

## 8.7 Darfur refugee emergency

**Did you know?**  
There are 10 million refugees around the world.

In this unit you'll find out about an example of international refugees.

### Aisha's story, from a refugee camp in Chad

I'm 27. My three children have diarrhoea. We live in one hut with my sisters, Neimad and Mona. My husband is dead. Neimad's husband was taken away. We haven't seen him for months.

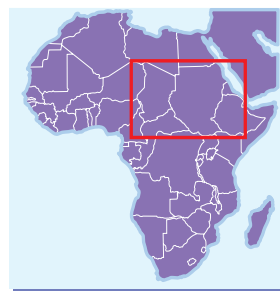
We had to leave our village when the Janjaweed attacked us. The village had 7000 goats, 1000 donkeys, 2000 camels, 3000 horses and many thousands of chickens. They took the men away, and then we heard shots. The women stayed.

The Janjaweed said: "Why do you stay? We killed your men." Later I went to where the shots came from and found my husband's body.

*This is a real story – though the names have been changed.*



Aisha is just one victim of the Darfur refugee crisis. By early 2006, there had been three years of civil war in Sudan's western region of Darfur. The UN said events in Darfur could have 'a devastating impact' on Chad and Sudan – two of the poorest countries in the world – as well as on the refugees.



### The two sides

Sudan's government, and the Arab militias that support it, especially the Janjaweed. They're accused of war crimes against Darfur's black African population.

Black African Darfuris. There are two main rebel groups – the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), the biggest, and the Justice and Equality Movement (Jem). The SLA was formed in 2002 to defend black African farmers against the Arab militias.



### Details of the crisis

- ◆ 180 000 Darfuris have been killed.
- ◆ 200 000 have fled to next-door Chad, and live in refugee camps
- ◆ Up to 1.8 million live in camps within Darfur
- ◆ News reports say militias have killed, raped, and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes
- ◆ Hundreds of villages have been burnt (see right)



### What's the fighting about?

The black African Darfuris say that Sudan's government favours the ruling Arab elite in the north of the country. Both groups are Muslims, but the Darfuris say that as non-Arabs they suffer discrimination.

There has been tension in Darfur for many years over land and grazing rights. In 2003, rebels started attacking government targets. The government struck back. It admits supporting 'self-defence' militias, but says it doesn't support the Janjaweed.

Refugees from Darfur say that following air raids by government aircraft, the Janjaweed ride into villages on horses and camels, slaughtering men, raping women, and stealing or burning whatever they can find.

### Refugees in Chad

Refugees fled to Chad, seeking safety. They arrived in a remote, desert region where water is in short supply. They made rough shelters, often just yards from the border – still within reach of raiding militias. In 2004, The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) moved most of the refugees to camps a safe distance from the border.

The UNHCR and other aid agencies built the camps to provide everything from family shelters to wells, toilets, clinics, and schools. Twelve camps were built by the summer of 2005. Emergency airlifts flew thousands of tonnes of tents, blankets, plastic sheeting, soap and other relief items.

Many refugees remain camped along a 600-km stretch of the border and are still vulnerable to attacks from Sudan.

No one knows if or when the refugees will be able to go home. ▲ *Safe at last?*



▲ *Fleeing to Chad.*



▲ *Safe at last?*

### What's being done in Darfur?

Lots of aid agencies are working in Darfur, but they can't get access to wide areas. They say the government blocks their movements by demanding visas. Aid workers have warned that many thousands are at risk of starvation and disease in the camps, with 1 million children threatened by malnutrition.

Peace talks keep failing. The lives of thousands of people are being ruined.

### Activities

- 1 Describe the background to the conflict in Darfur.
- 2 Why do you think the conflict has gone on for so long without being resolved?
- 3 Why did the UNHCR move the refugees who had fled into Chad?
- 4 Why do you think the government of Chad relied upon the UNHCR for emergency relief and aid?
- 5 What do you think might be some of the effects on Chad of such a large number of refugees?
- 6 Find out about another example of international refugees. Compare and contrast this example with the situation in Darfur and Chad.

**Did you know?**  
An all-star charity concert *Voices for Darfur* was held to raise money for the refugees.

