chaired by the Governor of South Darfur where UN agencies sit as observers. It's a total joke."

Another issue with UNFPA has been their ineffectiveness in the area of advocacy. Given the lack of clarity on the implementation of the changes in the Form 8 policy, for example, Vann's report recommended that UNFPA advocate more publicly with the government, other agencies in the UN system, and donor governments to ensure that sexual violence and how to respond was on the agenda of all meetings. When RI found on a December 2005 mission that most police agencies, health care providers, and most importantly, the Darfuri women were ignorant as to the change in the Form 8 rule, RI called for UNFPA to spearhead a public advocacy campaign around this change.52 Yet still no real public advocacy around this issue was forthcoming. According to the April 2007 UN review, operational agencies were still demanding that the UN "speak out on their behalf with one consistent voice and be more physically present on the front-line where NGOs are working." The recommendation of the report was that UNFPA develop and the UN Country Team agree to key messages on gender-based violence that

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^{*} The political decision by the current US administration to cease any funding for UNFPA has not helped the UN agency to address many of these barriers.

ensured a consistent voice on gender-based violence issues with national authorities and non-state actors.

UNFPA has also been overly focused on data collection at the expense of developing programs to support survivors. This report has already noted the difficulty collecting accurate information on the incidence of sexual violence in Sudan. UNFPA's focus on data collection despite these obstacles alienated humanitarian partners and led them to conclude that attending coordination meetings was a waste of time. In the words of the recent UN review, "The issue of data collection on protection related incidents and in particular GBV cases as one part of the information management needs of a GBV program has caused enormous difficulties in Darfur. Numerous attempts have been made to collect, store, and analyze such data but the sensitivities around GBV have hindered these attempts. There is undue emphasis on data on individual cases and

reported incidents. Emphasis should be on understanding trends and patterns of GBV to drive programming [emphasis added]. Each GBV working group should be supported to clearly define by whom, for what purpose, and how trends and patterns will be collected, analyzed and used to inform prevention and response."

As previous sections of this report have noted, it is not an easy task for a humanitarian agency to respond to sexual violence in conflict. The primary obstacles to prevention and response to such violence are not the well-meaning and over-stretched staff of the United Nations and humanitarian agencies working in Darfur, but rather the perpetrators of violence and the officials of the government of Sudan who actively work to block change. Nonetheless, UNFPA needs to find a way to overcome the challenges and strengthen their role as lead agency on gender-based violence in Darfur.

Displaced women carry water from a well inside one of Darfur's camps.
The ongoing fighting makes it more difficult for international aid organizations to ensure that displaced people in Darfur have adequate food, water, health care and shelter.

© Deborah Terry



AN ADVOCACY AGENDA ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN DARFUR

From the police officers that refuse to accept reports of rape and arrest raped women on charges of adultery to the harassment, intimidation, and attacks on local and international humanitarian organizations that attempt to provide services, the government of Sudan has shown itself unwilling to treat the issue of rape and sexual violence seriously. There are very few 'best practices' that can be recommended in a climate where impunity and violence are the norm. Humanitarian organizations whose priority is to alleviate the effects of war are neither well suited nor willing to provide recommendations on how to stop this four-year war. Until the government of Sudan stops condoning the rapes in Darfur and actively seeks to punish the perpetrators, the best that the international community can do is to bear witness to the suffering of the women, provide what care and support they can, and renew efforts to provide protection.

Under the heading of Protection in the IASC Guidelines for GBV there is a section that addresses expanding prevention and response to GBV, but it goes no further than making recommendations about "providing technical assistance to judicial and criminal justice systems," "strengthening national capacity to respond," and encouraging and promoting good practices.⁵³ There is very little guidance in this or any other document that addresses how humanitarian organizations can end violence and provide protection when the host government itself is failing to prevent — and indeed some elements are actively fomenting — the rape of its citizens.

The fact that humanitarian organizations are able to provide any services at all is amazing in light of the increasingly complex and dangerous situation in Darfur. The government of Sudan has thrown up roadblocks at every opportunity to humanitarian agencies that attempt to provide support to the women of Darfur. However, the lackluster efforts

of the United Nations at coordination and response to the survivors of rape are also unacceptable. While prevention and response to gender-based violence in this climate is exceedingly difficult, coordination of efforts and follow up on agreed-upon actions should not be.

The only solution to ending rape in Darfur is to find a political solution to end the conflict. Once the fighting ceases and the government of Sudan decides to enforce the rule of law in Darfur, then the survivors can get the justice that they demand. In the meantime, the only international body in Darfur that can provide physical protection to the people of Darfur is the African Union Mission in Sudan, with the prospect that UNAMID will be deployed in a speedy manner. UNAMID itself must place the highest possible priority on protecting civilians and stopping the sexual violence against Darfuri women.

Given the erosion of trust of the people of Darfur in the African Union forces, UNAMID will inevitably have to demonstrate through concrete actions that it will be more effective than its predecessors. There is no point in deploying a new force without doing anything to change the status quo. The United Nations, in conjunction with the AU, must demonstrate that they are serious about protecting the people of Darfur by developing an effective and responsive concept of operations, and insuring that field level leadership is both willing and able to implement it. Field commanders must work more closely with the women of Darfur to define their protection needs and understand how to address them. UNAMID must also be equipped with adequate resources, such as female translators, and expertise to address the particular needs of women in Darfur. The deployment of an all female contingent of Indian policewomen to Liberia was a step in the right direction and should be evaluated to see if it has made a difference in building trust between the population and the peacekeeping forces. Furthermore, given the long history of sexual exploitation and abuse

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UNAMID should follow
AMIS's example of
recruiting female police
officers, like this woman
from South Africa
working in South Darfur,
and ensure that the force
has enough female
translators to investigate
sexual violence in an
appropriate manner.

© Refugees International/ Sarah Martin in UN peacekeeping missions, the UN must demonstrate a willingness to deal aggressively with any instances of sexual exploitation that may arise from within its own ranks in Darfur — including suspending units as it did most recently in Cote d'Ivoire.

In terms of changes in the laws and policies of the government of Sudan, it is difficult to define a realistic, achievable agenda under current circumstances. At the national level. Sudanese activists and some members of parliament are working to change the laws related to rape that have unrealistic and discriminatory standards of evidence to prove an assault has taken place, leaving survivors bringing the case vulnerable to charges of adultery. Discrete international support to these efforts would be valuable, through technical support and funding as appropriate. It is absolutely critical to get Muslim women activists from outside Sudan involved in this effort so that the government cannot justify its failure to change its inappropriate legal framework as noble resistance against Western style feminists and anti-Islamic meddlers in the internal affairs of Sudan.

While ending the policy of granting immunity for government-affiliated individuals from prosecution for rape is of the utmost importance, it may be unrealistic as long as the government perceives itself as fighting internal rebellion. However, it may in fact be possible for Darfur-based agencies to make progress on the Form 8 issue about access to care for survivors, by continuing to press for the implementation of the policy that the form is not required for women to be treated for rape and to bring charges against the perpetrators.

While AMIS remains the sole international force in Darfur, it has lost so much credibility with local people that a strategy based on strengthening AMIS until the deployment of UNAMID is no longer viable. Policymakers and activists should highlight the problematic aspects of the AMIS experience in in-

teracting with the government of Sudan and with the displaced population and demand that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations make needed improvements for the deployment stage of the hybrid force.

An early priority should be for the force commanders to meet with local women's groups to design a strategy that responds to their needs for physical protection. UNAMID should follow AMIS's example of recruiting female police officers and providing security within camps, preferably through the deployment of enough civilian police to make a real difference. Finally, it is essential that any force have enough local translators, including female translators, to increase the frequency and quality of their communications with the local community and their ability to investigate sexual violence in an appropriate manner.

There is also a need for more specific programs to address the consequences of sexual violence in Darfur, and activists should push to ensure that the United States is providing an appropriate share of funding for such programs — particularly focusing on strengthening UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund which has been hamstrung financially for several years by the US government's decision not to fund their activities, contributing to their weakness in Darfur. To the extent possible given the reluctance of rape survivors to identify themselves, the U.S. and other donors should increase funding for income generation and psycho-social programs aimed at recovery and reintegration for them in both Darfur and also in Chad and the Central African Republic where they have taken refuge. Programs should also be developed for men to help them understand the issue of sexual violence and how it is impacting them and their loved ones and how best to support survivors. Finally, efforts should be made to increase funding for programs for children of rape. These programs should seek to integrate these children into the community.

The U.S. and other donors should increase funding for income generation and psycho-social programs aimed at recovery and reintegration for survivors.

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