

Original Paper

Bringing Hope and Saving Lives: Joint Humanitarian Logistics Initiatives in Darfur

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Abstract

The conflict in Darfur have had a significant impact on civilian population and resulted in the deterioration of humanitarian situation in the region. Approximately 5.5 million people were food insecure in Sudan in early 2018, e.g., only 2 percent of IDPs in Darfur and 1 percent of the refugee population could afford the food they need. Some 1.6 million displaced people are registered as living in camps in Darfur. The humanitarian consequences of violence and livelihood loss are seen in the high levels of food insecurity. In this situation, food insecure people continue to largely depend on relief provided by international humanitarian agencies who also face numerous challenges in implementing their programmes. The article explores the current humanitarian situation in Darfur, analysis the main actors, evaluates successful pilot innovative projects and argues that improved coordination, cooperation and partnership between stakeholders with different mandates can significantly increase the positive impact of humanitarian and protection interventions on vulnerable people in Darfur.

Keywords

Darfur, UNAMID, WFP, humanitarian, logistics, food, assistance, IDPs

1. Introduction

When talking about the future of humanitarian aid, only uncertainty seems to be certain. There is an increase in both the complexity of conflicts and their effects, as well as an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters. More places are becoming more dangerous and today's world has more protracted crises, some of which last decades. Humanitarian needs are increasing around the world. Armed conflicts last longer while new actors appear both on the geo-political and on the humanitarian arena. In times of increasing defence budgets, global disarmament is not prioritized and thus there is no prospect of a decrease of armed conflicts. Aid is also becoming increasingly instrumentalized and politicised, reflecting a changed geopolitical context, affecting large and small states alike. At the same time, global warming has changed the patterns of natural disasters, and made them more frequent - an additional risk factor for armed conflicts. How can those working in the field of humanitarian aid deal with this complexity? How can actors with different mandates work better together to overcome the old and new challenges and more efficiently and effectively serve the cause? (HCV, 2018)

2. Method

2.1 Existing Needs and Gaps

The conflict in Darfur have had a significant impact on civilian population and resulted in the deterioration of humanitarian situation in the region. The effects of the conflict ranged from deaths and injuries to the displacement of population, loss of property and crops, and deprivation of basic needs such as food, water, shelter, health, education and protection, with corresponding negative impact on economic and social rights of the population (UNAMID, 2017).

In Darfur, some 1.6 million displaced people are registered as living in camps. For unregistered IDPs—that is, displaced people living in rural settlements and urban areas—estimates vary considerably, especially as there is no systematic registration of displacement outside of camps. The humanitarian consequences of violence and livelihood loss are seen in the high levels of food insecurity, low levels of access to potable water, a lack of access to livelihood opportunities, and increased need for protection. Natural hazards are expected to exacerbate food insecurity and acute malnutrition, which are also prevalent in other parts of the country. In addition, in many parts of Darfur, inter-communal conflict is another main cause of insecurity and recurrently causes displacement. Such localised armed violence takes place most frequently between sedentary-farming and nomadic-pastoral communities, as well as between nomadic communities, clashing over access to, use of, and management of resources, especially land (OCHA, 2018).

Approximately 5.5 million people were food insecure in Sudan in early 2018—up from 3.8 million in 2017. It is estimated that more than 80 percent of the population may already be unable to afford the food they need on a daily basis to live a healthy life. The chronic malnutrition rate is 38 percent, with

11 out of 18 states recording the stunting prevalence among children at above 40 percent. The past four years have also seen an influx of refugees from South Sudan. In January 2018, only 2 percent of IDPs in Darfur and 1 percent of the refugee population could afford the food they need (WFP, 2018).

2.2 Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Nexus

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life. On average, WFP reaches more than 80 million people with food assistance in 75 countries each year. About 11,500 people work for the organization, most of them in remote areas, directly serving the hungry poor. Sudan is one of the WFP's largest and most complex operations – providing food assistance to millions of people affected by conflict, displacement and chronic under-nourishment (UNIS, 2018).

The Sudan 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview points to 5.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 3.1 million in Darfur. However, access restrictions and insecurity continue to have a significant impact on the ability of humanitarian organizations to meet needs across Darfur whose over-arching objective is to protect the lives, security and integrity, as well as the fundamental wellbeing and dignity, of people affected by emergencies, including conflict (MYHS, 2017).

The African Union—UN hybrid operation in Darfur was formally established by the Security Council on 31 July 2007 through the adoption of resolution 1769, referred to by its acronym UNAMID, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. UNAMID formally took over from AMIS on 31 December 2007. Protection of civilians, facilitation of delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel is one of the strategic priorities for UNAMID. The Mission provides armed security escorts to enable aid organizations to provide, inter alia, life-saving humanitarian operations in Darfur.

UNAMID is confronted with numerous logistical and security constraints as it must operate in unforgiving terrain and in a complex and often hostile political environment. The Mission also faces shortfalls in critical transport, equipment, infrastructure and aviation assets. In the meantime, UNAMID is doing all in its power and with limited resources to provide protection to civilians in Darfur, facilitate the humanitarian aid operation, and help provide an environment in which peace can take root. The mission carries out more than 100 patrols daily and works to address some of the critical roots of the conflict (UNAMID, 2018).

2.3 UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination

UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from cooperation to co-existence. Coordination is a

shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training. The key coordination elements in natural disasters and complex emergencies are information sharing, task division and planning. The scope and modus operandi of these key elements will change with the context and with the focus of the five CMCoord tasks: a) Establish and sustain dialogue with military forces; b) Establish a mechanism for information exchange and humanitarian action with military forces and other armed groups; c) Assist in negotiations in critical areas of humanitarian-military interaction; d) Support development and dissemination of context-specific guidance for the interaction of the humanitarian community with the military; e) Monitor activity of military forces and ensure positive impact on humanitarian communities (OCHA, 2015).

In peace operations, the Civil-military Coordination (CIMIC) is the dialogue and interface among the civilian, police, and military components of a peace operation with respect to political, security, humanitarian, developmental, and other dimensions of the operation. This dialogue and interface can help attain larger, more strategic political goals related to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacekeeping, or peacebuilding, as well as humanitarian assistance, or under stabilization or “conflict management” conditions. As such, it is a subset and a synonym for the coordination of an integrated UN field mission. Effective civil-military coordination contributes to the mission mandate and its “exit strategy”, primarily in the eventual departure of intervening military forces by fulfilling the mandate. In other words, it attempts to help transition the military out of the mission environment at minimal human, financial, and physical costs. To that end, the need for better civil-military coordination is driven by the complexity of the peace operations environment, as well as growing demand and increasingly limited resources (Holshek and de Coning, 2017).

In 2015-2016, UNAMID Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison (PoC/HL) Section and OCHA established civil-military coordination structures in all five states of Darfur to discuss and agree on the procedures and challenges occurring in providing armed escorts, and to bring suggestions on improving this service including any concerns or issues related to armed escorts; identify movement restrictions imposed by both the authorities and the armed groups and develop suggestions as to how best to address such challenges; and for the purpose of information sharing. In addition, these civil-military coordination structures are responsible for proper recording and reporting the number of requests received from humanitarian organizations for UNAMID’s support and the status of those requests.

Similarly, PoC/HL and OCHA established a Civil-Military Advisory Group (CMAG) in order to have an overarching structure at the regional level. The purpose of CMAG is therefore to: a) collect and analyze systemic challenges in the states which are then formulated in policy and directives to resolve them; b) develop guidance and necessary support in implementation of the Darfur Civil-Military Coordination Guidelines and other directives and standard operating procedures (SOPs); c) identify and forecast at the strategic level any impending crises, various operational/logistical challenges that might

have impact on civil military coordination issues (UNAMID, 2017).

2.4 Joint Humanitarian Logistics Initiatives

In the framework of civil-military coordination, the acute humanitarian needs in Darfur and the insecurity in Darfur prompted WFP and UNAMID to seek innovative solutions and alternative partnership arrangements, especially for the delivery of life-saving food assistance. In October 2013, WFP informed UNAMID of an urgent requirement to move food during the period of November 2013 - June 2014 for the following routes: a) El Fasher to El Geneina (via Kabkabiya/Saraf Umra); b) El Fasher to Nyala (via Shangil Tobaya); c) Nyala to El Geneina (via Zalingei). This request came following the clashes between Maaliya and Rezeigat tribes in Abu Karinka and El Leit (East Darfur state) in September 2013, which resulted in irregular or no escorts provided to WFP food convoys by the Government of Sudan.

UNAMID agreed to provide escorts for WFP's own as well as commercial trucks and developed three special logistical arrangements that took into account the security risk management, access restrictions, terrain and landscape of the region, and emergency nature of WFP's food assistance: 1) "Exclusive escorts"—UNAMID dedicates its escorts only to WFP fleet/contracted truck convoys; 2) "Robust escorts"—up to 30 WFP fleet/contracted trucks are added to a regular UNAMID standing weekly convoy of 30 vehicles with increased armed protection measures; and 3) "Gap filling escorts"—WFP is given an opportunity of filling a space which UNAMID has not used for its weekly standing convoy, to be comprised of up to 30 vehicles.

The main objective of this arrangement was to provide assistance to WFP to supply its main warehouses and IDPs camps in Darfur with sufficient amount of food stock needed for distribution among people affected by conflict, displacement and chronic under-nourishment in South, Central, North, East and West Darfur.

3. Result

The provision of UNAMID escorts was one of the largest contributing factors to WFP's rapid and timely humanitarian response to the needs of the crisis affected population and beneficiaries in Darfur. WFP was almost invariably the first agency to deliver its assistance to conflict affected population from their food hubs filled through UNAMID escort operations.

From November 2013 to December 2014, the three WFP-UNAMID logistical arrangements enabled 1,340 WFP fleet/contracted trucks in 121 convoys to deliver food totaling 36,338 MTs for the vulnerable people in Darfur, including: a) 1,010 trucks with 26,290 MTs of food aid delivered through gap filling escorts; b) 191 trucks with 6,610 MTs of food aid delivered through robust escorts; and c) 139 trucks with 3,438 MTs of food aid delivered through exclusive escorts.

Based on the success of the 1st phase of this creative joint logistics arrangement carried out in

2013-2014, UNAMID and WFP agreed to expand the project to the whole of Darfur through and to extend its period with a view to delivering food to more beneficiaries while exploring the maximum use of the three types of logistical arrangements.

In the 2nd phase, from January to December 2015, 588 trucks in 77 convoys escorted by UNAMID delivered a total of 17,986 MTs of food and non-food items to the hundreds of thousands of displaced and conflict affected population in Darfur, brining hope, saving lives and promoting partnership and cooperation for maximizing the collective efforts for greater impact on the people in need.

Subsequently, in the 3rd and 4th phase of the project, UNAMID provided escorts for 397 WFP trucks with 10,180 MTs of food in 2016, and for 389 WFP trucks with 7,779 MTs of food in 2017. In total, from November 2013 to September 2018, UNAMID supported WFP with the provision of armed security escorts for 2,935 trucks with 75,963 MTs of food and non-food items.

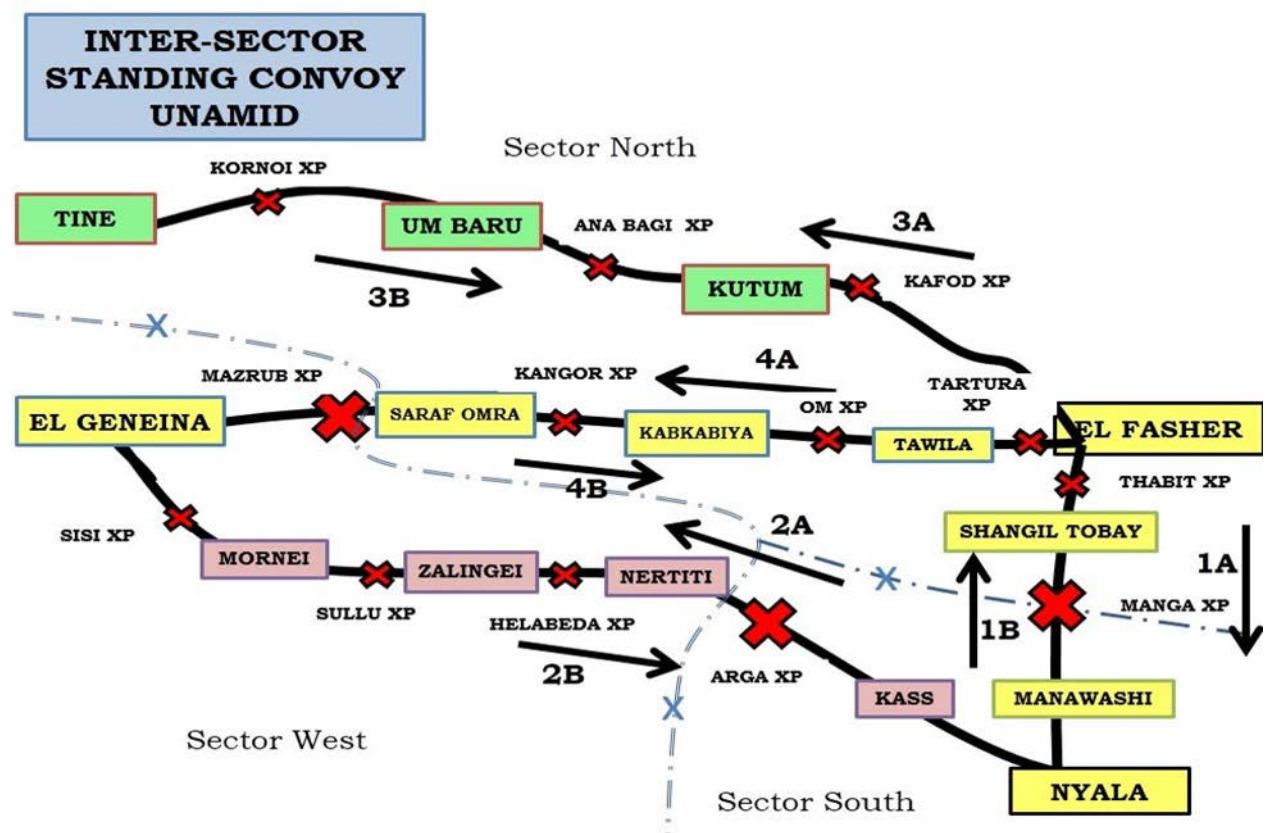


Figure 1. Inter-Sector Standing Convoy, UNAMID

4. Discussion

The “gap filling escorts” proved to be the most effective solution of the three logistical arrangements for escorting the WFP convoys along food supply routes. This is due to the fact that the “exclusive

escorts” were a newly approved special arrangement and faced some challenges at the beginning of the operation, including shortage of UNAMID military personnel resulting from periodic troop rotations and unavailability of sufficient number of recovery vehicles to provide support to all planned convoys. Security escorts to WFP trucks with food were provided by UNAMID military personnel while the overall planning and coordination of the project was provided by UNAMID PoC/HL Section at the Mission Headquarters and in the field.

In addition to these arrangements, UNAMID and WFP agreed on the co-location of a WFP Logistics/Fleet Liaison Officer with PoC/HL Section in El Fasher to act as an intermediary between the two organizations and to assist with the integrated and joint planning and implementation of the project. The co-location of UN humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel in one office was one of the success factors resulting in effective implementation of the project.

The project was implemented through existing human resources (military and civilian peacekeeping personnel), assets and contingent-owned equipment that are available with UNAMID to provide the mandated support to protection of civilians, facilitation of delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. There has been no special budgetary allocation for the operation, except from the joint planning and strategic and creative thinking on the best use of security escorts to support the life-saving humanitarian operations of WFP.

At the same time, several factors caused the delays in convoys’ arrival to final destinations and their return to El Fasher, including insecurity, lack of recovery trucks and mechanical breakdown of trucks en route, weather and road conditions, etc. Nevertheless, all efforts were made to overcome the challenges and ensure the onward transportation of humanitarian relief items to their final destinations. The successful experience of UNAMID and UNCT members (WFP) working together on planning the response and addressing emergency humanitarian situations in Darfur could be replicated by other DPKO field missions operating in the similar context and undertaking similar activities. For this purpose, the After Action Review (AAR) outlining the process and methodology of this joint initiative was developed and placed on the Policy and Practice Database in the UN Secretariat.

5. Conclusion

In just about three years (2016-2018), UNAMID’s Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison (PoC/HL) Section coordinated the provision of a total of 4,554 armed escorts to humanitarian partners in Darfur, including WFP. In 2016, 1,398 escorts were provided to support 343 requests for Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) to support UN humanitarian activities in complex emergencies. Similarly, in 2017, 1,898 escorts were provided for 683 MCDA. In 2018, 1,258 escorts were provided to support 395 MCDA requests from humanitarian partners during the first nine months. These escorts enabled the humanitarian partners to deliver humanitarian assistance, conduct inter-agency verification

assessments, distribution and monitoring of food and non-food items and other operational activities. In addition, UNAMID continued to provide daily escorts to humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) partners for water-trucking from Kube to Sortony gathering site for internally displaced persons in North Darfur, which hosts over 21,500 persons, as well as regular armed escorts, twice a week, for humanitarian supplies between Sortony and Kabkabiya in North Darfur. UNAMID also provided security for the warehouses and assets of humanitarian agencies, including WFP and humanitarian non-government organizations, in North and West Darfur.

Taking into consideration the acute humanitarian needs in Darfur and insecurity in some areas, UNAMID, in close cooperation and partnership with humanitarian partners, will continue to seek innovative and effective ways to provide security escorts to humanitarian convoys in order to ensure that relief items reach the vulnerable communities in a timely and efficient manner.

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Notes

Note 1. This article was presented as a major paper during the 3rd International Conference on Food Security and Nutrition held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 23-25 March 2016, Available at: <http://www.icfsn.org/index.html>

Note 2. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of UNAMID.