

When 93,000 people know your name

by Alfredo Zamudio



NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

“Norwejj, norwejj, okay, okay,” was how smiling faces greeted me every morning for nearly two years. I was the Norwegian Refugee Council camp coordinator¹ for Kalma IDP camp, east of Nyala in South Darfur. Kalma is currently home to 93,000 IDPs – individuals with the usual range of skills, aspirations and hopes but who, because of violence and conflict, currently need assistance to survive.

Kalma camp is some 7km long and 1.5km at its widest. It was established in February 2004 when the authorities relocated IDPs from an existing camp near Nyala. By July 2004, when NRC was asked by Sudan’s Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) to coordinate humanitarian efforts, the population of the camp had increased to 46,000. Since then, Kalma’s population has more than doubled.

NRC was party to a tripartite agreement with the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and HAC, with HAC taking the role of camp manager and NRC that of camp coordinator. The day-to-day work of camp coordination involved daily dialogue with and mediation between IDPs, participating/partner agencies and international agencies such as the African Union Civilian Police (AU CivPol), the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)² and OCHA.

NRC’s work follows the precepts of international humanitarian law (including respect for and advocating in favour of the provision of humanitarian space and access to beneficiaries), international human rights law, the SPHERE Standards³ and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.⁴ NRC’s approach in Kalma was underpinned by NRC’s Camp Management Toolkit⁵ which provides a framework for identifying issues, action points, partners/stakeholders, problems, outputs and results.

The importance of identifying and understanding stakeholders is a key

issue for the success of coordination. Kalma has three major stakeholders:

- 93,000 IDPs represented formally by 650 sheikhs
- Government of Sudan (GoS) represented primarily by HAC and the police
- national and international NGOs, plus UN agencies

NRC did not have Memoranda of Understanding with partner agencies on a permanent basis, although these were occasionally drawn up for specific projects, such as non-food item distribution or hygiene campaigns. All camp coordination activities aim to improve living conditions but the main role for the camp coordinator was to provide sufficient humanitarian space in the camp and to ensure collaboration of the IDPs. We managed this by establishing multi-faceted communication between all stakeholders. Sometimes this was put under great pressure, particularly by the high levels of insecurity in the camp.

Social workers were trained in protection issues especially those affecting women, such as firewood collection, sexual harassment and abuse, domestic violence, high food prices and registration problems. These concerns were passed on to the coordination team. NRC had a rule of hiring at least 50% women when hiring day workers – for the same salary as men – and was also the first NGO to hire female guards.

Humanitarian response in a camp like Kalma is a complex humanitarian operation, requiring proper management, solid funding, resilience and diplomatic abilities, as well as a clear understanding of the humanitarian issues and of international humanitarian law and standards.

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1. This job is called ‘camp manager’ in the NRC Camp Management Toolkit.
2. www.unmis.org
3. www.sphereproject.org
4. www.brook.edu/fp/projects/idp/gp_page.htm
5. www.nrc.no/camp (currently being revised)

On 3 September 2006 NRC was informed that it was being suspended from working in Kalma IDP camp. On 9 November, after 64 days of suspension, NRC decided to withdraw from South Darfur. On 21 November NRC was officially evicted, on grounds of making false reports of rape and of creating divisions between the IDP community and the government.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) works to provide assistance and protection to refugees and displaced people in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

www.nrc.no/engindex.htm

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is part of NRC and is an international non-profit organisation that monitors internal displacement caused by conflicts.

www.internal-displacement.org

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