

D.9 Sudan - 1985 - Conflict

Case study: Planned camps

Project type:

Planned camps

Disaster:

Civil war and famine in Ethiopia
(Eritrea and Tigray) 1983-1984

No. of people displaced:

Hundreds of thousands

Project target population:

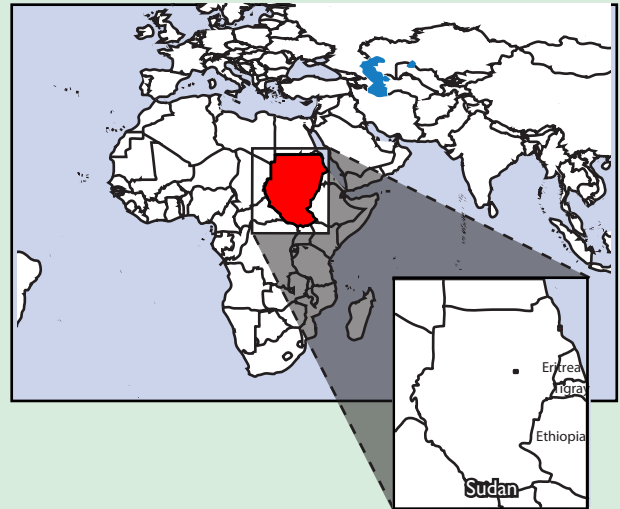
232,000 across 15 camp complexes (June 1985)
Camp capacity designed for up to 640,000

Occupancy rate on handover:

Unknown

Shelter size:

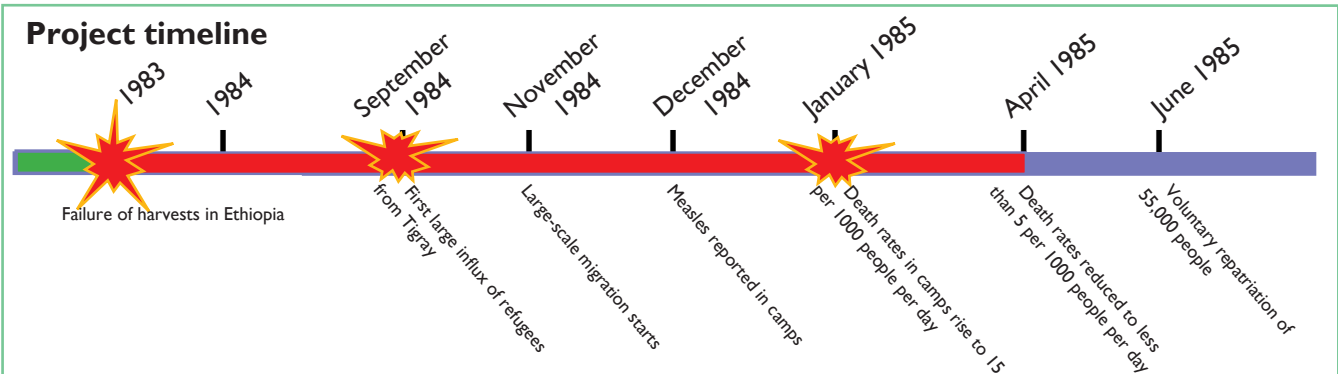
Various



Summary

Relocating refugees from smaller camps gave time to create better sites and facilities in the larger camps built as part of the second stage. Building camps using a hierarchy of shelter groupings (cluster-block-sector) helped the humanitarian actors ensure support for the cycle of repatriation.

Project timeline



Strengths and weaknesses

X Working with local relief agencies allowed camp planners to understand village and community structures, and to adapt camp layouts to those structures accordingly.

X Having clearly demarcated sections and blocks in a camp facilitated both repatriation and phased reuse of the camp for newcomers.

X Decentralisation of services in the camp allowed for easier training of village health workers in preparation for repatriation.

W Multi-sectoral guidelines on camp planning and camp management had been available for a number of years,

but were insufficiently known among many implementing organisations.

W Unplanned camps not only had problems with water supply, but some then had health-threatening problems with drainage once the rains arrived.

W Relocation to new camps, while unavoidable, had large programme costs.

W Not even advanced camp layouts can solve the grave issues of malnutrition or communicable disease.

Before the influx

There had been ongoing conflict between the Ethiopian government and rebel groups fighting for independence for the provinces of Eritrea and Tigray since the 1970s. Many refugees from the conflict moved to Sudan. During 1983-1984, the conflict combined with drought across many countries in Africa to create a major famine. There were no early warning programmes or adequate stockpiles until after September 1984.

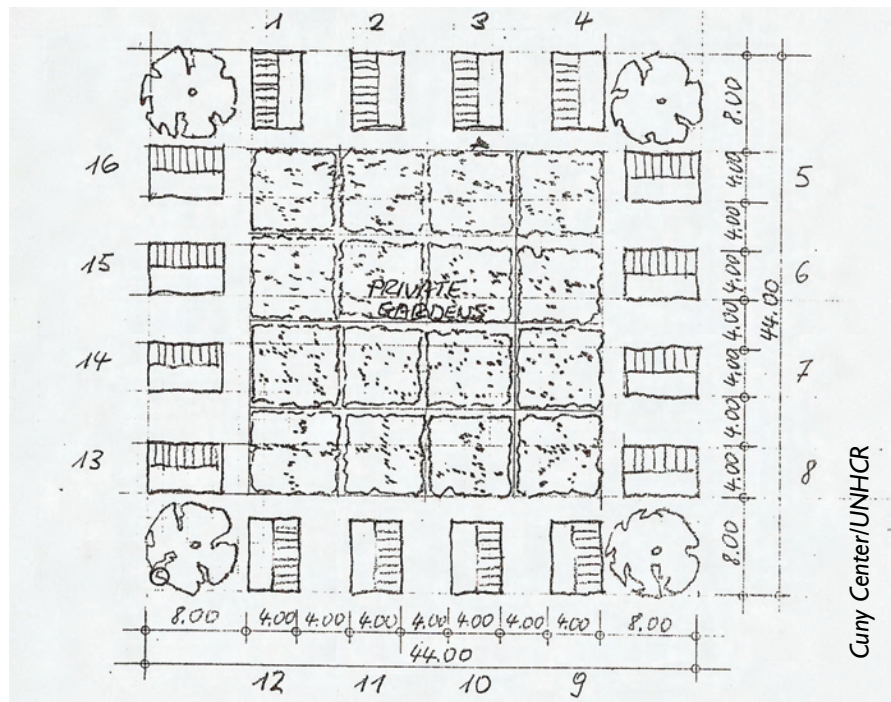
Before 1984, sufficient food had been supplied into Tigray from Sudan. By mid-1984 the Relief Society of Tigray, a national civil relief organisation, stated that the famine had reached crisis levels and that they would lead Tigrayans out of Tigray and into Sudan, where they could receive aid.

Initial camps in Sudan were sometimes located adjacent to the sites of older permanent refugee settlements. In early December 1984, it was realised that there were not enough water resources for these camps. A decision was taken to look for sites that would support larger numbers of refugees. Even then, not all camps had adequate clean water for many months. Waterborne disease, alongside measles and malnutrition in new arrivals, became the chief cause of death in the camps.

Although the Sudanese had welcomed hundreds of thousands of refugees for resettlement from Ethiopia over the previous two decades, the scale of the new influxes, and the fact that Sudan itself was suffering a drought, caused a reversal of policy in the Sudanese government. Even when this decision was overturned, the government indicated that they did not expect the refugees to remain in the long term.

After the first influx

NGOs began searching for suitable sites for new camps. Between April and June 1985, 55,000 refugees were able to return to Ethiopia. But this still left 258,000 new Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan, in addition to 120,000 Chadian refugees in the west of the country, 700,000 'old' Ethiopian refugees and increasing numbers of internally displaced Sudanese.



Block plan

Selection of beneficiaries

There was no selection per se. As the refugees arrived in the camps in more or less intact village groups, it was possible to work with the village leaders and social structures to identify vulnerable members.

Land rights / ownership

There were no permanent land rights given to refugees. In fact, the government of Sudan insisted that new refugees would not be granted permanent residency.

Technical solutions

Once decisions had been made to transfer some of the refugees from inadequate camps, the new camps were set up following a hierarchy of blocks of buildings. This started with a cluster of shelters based on the size of each extended family. These clusters could be grouped together to form a block that would follow the size of a single village. A number of blocks would form a sector of a camp.

Importantly, the number of clusters in a block was not predetermined, but was dependent upon the number of extended families coming from each village in Tigray. To the extent possible, services such as health units and supplementary feeding centres were decentralised throughout the camps. Space was left in each block for late

arrivals from each village.

This cluster, block and sector hierarchy was derived from the *Handbook for Emergencies*, which had been made available two years before the crisis. A Sudan-specific version of the handbook specific was created.

As the main emphasis was placed on water supply, sanitation and the logistics of food and medicine, the basic shelter was often a traditional tukul tent made out of branches, although there were some distributions of other shelter materials. The government's insistence that the camps were to be short term often prevented the use of any more durable shelter materials, even if the resources had been available.

Implementation

The Relief Society of Tigray would often lead the Tigrayans into Sudan in entire village groups. In some cases, the society would also participate in the transfer of groups from one of the first camps to a second camp with better facilities.

Materials

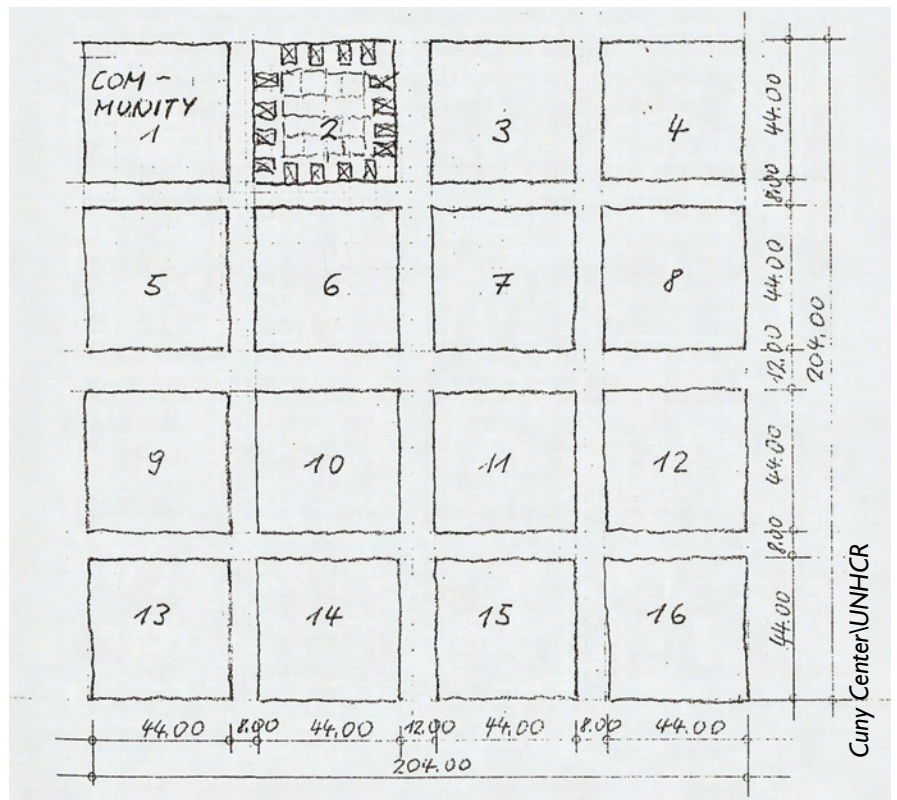
Pressure from the Government of Sudan meant that use of any 'permanent' materials was avoided. Although there were distributions of plastic sheeting, many of the refugees

lived in self-built tukul tents, made from tree branches, grass thatch and cloth.

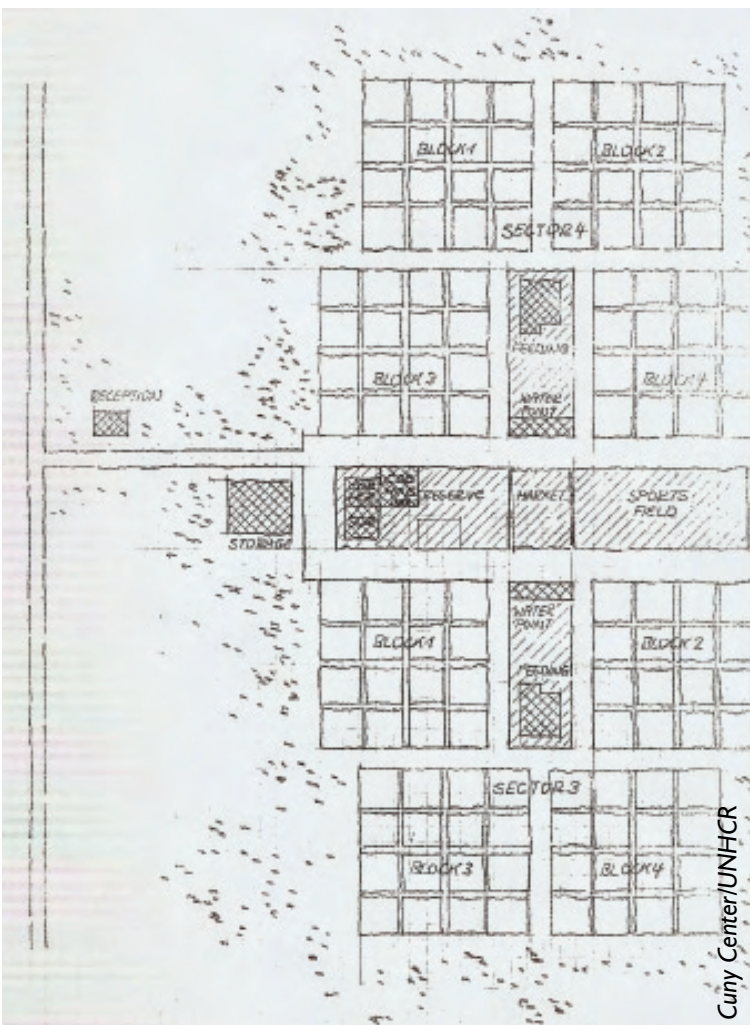
Logistics

Access to the camp helped with logistics. The most important paved highway in Sudan, connecting Port Sudan with Khartoum, ran through the camps areas. A major train line also ran adjacent to the highway for part of the time, and airports capable of handling large jets or C-130s were available at towns used as logistics hubs.

Most materials had to be imported using UN mechanisms, apart from individual shelter materials scavenged by the refugees. During the emergency, there were some severe delays in the provision of materials, but these were caused by poor pre-planning, lack of stockpiling and internal organisational issues, as much as by lack of physical infrastructure.



Sector plan



Camp plan

'[The design] had several major advantages. First, it enabled the relief agencies to train a cadre of health workers from each village. In the event that people decided to return to Tigray (which many of them did several months after arriving in the camp), the skills and training the workers had acquired would be taken back to the village with them. Second, it provided camp administrators with a simple way to reunite families. When anyone entered Sudan, they simply had to tell the relief authorities what Tigrayan village they were from; they could be transferred to the camp where the people from that village were located. Family reunification could then be handled on a self-help basis. Finally, camp administrators were presented with an intact community organization with which to work, facilitating activities which required notification or organization of the refugees.' - Fred Cuny