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Development Objective: Supporting early recovery in Central and West Darfur

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Cover Photo: A participant in one of the project's business training courses holds up his certificate of completion.

RESOURCES, LIVELIHOOD AND SECURITY IN DARFUR – RLS DARFUR [USAID/OFDA-NEF]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	iii
1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Progress According to Objectives	2
3. Activities and Accomplishments.....	2
3. Overall Project Performance	10
4. Overall Cost Effectiveness.....	11

Attachment:

1. Project Success Story
2. RLS Mid-Term Assessment Report, June 2014

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DCPSF	Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund
HAC	Humanitarian Action Committee
HIH	Hand in Hand Organization for Peace and Development
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NEF	Near East Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RESP	Resources, Economic Security and Peace Project
RLS	Resources, Livelihoods and Security Project
SOHA	Sudanese Organization for Humanitarian Assistance
SVA	Supra-Village Association
ToT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

1. Executive Summary

The Resources, Livelihoods, and Security (RLS) Project focuses on promoting peaceful and participatory economic recovery and food security among IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable populations in Central and West Darfur through micro-enterprise development, income generating activities, and agricultural development designed to increase income, create jobs, and diversify household revenue. The project operates in 25 villages in 7 localities. It builds on the organizational structures, community mobilization, and collaborative planning established under NEF's Resources, Economic Security and Peace (RESP) Project supported by DCPSF. The Supra-Village Associations established under RESP continue to be integrally involved in the planning, implementing and monitoring of RLS activities. NEF's local implementation partners are Hand-in-Hand (HiH) and the Sudanese Organization for Humanitarian Aid (SOHA).

Significant progress was made in the project's second year, particularly in training and promoting food security prior to the rainy season. Key accomplishments include:

- 1557 people – 58% women - took part in 40 small business development training workshops. Monitoring is showing business viability rates of 65-70% with reported monthly profits ranging from \$150 to \$250 per month. The average output costs for training and business start up support was \$265 per participant, showing this activity area to be highly effective.
- 2500 people – 48% female - received seeds and tools as part of 10 seed fairs targeting 24 villages (111.5 MT of seeds and 1295 tools distributed). The average output cost for seed fairs was \$44 (seeds, logistics, casual staff) and the average value of farmers' crops was just under \$1400. This activity area is also highly effective.
- An increase in food self-sufficiency of 32% was achieved amongst surveyed farmers (compared to the project target of 28.75%).
- The project's farmer-to-farmer approach is being viewed by the Ministry of Agriculture as a model for other agriculture development initiatives.
- The mid-term assessment concluded that "the project has demonstrated conclusively that recovery can take place where reconciliation, peacebuilding, participatory community mobilization, and cooperation with authorities and line ministries offer a nurturing environment".

The project benefits those who depend on agriculture and livestock to earn livelihoods as well as those living in towns and camps. As such, it has generated high interest in local communities, including among conflicting groups: farmers, pastoralists, rebel groups, native administration, and government leaders and ministries.

2. Progress According to Objectives

Sub-sector	Indicators & Targets	Project Target	Achieved Year 1	Yr 2 target	Yr 2 reached	Cumulative Target	Cumulative Reached
Objective 1 (Impact 1): To establish and/or support viable livelihoods (farming, livestock, non-farm) for conflict affected and returnee populations and IDPs, in support of early recovery in West (& Central) Darfur.							
Economic Asset Development	Number of people assisted through economic asset development activities	2750	773	1500	1557	2200	2330
	Number and percent of people using economic assets created to support their livelihood pattern	2350 (85%)	0	1500	908	1000	908
Objective 2 (Impact 2): To promote sustained food security for conflict affected, IDPs and returnee populations of West Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production.							
Seed systems and Agricultural Inputs	(Projected) increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to distributed seed systems/agricultural input activities	3.45 months (28.75%)	n/a	3.45 months (28.75%)	5.38 months (32%)	3.45 months (28.75%)	5.38 (32%)
	Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities	4000	4000	3000	3000	7000	7000
Livestock Production	Number of animals benefitting from or affected by livestock activities	375,000	3154	75,000	50,080	Being revised	53,240
	Number of people benefiting from livestock activities	1000	973	1000	1938	2000	2911
Pest and Pesticides	Number of people trained in pest and pesticide management.	125 ¹	125	0	0	125	125
	Number of beneficiaries practicing appropriate crop protection procedures.	4680	610	4100	4350	4680	4960
	Number (estimated) of hectares protected from pests/diseases.	11,907	TBD	11,907	11,675	11,907	11,675
Total Beneficiaries (non-duplicative)		6650	5436		3397		8833

3. Activities and Accomplishments

Objective 1: To establish and/or support viable livelihoods (farming, livestock, non-farm) for conflict affected and returnee populations and IDPs.

Subsector 1: Economic Asset Development

Indicators & Targets	Baseline	Project Target	Target Year 2	Achieved Year 2	Achieved Cumulative
Objective 1 (Impact 1): To establish and/or support viable livelihoods (farming, livestock, non-farm) for conflict affected and returnee populations and IDPs, in support of early recovery in West (& Central) Darfur.					
Number of people assisted through economic asset development activities	0	2750	1500	1557	2330
Number and percent of people using economic assets created to support their livelihood pattern	0	2350 (85%)	1500	908	908

Baseline data collected in each community showed a strong need for livelihood support for those without access to land or livestock (particularly IDPs and returnees), and for those who needed additional income during months of food insecurity. The project has addressed

¹ This is the number of people directly trained through the project. In turn, they have shared their knowledge with other farmers in their communities through the farmer-to-farmer approach.

this need through business development training and financial support for business startup that resulted in the establishment of over 900 microenterprise and income-generating initiatives.

Activity 1.1 Conduct business development management training. During Year 2, 1557 people were trained in 40 community-level workshops (58% women, 23% IDPs, 35% returnees) held in three clusters: Nertiti, Garseilla, Abata, Sulu, Traige, Kereinek and Zalingie. One workshop included 20 people with disabilities. Business training workshops target two groups of participants: those who want to start or expand micro-enterprises, and those who want to start or expand income-generating activities (IGAs). IGAs are considered to be smaller scale initiatives that are generally in rural areas and home-based.

Activity 1.2 Facilitate business plan development. Those trained in micro-enterprise development are required to develop business plans. These plans are reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of NEF staff, partners, and community members. Selection criteria identified in NEF’s Contribution Fund Manual are used by the Committee to determine which of the proposed businesses should be supported. During Year 2, 1050 business plans were reviewed by the Selection Committee and 908 were approved for funding.

Activity 1.3 & 1.4 Facilitate creation of micro-enterprises and income-generating opportunities. To help ensure successful start-ups, the items needed for all business are procured and distributed by project staff, rather than cash grants being provided directly to beneficiaries. A Procurement Committee, with representation from NEF, local government (Taxation Department), the Native Administration, Supra Village Associations (SVAs) and project beneficiaries. This committee is responsible for overseeing the procurement and distribution of the diverse range of items required for starting all of the businesses as per NEF procurement guidelines. During Year 2, 908 people were provided with start-up support. There was considerable diversity in the types of businesses that were launched. Figure 1 shows the types and numbers of successful project-supported enterprises in Zalingei.

Figure 1: Successful business projects in Zalingei

No.	Successful Business Projects in Zalingei	Number of Projects
1	Crops (sorghum, millet, groundnuts) trading business	80
2	Oil, sugar, essential goods trading	72
3	Livestock and poultry	19
4	Tea making	18
5	Cheese making	6
6	Local Restaurant project	10
7	Rickshaw, motorbike spare parts business	5
8	Ceramics and masonry work	1
9	Hairdressing/Barber	2
10	Cell phone scratch-off cards	6
Total		219

Assessment and Surveillance

Data: Results for this objective are monitored by use of the following processes (i) information recorded during the training workshops for each training participants that is subsequently entered into a database and used to track all further support to each participant, (ii) workshop evaluation forms, (iii) the business plans, and (iv) records of the scoring of business plans according to project criteria. A business monitoring forms is then used to document the success and impact of the income-generating and micro-enterprise activities. The results were reviewed and confirmed as part of the mid-term assessment conducted in March/April 2014.



An IDP woman is starting a microenterprise raising goats to help her better provide for the 7 children she is raising on her own. The project provided her with business training, goats and animal health advice to help her launch this initiative.

Successes, Constraints and Adjustments:

There has been a very positive response to the project's economic asset development activities. Mid-term assessment results show that community leaders view the opportunities to start/expand microenterprises as being critically important, particularly for the more economically marginalized groups in their areas. Monitoring conducted of 313 funded IGA/enterprise projects in Zalingei showed that 219 (70%) were operating successfully; and that 65% were operating successfully in Delaige and Sulu clusters. Beneficiaries report that their businesses are having a transformative effect on their lives - income is being reinvested in their businesses, used to pay for school fees and improve living standards, and saved for emergency situations. There are many cases of beneficiaries expanding their businesses and hiring employees, thereby contributing to the local economy.

However, due to delays encountered in the transfer of project funds, the provision of business start-up support for approximately 500 people, scheduled for September, had to be postponed. As a result, just over 900 people started businesses in Year 2 compared to the goal of 1500.

Successful Entrepreneurs: *Tamadur, a 30-year old mother of 7 children lives with her husband in the Kanjomiya neighborhood in Zalingei. Her husband's income is very limited and doesn't cover her family's daily needs such as food and water. There are even times when Tamadur's family goes without real meals for several consecutive days. In this dire situation she thought of trying to start a small business, but there were little to no resources to help her get started; community members in a position to possibly lend her money demanded a guarantee of repayment. Then she came in contact with NEF. She related enthusiastically when interviewed, "Thank God, NEF came through and helped us with funding. It was a lifesaver! With the assistance provided by NEF, our standard of living has significantly improved. After covering all the family's necessities, I have over 3000 SDG in savings... With our steadily accumulating savings, I am planning to*

expand my grain trading business. You are such humane people!”

Another successful entrepreneur is Zeinab, a widow with nine children from Sulu cluster, who also started a business selling grain. The project provided her with 4 sacks of millet and food oil. She sold these at a small market shop in Sulu and continues to re-invest in the business. “Within a few months I was able to cover all of the school expenses for my children and I was able to noticeably improve my family’s standard of living . . . I am amazed that I now have savings in a short period of time and am expecting more success in my project.”

Taja now has a successful cheese-making business in Zalingei. She says that, as a result of her participation the project, she is now not facing any problems. “For the first time in my life I find myself able to save money for tomorrow and for emergency situations.”

Objective 2: To promote sustained food security for conflict affected IDPs and returnee populations of West Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production. [Seed systems, agriculture inputs, livestock, integrated pest management]

Baseline data showed a strong need for agriculture inputs and training (agriculture extension), activities that would alleviate sources of conflict between different groups, and activities to support livestock, particularly those that would benefit pastoral communities. A regional shortage of seeds was affecting almost all small-holder farmers, and a lack of access to information about improved agriculture practices. The more economically marginalized (including women-headed households, IDPS and returnees) also showed a strong need for basic agricultural tools and plows to prepare the soil for planting. It was also clear that pastoralist communities had not been reached by development efforts in target areas. Most had minimal, if any, access to animal health services and were increasingly affected by the increasing expansion of farmed land.

The RLS project has addressed these needs by through a comprehensive support program for small-holder farmers (provision of inputs to almost twice the number of originally targeted beneficiaries, multi-layered agriculture training, support for government extension services), with particular attention to marginalized groups, and targeted interventions for pastoralists. NEF has worked in close cooperation with relevant Ministries in the Central Darfur government in planning and implementing these initiatives.

Subsector 2: Seed Systems and Agricultural Inputs

Indicators & Targets	Baseline	Project Target	Year 2 Target	Achieved Year 2	Achieved Cumulative
Objective 2 (Impact 2): To promote sustained food security for conflict affected, IDPs and returnee populations of West Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production.					
(Projected) increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to distributed seed systems/agricultural input activities	3-4 months of food insecurity	3.45 months (28.75%)	3.45 months (28.75%)	5.38 months (32%)	5.38 months (32%)
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities	0 (these inputs were indicated as high priority needs)	4000	3000	3000	7000

Activity 2.1 Facilitate farmer-to-farmer extension and establish on-farm trial plots.

The foundation for farmer-to-farmer training was established in Year 1 with: a training of trainers course for 125 lead farmers from the 25 village communities was designed collaboratively with the Ministry of Agriculture; and demonstration plots being identified in most villages where lead farmers implement the new techniques learned at the training course and share the techniques with their learning group members; each lead farmers organized approximately 5 Farmer Field School (FFS) groups and the majority hosted field days and some organized exchange visits with other FFS groups. Fertile community-owned land was allocated to newcomers and the most vulnerable in 11 villages.

A survey was carried out in December 2013 and early January 2014 of 250 farmers that are part of the FFS in all of the 25 target villages (10 farmers per village). The results showed that 86% percent of the farmers attended FFS sessions in their areas and 67% of the farmers attend the sessions regularly. Half the farmers surveyed reported a positive shift in their attitudes toward new farming techniques as a result of the sessions (Oct-Dec, 2013)

During Year 2, over 100 on-farm demonstration sessions of good farming practices were organized by LF for almost 2000 farmers. Topics covered included crop rotation, agro-forestry, terracing techniques, and new crop introduction to address the adverse effects of climate change.

Activity 2.2 Distribute agricultural inputs, seeds and basic implements through voucher system and agricultural fairs.

In October, 500 beneficiaries (identified as the most vulnerable in their communities by community leaders) received vouchers valued at SDG 330 for purchasing certified seeds of common vegetable crops including tomatoes, onions and broad beans. This amount is enough to plant an area of 3 feddan.

The success of the distribution of seeds and tools in Year 1 led to a second round of seed fairs (12) being held in May and June in nine clusters. Over 2500 project beneficiaries received seeds that were identified as the most desirable such as Sesame and Millet.

The above-mentioned survey also assessed production and increased food security achieved through project activities. The results indicated a **32% increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency** due to RLS project's distributed seed systems and agricultural input activities. On average, there was an **approximately 60% increase in amount of land farmed** (sorghum, millet, and groundnut being the primary crops) with the **households' average yield for cereal crops seeing a 59% overall increase**. NEF-assisted farmers saw a 32% increase in Sorghum crop yields, 137% increase in Millet crop yields, and 127% increase in Groundnut crop yields. Yields were substantially higher than for neighboring non-beneficiary farmers; with reports of over three times more.

Central Darfur farmer Assadiq Mohammad Sheikh, a 33 year-old father of three, had been displaced from his village near Zalingei since 2005. In 2010, he was finally able to return. He reflects, “We had been leading a very harsh and unforgiving life since we returned to our village. We have relied primarily on farming for our livelihood. We used to be continually plagued by either a lack of seeds or no seeds at all with which to cultivate our fields. NEF is the first organization to provide us with seeds since we returned. Personally, I am so happy that this year I am finally able to go to my land and actually grow something on it! Fortunately, this year we are having abundant rain; with the seeds that I obtained from NEF I was able plant a robust crop. At last, now I feel quite assured and content that my family won’t suffer this year from any lack of millet or sorghum. We are so grateful.

Activity 2.3 Produce seeds and promote seed production. Over 120 youth with farming backgrounds have been selected from potential seed producing villages including Nertiti, Zalingei, Garseila, Delaige, Traige and Mornei and organized into 12 groups. Each group member was scheduled to receive a microenterprise grant to cover production costs and the establishing of retail outlets for agricultural inputs including seeds in his or her village area. This activity was delayed will now be completed during Year 3.

Activity 2.4 Develop conventional and non-conventional agricultural water resources.

NEF, in collaboration with the Supra-Village Associations (SVAs), local leaders, and Water and Environment Sanitation (WES), completed the water works needs assessment survey and identified several types of priority community water initiatives including the rehabilitation of shallow wells. Initiatives include renovating wells and equipping them with simple fuel powered pumps, and excavating dykes and water yards (*haffeurs*) for seasonal water harvesting. Supplies have been procured and a Water Committee has been established in each village cluster. The Committees will receive capacity building training on organizational management of the water facilities; however, the installation of water projects and the basic rehabilitation training was delayed due to the interruption of the fund transfer and will now be carried out in Year 3.

Subsector 3: Livestock Production

Indicators & Targets	Baseline	Project Target	Year 2 Target	Achieved Year 2	Achieved Cumulative
Objective 2 (Impact 2): To promote sustained food security for conflict affected, IDPs and returnee populations of West Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production.					
Number of animals benefitting from or affected by livestock activities	0 (support for this sector was also identified as a high need)	375,000	75,000	50,083	53,237
Number of people benefitting from livestock activities	0	1000	750	1938	2911

Activity 3.1 Conduct participatory value chain analysis

This was completed in Year 1.

Activity 3.2 Improve community pasture areas through enclosures and enrichment planting

In Year 1, SVA Pasture Sub-Committees in all 9 localities identified 10-hectare plots to be used for this purpose. These areas were seeded with seed sourced in South Kordofan each pasture area was demarcated with posts. Vegetation growth was vigorous in most pasture enclosures; it was helpful that a variety of fodder species were planted to ensure diversification. Three pastures were used for grazing too early and the vegetation growth was not sustained throughout the entire plot. However, most were highly utilized by herders and by residents during the dry season when other food sources were scarce. The pastures played a significant role in keeping livestock off of farmers' fields and contributed to reducing a very common cause of conflict between nomads and farmers.

In Year 2, NEF again worked in collaboration with MOA department of the Range and Pasture Department and brought in 1.5 tons of certified pasture seed from South Kordofan to over-seed a total of 86 hectares of pasture area. NEF has also worked with the SVAs to assist them to play an increased role in monitoring use and discouraging early grazing in these areas. Pasture growth was abundant in Year 2.

Activity 3.3 Provide training and targeted support for livestock interventions and marketing. Technical training and business training and business start-up support was provided in cheese-making during Year 2. In Year 3 it is expected that additional technical support will also be provided in the areas of animal fattening, goat re-stocking, fodder production, and the preservation of drylands.



Project-trained paravets are providing welcomed support in places where it was very difficult to access animal health services.

Activity 3.4 Training of community paravets to establish community-based services.

During Year 2, the MoA Veterinarian Department continued to work closely with NEF staff to support the 25 project-trained para-veterinarians in their work to provide quality services to all nine clusters. The paravets received an additional quarter of their drug supplies and continued to be guided by RLS staff to become more business oriented in order for their work to be sustainable. In Year 2 the paravets started paying for drugs received and are increasingly charging for their services. In total, 50,100 large

and small animals were treated and over 1900 people benefited from these services during Year 2.

This component has been well received by communities. Results of focus group discussions during the mid-term evaluation showed that “the creation of 25 new technicians to serve livestock health needs reduced local vulnerability as many people no longer need to venture into insecure areas to obtain assistance”.

Subsector 4: Integrated Pest Management

Indicators & Targets	Baseline	Project Target	Year 2 Target	Achieved Year 2	Achieved Cumulative
Objective 2 (Impact 2): To promote sustained food security for conflict affected, IDPs and returnee populations of West Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production.					
Number of people trained in pest and pesticide management.	None to minimal knowledge about IPM practices	125	125	125	125
Number of beneficiaries practicing appropriate crop protection procedures.	0	4680	4100	4354	4964
Number (estimated) of hectares protected from pests/diseases.	0	11,907	11,907	11,675	11,675

Activity 4.1 Training of Trainers on Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

This activity was successfully completed in Year 1. Those trained continued to teach and share skills they learned with other farmers under the close supervision of both a MoA representative and The NEF agriculture specialist.

Activity 4.2 and 4.3 Focus Groups develop community-level IPM action plans and provision of Technical Assistance.

The goals and targets for this sector have been achieved. IPM was the topic of 68 Farmer field School sessions conducted throughout the project sites. Almost 3000 people participated in these sessions and, as a result, 11,675 hectares are now under at least one form of IPM. According to the survey conducted in late December/early January, the most commonly used IPM techniques were early sowing of seeds and crop rotation.

The impact of the RLS IPM activities extends beyond direct project beneficiaries. In early 2014, one of the IPM trained farmers alerted the Ministry of Agriculture to an infestation of white fly that he was able to identify in his onion fields as a result of the training. The Ministry was able to mobilize a response that helped to limit crop damage for hundreds of farmers in the Delaige area.

Assessment and Surveillance Data:

Results for this objective are measured and confirmed by (i) participant information collected during the lead farmer, paravet and IPM training workshops, (ii) participant evaluation forms for all workshops, (iii) lists provided by lead farmers of participants in their Farmer Field Schools and confirmed during monitoring visits by project staff (iv) records that track the distribution of seeds and implements during seed fairs, (v) paravet records of animals treated, and (vi) a survey to determine crop yields and increase in number of months of food security carried out after the harvest. For the 2013 harvest, a survey was conducted of 10 randomly selected farmers from each of 24 villages. The survey data was combined with the results of focus group discussions involving farmers and key beneficiaries. The Mid-Term Assessment process assisted in confirming and provided more nuanced details of project progress.

Successes, Constraints and Adjustments:

Most targets for this objective were exceeded; most notably in the seed and agriculture inputs subsector in which 7000 people benefitted in total from agriculture inputs (compared to the project target of 4000), and food security was increased by almost 2 months more than targeted (5.38 months versus the target of 3.45).

The Mid-Term Assessment also found that, in respect to the revitalization of agricultural extension services through collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture:

“in Central Darfur NEF has become a de facto implementing partner of the Ministry, which lacks sufficient resources to implement programs. An innovative element in the extension activities underway is the emphasis on farmer-to-farmer learning, with project-trained lead farmers taking command in organizing Agricultural Learning Groups within their communities. These lead farmers have helped disseminate new agriculture practices on a wider scale.”

More recently, NEF has learned that the Ministry will be using the project’s farmer-to-farmer approach as a model for other agriculture development initiatives to follow.

The project’s interventions aimed at pastoralist communities have also been important. Few other formal development efforts in Central Darfur have addressed the livelihood needs of pastoralists; there has typically been much more focus on agriculture development. Nor have pastoralists generally been brought into structured conversations with resident populations. Both of these factors appear to be distinguishing the RLS project in the eyes of communities and government.

The only indicator not on track to be met for this objective is the ‘number of animals benefiting from or affected by livestock interventions’ – this is in spite of the implementation of all related activities. It appears there was a miscalculation in the number of animals that could be treated by each project-trained paravet. NEF will be discussing a revision of this target number with the AOR.

4. Overall Project Performance

Overall progress for RLS continues to have been strong. Although some activities did not meet target numbers for Year 2, the project has exceeded the projected total number of beneficiaries by 32%. At this point, it appears that all project activities will be implemented within the extended project timeframe.

NEF has consistently disaggregated results by gender and IDPs. RLS has succeeded in reaching the target of 50% female beneficiaries, but is below the target of 33% IDP beneficiaries, and instead reached 25% by the end of Year 2. The number and percent of returnees (target = 33%) is also broken out where possible. However, ongoing conflicts in Central Darfur and resultant displacements have led to challenges in collecting accurate data especially as some returnees are reluctant to identify themselves in this way for safety reasons. By the end of Year 2, the data that has been collected shows that approximately 27% of beneficiaries are IDPs but it is likely that a higher percentage has actually been reached.

The Mid-Term Assessment is attached as an appendix to this report. This assessment concluded that, in spite of the challenging environment, the **project’s objectives of**

strengthening livelihoods and enhancing food security in Central Darfur are being successfully attained through “thoughtfully designed, efficiently organized and implemented, and well-received activities”. The evaluators also ascertained that “the project has demonstrated conclusively that recovery can take place where reconciliation, peacebuilding, participatory community mobilization, and cooperation with authorities and line ministries offer a nurturing environment”.

The evaluators highlighted two aspects of the project design that substantially contributed to success achieved to date:

- The community mobilization strategy undertaken by NEF (through the formation and capacity development of inclusive Supra-Village Associations);
- The strategy of building on the DCPSF-funded project (which focused on promoting reconciliation and inclusive, collaborative local-level natural resource management activities); both projects focused the same communities.

5. Overall Cost Effectiveness

Although the inflation rate was significant over the second year of the RLS project, there was not a substantial impact on the activities budget. Due to challenges in transferring funds to Sudan in the latter part of Year 2, planned expenditures on supporting business startups were postponed, leading to under-spending on several budget lines.

Impacts that became visible during Year 2 enabled the following calculations of project effectiveness:

- **Enterprise development support:** The output costs for training workshops and the provision of business start-up grants for entrepreneurs are \$265 per participant (total participants = 908). Business monitoring is showing that entrepreneurs are making up to \$150 - \$250 per month. (market gardens – \$150; tea sellers - \$206; tile cutter - \$250). For those making \$150/month, the return rate of this investment for one year is US\$1 : US\$6.80 for successful businesses (factoring in a 70% business success rate, the rate of return would be US\$1 : US\$4.75)
- **Provision of Agriculture Inputs:** The output costs for seed fairs (seeds, logistics, casual workers, transportation was \$44 per participant (total participants = 7000). The average production value from the crops planted in 2013 was \$1394. The rate of return is US\$1 : US4 \$31.68.

Crop	Average Production	Price/sack (SDG)	Exchange Rate	Total (US\$)
Sorghum	6.17	250	5.9	261
Millet	8.19	350	5.9	486
Groundnut	8.48	450	5.9	647
Total average income				1394

In both of the above cases, the project is showing to be highly effective in achieving its results.

Attachment 1: Success Story

RESOURCES, LIVELIHOODS & SECURITY

Displaced Women in Darfur become Successful Entrepreneurs



Nawal is one of Darfur's 2 million internally displaced refugees. Within 3 months of receiving business start-up support, she has a small, thriving restaurant with 2 employees.

Zalingei, Darfur—Regional violence forced Nawal Al Sanowski, a mother of four, to flee her village. At the time, she never could have imagined it would lead to her becoming a successful restaurant owner. But that is what happened, and today her business is thriving with an average daily income of \$26.

Nawal's success began with tragedy. Separated from her husband, she arrived in the Central Darfur town of Zalingei as the sole breadwinner of her household. Her precarious situation led to her selection by community leaders for a USAID-OFDA funded project that emphasizes the inclusion of women, internally displaced people (IDPs), and youth in activities supporting early recovery efforts in Darfur.

Near East Foundation beneficiaries like Nawal participate in training workshops that help people start or expand income-generating activities. To date, 2,330 beneficiaries have received such business training in 58 workshops

held in 8 village clusters in Darfur. Basic marketing and financial management are among the key topics covered. These concepts assist beneficiaries to assess what factors contribute to the success or failure of their respective enterprises. An important resource for women in Darfur, they make up approximately 54 percent of the workshop participants.

Nawal used a \$230 business start-up grant to open a restaurant, and three months later, it is flourishing. Sharing her newfound success, she hired two women as assistants. Halima and Amina, also IDPs and the sole breadwinners of their households, were trained in pastry making and help with

Nawal's business. "At first, I sold around 2 kilos of pastries a day, but now that's increased to 8 kilos with customers buying them up quickly," she says of her pastries, a customer favorite.

Nawal now earns enough to take care of her family and even plan for the future. Business is so good she is moving to an even better, busier location with greater potential for client base expansion. Though monthly rent for the new location is \$105, Nawal feels her income will allow her business to expand without undue risk.

Khadoj Abdullah is another success story. An orphan responsible for her seven younger siblings, she is an up-and-coming business owner who benefitted from business acumen acquired at NEF workshops. Trading in sorghum and millet, locally produced grains, Khadoj created a niche for herself with the unique way she processes millet, which is very popular among her growing clientele. She also profited by skillfully anticipating her customers' needs during the holy month of Ramadan, supplying them with certain types of chickpeas much sought after during that time. With her increased revenue, Khadoj can now pay for her younger siblings' school tuition.

Nawal and Khadoj are delighted with their turns of fortune and credit the assistance provided by the Near East Foundation for helping them gain financial and social empowerment.



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Attachment 2: RLS Mid-term Evaluation Report

RESOURCES, LIVELIHOODS & SECURITY IN DARFUR



MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

Award #: AID-OFDA-G-12-00205

Project Duration: October 2012 – September 2014

Project Budget: US \$2,696,351

Assessment Team

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Report Prepared for the Near East Foundation by A. Peter Castro

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. METHODOLOGY	5
3. PROJECT CONTEXT AND CONCEPT	6
4. RLS PROJECT PERFORMANCE	10
Introduction.....	10
Objective 1: To establish and/or support viable livelihoods (farming, livestock, non-farm).....	11
Enterprise Development:.....	11
Objective 2: To promote sustained food security	14
Farmer-to-Farmer Extension:	14
Distribution of Agricultural Inputs:	16
Promotion of Local Seed Production:	17
Improvement of Community Pastures through Enclosures and Enrichment Planting:.....	18
Training of Community Paravets:.....	19
Introduction of Integrated Pest Management:	19
5. LESSONS LEARNED.....	20
Supporting Early Recovery:	20
Food Security:	20
Training:.....	21
Community Mobilization:	21
Women’s Participation:	21
Timely Distribution of Inputs:	21
Monitoring and Evaluation:.....	21
NEF Staff Capacity Building:.....	22
Cooperation with Local Authorities:.....	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Resources, Livelihoods and Security (RLS) Project in Darfur is successfully supporting economic recovery and enhancing food security in 25 communities within Central and West Darfur. Despite the numerous logistical and security challenges in the area, the Near East Foundation (NEF) and its national partners have worked effectively and efficiently in an inclusive and participatory manner to promote economic asset development and to improve agricultural and livestock activities, thus strengthening local livelihoods. NEF has accomplished this by:

(1) Restoring livelihoods and markets by providing practical training and support for enterprise development. Over 2,700 people, more than half of them women, participated in business training to assist them in establishing viable microenterprises and other income-generating activities. As of the end of June 2014, 904 trainees had received in-kind start-up grants¹. Subsequently businesses have been successfully launched. An anticipated project extension of approximately 4 months will enable staff to judiciously complete distribution and provide needed participant coaching.

(2) Implementing an inclusive, comprehensive approach to restore smallholder agriculture and increase food security that has resulted in enhanced food stocks through:

- *Distribution of basic agricultural implements, seeds, and other inputs to more than 6,800 recipients through local seed fairs².* Participants have included destitute and disadvantaged households, as well as internally displaced populations and returnees. With the exception of destitute families, the participants provide a cost share for the items.
- *Negotiation with local authorities to provide returnees and landless households with access to farm plots.* NEF staff was able to reach agreements in 11 communities to secure land for destitute families. This action, along with supplying seeds and implements, made it possible for these families to increase their food security.



Farmers use vouchers to purchase tools, such as rakes and hoes, at project seed fairs.

¹ The total number of in-kind grants distributed by the end of the assessment (mid-April 2014) was 600.

² The total number of people who had benefited by the end of the assessment was 4500. During May and June 2014, NEF conducted a second series of seed fairs for 2300 new recipients. The project has now exceeded the project target by 2800.

- *Introduction of improved and climate-resilient agricultural practices, including integrated pest management.* The project trained 5 lead farmers from each of the 25 villages; as a result, these new practices are being used throughout the villages. A follow-up training session on integrated pest management has led to reductions in crop damage.
- *Revitalization of agricultural extension services through collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.* In Central Darfur, NEF has become a de facto implementing partner of the Ministry of Agriculture, which lacks sufficient resources to implement programs. An innovative element in the extension activities underway is the emphasis on farmer-to-farmer learning, with project-trained lead farmers taking command in organizing Agricultural Learning Groups within their communities. These lead farmers have helped disseminate new agriculture practices on a wider scale.

(3) Providing targeted support to pastoralist communities through:

- *Pasture enrichment seeding and construction of temporary enclosures.* The enclosures provide dry season forage for herders, especially nomadic groups, and have proven effective at averting conflict over competition for scarce forage. Approximately 10 hectares are set aside in each of the nine clusters for this activity.
- *Training and certification of para-veterinaries (paravets) for each project community.* Two of the 25 trainees include the first women certified as paravets in Central Darfur. The paravets have directly contributed to the improvement of livestock health, while also making such services more accessible to rural residents.

(4) Developing a positive rapport with authorities and relevant line ministries that has increased access to targeted communities and reduced delays in implementation. The project received a major boost in March 2013 when it received blanket clearance from the security authorities to carry out project activities. This is quite rare and has contributed to the success of the project by eliminating the time-consuming approval process for individual activities.

These major accomplishments of the Resource, Livelihood and Security Project have been complemented by the achievements of another Near East Foundation project that ran concurrently in the same communities: the Resources, Economic Security and Peace Project (RESP), sponsored by the Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund (DCPSF). That project installed SupraVillage Associations, a vehicle for inclusive community mobilization, capacity building, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. The Associations provided a useful foundation for the strengthening livelihoods and promoting food security objectives pursued by the RLS project.

Future Activities and Sustainability

While great progress has been demonstrated, the project areas remain in the early stages of recovery. Continuation of support will help deepen the impact and ensure the sustainability of current achievements. Concurrently, the successes of the RLS project in the 25 participating communities have created demand from neighboring villages to expand this work - the potential exists to significantly broaden the scale of impact utilizing the proven project model. Without complementary efforts aimed at fostering reconciliation, strengthening of civil society, and promoting good governance, Darfur's economic prospects will continue to be vulnerable to disruption due to conflict, instability, and other problems.

1. INTRODUCTION

The RLS Project, which began in October 2012, seeks to foster peaceful and participatory economic recovery and food security among IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable populations in Central Darfur State through microenterprise development, income-generating activities (IGAs), and interventions targeting farmers and pastoralists. RLS operates in 25 villages encompassing seven administrative localities, with project management based in Zalingei township.

This report examines the results, outcomes, and lessons learned to date of the Resources, Livelihoods and Security (RLS) Project in Darfur, funded by USAID/OFDA, and implemented by the Near East Foundation (NEF) with its national partners Hand in Hand Organizations for Peace and Development (HiH) and the Sudanese Organization for Humanitarian Aid (SOHA).

As per the terms of reference, the emphasis of this assessment is on understanding the social processes of the project, rather than on financial accounting or similar aspects of fact verification. Data gathering relied on information obtained from project participants, partners, providers, and other key stakeholders, as well as project monitoring and evaluation data.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is presented as an internal assessment that was carried out in conjunction with an assessment of a second NEF project (RESP) running concurrently in the same villages. Dr. Peter Castro³ is familiar with NEF's activities in Darfur, having served as the lead trainer for two training of trainer (TOT) workshops for the RESP project in Zalingei in 2012 and 2014, respectively. Ms. Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed⁴ was involved in the 2014 RESP TOT workshop as a gender specialist.

Darfur's conflict setting prevents the use of standard project evaluation techniques, such as extensive field visits and travel to non-project communities. Security concerns and the Security Services limited Castro's travel within Darfur to Zalingei town. As a Sudanese national, Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed was able to visit project sites – including in Zalingei cluster (Zalingei), Traige cluster (Kartu, Taleni), Azoum cluster (Sulu) and Moreni cluster (Moreni, Gerndi, Sis, and Serangi) – but also faced some restrictions on her ability to hold meetings and conduct interviews. The team carried out its assessment within these constraints, talking with project participants in focus groups or individually, and holding key informant interviews with project staff, members of partner organizations, and other relevant persons, including members of international organizations such as UNAMID and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Peter Castro travelled to Sudan from March 27 to April 11, 2014 to carry out this study, and was in Zalingei, the capital of Central Darfur, from March 29 to April 7. Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed spent an additional 10 days in Central Darfur visiting field sites.

³ Dr. Castro has more than 30 years experience as a practitioner and academic dealing with development issues in East Africa and other areas. He has served as a project evaluator for USAID, the UNDP, and others. He is on the faculty of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

⁴ Ms. Mohamed has extensive experience in Sudan as a development practitioner and evaluator, specializing in gender issues.

3. PROJECT CONTEXT AND CONCEPT

Darfur continues to be a volatile area since large-scale violence and disruption erupted in 2003. More than 3.5 million Darfurians are still severely affected by ongoing conflict and insecurity, including 2 million who are internally displaced.⁵ The region, once a self-sufficient producer of staples and a major livestock supplier, is now characterized by widespread poverty and chronic food insecurity. Nearly two-thirds of its residents fall below the poverty line, among the highest rates in Sudan.⁶ Previously limited infrastructure and social services have deteriorated, further undermining Darfur's economic capacity. Additionally, climate change poses a major threat to the region's agrarian livelihoods and social foundation. Years of negotiations have yet to bring an end to predatory violence and unrest in the region, which is as large as Spain.

Despite these formidable challenges, many Darfurian communities seek to restore their social fabric through reconciliation and consensual conflict resolution,⁷ while also pursuing broadly based economic betterment.



Supra-Village Association were established by NEF in each cluster to guide, oversee and sustain project activities. Members meet regularly to discuss community priorities, participant selection, land distribution and other components of the RLS project.

⁵ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot (30 April 2014)."

⁶ *Developing Darfur: A Recovery & Reconstruction Strategy 2013-2019*, prepared on behalf of the Darfur Regional Authority by multiple agencies.

⁷ Jérôme Tubiana, Victor Tanner, and Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil, *Traditional Authorities' Peacemaking Role in Darfur*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Studies, 2012.

The RLS Project provides an ambitious and effective vehicle to support Darfurian aspirations for peace and recovery.

RLS shares a unique institutional structure and mobilization strategy with another NEF project running concurrently: the Resources, Economic Security and Peace (RESP) Project, detailed in the following section, sponsored by the Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund (DCPSF). Governing structures known as SupraVillage Associations, formed through the RESP Project, serve as a vehicle to help implement and maintain the activities of the RLS Project.

The RLS Project seeks to strengthen livelihoods and food security among conflict-affected populations, including returnees and IDPs, in Central and West Darfur, with the goal of promoting early recovery of agriculture, livestock, and small businesses. RLS's design and implementation contains several distinctive and innovative features:

- **Economic asset development** is introduced through participatory training workshops offering practical guidance in marketing analysis, bookkeeping, and financial management. The project supports both already existing and start-up enterprises. There are two tracks: **microenterprises**, which include shop- and urban market-based activities; and **income-generating activities**, involving smaller-scale initiatives based in households or rural areas. Participants develop their own feasibility analyses and business plans, which are reviewed by a Procurement Committee consisting of project staff, SVA representatives, and local authorities. Approved plans receive in-kind material support through the RLS project. **Women constitute more than half of the 2,750 trainees.**
- **Asset recovery and food security** are promoted through the RLS project's distribution of **basic agricultural implements, seeds, and other inputs via seed and tool fairs**. The technical aspects of seed selection and delivery have been carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. In selecting participants, the SVAs and local authorities have included destitute and disadvantaged families, including female-headed households. Project participants who receive support must engage in some modest cost sharing, but locally designated poor households are exempt from this requirement. Once again, the Ministry of Agriculture furnishes assistance in quality control. More than 4,500⁸ people have reportedly benefited from this input and seed distribution through the fairs, and their new crops have helped to extend their food stocks.
- **Locally sourced seeds** provide agricultural inputs and are an economic development opportunity for young farmers, more than 120 of whom have been selected as suppliers.
- **Agricultural extension services are reinvigorated** through farmer-to-farmer learning conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. The RLS Project initiated this by training seven Ministry of Agriculture officers, along with 125 community members (with women making up one-fourth the total) selected to serve as **'lead farmers'** by their SVAs and local authorities.⁹ The lead farmers each trained 15 to 20 others, who constituted **Agricultural Learning Groups**. The lead farmers and their groups served as networks for

⁸ 6800 as June 30, 2014

⁹ Another three individuals from national NGOs also received training.

spreading extension information. Participants in the distribution of farm implements and seeds also participated in extension activities, including the learning groups.

- **Livelihood support for nomadic herding activities** occurs through the project's sponsorship of pasture enrichment seeding and temporary enclosures, which are opened for dry season usage. Each of the nine clusters set aside approximately 10 hectares for this activity. NEF obtained its initial seed supply from South Kordofan, as local sources were unavailable. Communities are now collecting seed from the restored pastures to extend the enrichment planting.
- **Para-veterinary training supports improved livestock health and production.** RLS trained a para-veterinarian from each of the participating communities. These 25 certified paravets include the first two women ever certified as such in Central Darfur State. This activity is also part of the RLS Project's enterprise development component. The paravets received both technical and business training, as well as assistance in obtaining veterinary drugs. Central Darfur's Department of Animal Wealth collaborated in the training and certification. To foster the sustainability of this activity, community members must pay small fees for services (an average of US\$.50) which support the replenishing of drug and equipment supplies.

Interviews with community members revealed their strong support for these interventions, whose value are readily visible to them. The RLS Project has involved close collaboration with line ministries involved with agriculture and livestock issues, enhancing the overall delivery of training and services. Project reports indicate that government officials support these sentiments, recognizing the tangible contribution to local livelihoods.

RLS and RESP: A Complementary Framework/Approach

The RESP Project, which ran from January 2012 to April 2014, promoted reconciliation and inclusive, collaborative local-level natural resource management activities in the same 25 villages as the RLS project.

Although each project has its own distinct objectives and activities, both undertakings have in common NEF's core value framework of Knowledge, Voice, and Enterprise. It promotes participatory and gender-sensitive capacity building, local mobilization, and livelihood strengthening in marginalized and vulnerable communities. The shared dedication of NEF and its partners to these principles through project concept, implementation, and management have been important factors in the successes achieved by both the RLS and the RESP projects.

Staff commitment to the project has been especially important in Darfur's challenging circumstances, where project personnel and participants constantly face severe hazards, including conflict, insecurity, health risks such as yellow fever, bad roads, and erratic weather. NEF's long involvement in Sudan, where it has operated since 1978, has contributed as well to the success of the RLS Projects.

What is impressive is how well the RLS and RESP projects complement one another. The RESP Project established NEF's *modus operandi* for promoting peacebuilding and recovery through

participatory capacity building, inclusive community mobilizing, and effective input delivery. Getting the RESP project fully underway took considerable time, which reflected to a large extent the difficulties of navigating Darfur's complex security apparatus and its conflict setting. Yet NEF's country staff and project personnel learned lasting lessons from this experience – they **developed rapport with governmental officials and local authorities, who became solid supporters of NEF's initiatives in Darfur, including the RLS Project.** NEF and its partners also built a strong rapport with communities participating in the RESP Project by establishing Supra-Village Associations (SVA), multi-stakeholder institutions for mobilizing peacebuilding and sustainable natural resource management. The SVAs incorporate local, formal and informal leadership, but also feature representation from women, youth, and a range of local ethnic groups.



The 25 graduates of the 4 week para-veterinarian training course included the first two women to receive this certification in Darfur. Paravets have treated over 5500 animals to date.

Project personnel further excelled in delivering participatory training based on experiential learning. These trainings offered tools and strategies that community members readily employed in promoting reconciliation, conflict resolution, and natural resource management. For example, the **SVAs utilized their conflict management training to address more than 240 documented disputes.** The RESP Project provided two additional innovations, Local Conventions and Collaborative Land Use Management Plans (CLUMPs), which the SVAs adopted as a means of promoting dialogue among diverse stakeholders, as well as restoring or enhancing local capacity for sustainable resource management. The SVAs carried out

collaborative income-generation as part of these endeavors. The RESP Project's communications strategy included the regular use of radio programming as an educational and awareness-raising tool, reaching an audience in three states. Overall, the RESP Project offered its participant and neighboring communities new ideas, means, and opportunities for adapting positively and peacefully to their physical and social environments.

4. RLS PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Introduction

As detailed in previous sections, **RLS has made significant progress towards achieving the project goals.** Since the project launch in September 2012, NEF and its local partners, HiH and SOHA, have trained over 2,700 people and at least 4,500 people have reportedly benefitted from input and seed distribution through project fairs.

Due to factors outside of project control, such as security-related concerns, RLS activities took time to get fully underway. The staff initially needed to obtain official permission to hold any project activities, including workshops. This situation was remedied when the RLS project obtained blanket approval in March 2013 to carry out its work, underscoring the value of establishing rapport with officials.

Conflict and insecurity were an ever-present source of anxiety. The outbreak of violence during the project period between members of the Misseirya and Salamat tribes proved particularly disruptive. For example, the first seed fairs for two of Mukjar cluster's villages needed to be cancelled and enterprise development workshops have yet to be held in Mukjar cluster due to insecurity in that area.¹⁰ Fighting and insecurity caused pastoralists to enter ahead of schedule four of the enclosed pastures containing enrichment plantings, as they lacked access to their customary grazing grounds.¹¹ Regional conflicts delayed the truck convoy delivering pasture seed from Kordofan and drugs for the paravets.¹² The RLS project was further delayed, particularly its enterprise development activities, in late 2013, when bank transfers were halted for almost two months through the actions of a U.S.-based bank security officer who was not knowledgeable on the terms of Sudan sanctions. A yellow fever outbreak in late 2012, said to be the worst in two decades,¹³ also temporarily slowed down project activities.

NEF and its partners have dealt with these obstacles in a positive and creative manner. When the RLS project received blanket approval for its activities in March 2013, the staff management decided to focus its personnel on agrarian activities to take advantage of the coming wet season.¹⁴ As will be discussed, this proved a sound strategy, as project participants benefited from the training and inputs received during this period. The delay in the transfer of funds further setback allocation of support to approved enterprises. As the RLS project enters

¹⁰ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, January to March, 2014."

¹¹ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, July to September, 2013."

¹² NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, April to June 2013."

¹³ BBC, "Sudan's Yellow Fever Outbreak 'Worst for 20 Years,'" 18 December 2012, online at: www.bbc.com/news/health-20775086

¹⁴ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Annual Report, September 2012 to September 2013."

into its later phase, it needs to prioritize this distribution if participants are to benefit in a timely manner.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE BY OBJECTIVE

Objective 1: To establish and/or support viable livelihoods (farming, livestock, non-farm) for conflict affected and returnee populations and IDPs, in support of early recovery in West (& Central) Darfur

Enterprise Development:

The RLS Project's economic asset development activities consist of two components:

(1) Capacity building for enterprise creation or strengthening.

By April 2014, staff had facilitated 58 workshops on enterprise development attended by 2,750 participants, the majority (54 percent) of them women.¹⁵ IDPs have been significantly represented among the trainees (20%), while youth as a broad category have been involved to a lesser extent.

(2) Providing direct support to individuals to start-up or upgrade their businesses or income-generating activities.

The RLS Project distributed support to 300 participants in the Zalingei areas during December 2013 and January 2014. The staff, working with the Sudanese Humanitarian Commission (HAC), worked to speed up the process so that 600 additional participants received support by the end of June. This acceleration of the economic asset development component is an important accomplishment. The RLS Project needs to continue with this phase, while also providing coaching and other assistance as needed to the microenterprises and income-generating activities that are underway.

As with other aspects of the RLS Project, **NEF has excelled at providing relevant, practical, and timely training based on participatory methods and experiential learning.** Training provides the basis for participants to prepare business plans. Coaching is provided by project staff, who also offer guidance on the market potential of different enterprises based on a value-chain analysis and feasibility study carried out in early 2013. Business plans are submitted to the project and, if approved, are eligible for in-kind support. A member of Hand in Hand Organization stated that the screening and monitoring committee for enterprise development included members of the local business community, whose expertise has been helpful in identifying market constraints. As mentioned earlier, security concerns, conflicts, and other factors delayed implementation of enterprise development. While the screening process itself is time consuming, it is undoubtedly necessary as a way of assessing the candidate's suitability and ensuring transparency in the overall selection process.

¹⁵ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, January to March 2014."



Participants are launching a wide variety of businesses. Nawal started a small restaurant. She now has two employees and an average daily profit of US\$26.

Participants

RLS participants appear to come from a range of socioeconomic situations. Interviews indicated that destitute or disadvantaged households have been included. **To permit participation by returnees and the landless, the project staff negotiated with SVA representatives and local authorities in 11 communities to locate plots for them.**¹⁶

Project recruitment of lead farmers drew heavily on literate individuals, with more than one-third of them having university or secondary school training and less than one-tenth being classified as illiterate.¹⁷ The inclusion of literate, essentially middle class individuals in entrepreneurial development initiatives (training and support for operating or investment capital) has shown to help rebuild local economies.¹⁸

NEF and its partners deserve praise for their community mobilization strategy, which draws on local leadership, while also taking into account issues of equity and inclusion.

¹⁶ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, April to June 2013."

¹⁷ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, March to June, 2013."

¹⁸ James Morton attacked "the absurdity" of development projects in Darfur and elsewhere that attempt to bypass the rural middle class (*The Poverty of Nations*, London: Taurus, 1994, p. 54).

Even where the more educated or 'middle class' have been targeted, they take on the role of disseminating knowledge and serving as role models.

Participant Feedback

Those **participants who have received assistance have been overwhelmingly positive about its impact.** For example, a small shopkeeper in Zalingei town who needed help running his business more efficiently indicated that the business management training was as important as the opportunity to expand his business. He found the five-day training course practical and useful. It introduced him to new ideas on how to account for his money more closely, including calculating daily income. The training also provided information on monitoring inventory, and ways to utilize profits as a means for reinvestment. With the grant that he received, the shopkeeper traveled to Geneina to obtain higher quality goods, such as soap and imported sugar, which he has been able to sell. He hopes to obtain additional items that are in demand locally. In addition, he seeks further training to acquire better bookkeeping skills. One got the sense from the interview that the shopkeeper *gained a specific set of skills and techniques as well as a stimulation of his imagination allowing for greater recognition of opportunities.*

Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed interviewed a woman living in Zalingei who received training through the RLS project. She had been earlier trained in food processing, working in a small unit producing cheese. The participant started making cheese independently, and became known for the high quality of her product. In fact, she has assisted women in other parts of Darfur to make cheese. **The RLS Project has allowed her to turn her skills into a business by providing much needed management skills.** The money earned from selling cheese is helping her to pay school fees for her three daughters and to support one at the university. She emphasized that, through the RLS Project, *her living conditions improved significantly.*



Project Assessor, Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed (left), interviews an RLS participant.

As mentioned earlier, it was not possible to collect detailed information from a representative sample of the enterprises. The assessment team's impression, based on limited discussions with project participants, is that the support has been well received. The participants reported that the RLS Project is helping them to improve or create their businesses. The first enterprises were launched in December 2013. In order to effectively assess their long-term viability, a further assessment should be conducted closer to the end of the project. The impression gained during this assessment is that they are on-track, with high morale among the participants. The RLS Project's monitoring and evaluation staff should be sure to carry out periodic market surveys that allow the performance of the project participants to be seen in their wider economic context. If time permits, the RLS Project may want to compare the performance of its enterprises (which are based on individuals) against that of the collaborative-based enterprises set up as part of the RESP Project to assess the strengths and limitations of each approach.

The future of the enterprises will depend on the creativity and skills of their owners and workers, the wider economic conditions, and the degree of coaching and other support from project staff. Revival of the wider livestock and farming economies will help further the process of local income diversification, as demand for foodstuff, consumer goods, and services increases. Improvements in infrastructure will also enhance access to suppliers, even if it also introduces new competition.

Without efforts aimed at fostering reconciliation, strengthening of civil society, and promoting good governance, however, Darfur's economic prospects will continue to be vulnerable to disruption due to conflict, instability, and other problems.

Objective 2: To promote sustained food security for conflict affected IDPs and returnee populations of West Central Darfur through improved agriculture and livestock production.

The assessment team found that **the RLS Project has initiated several very well designed, efficiently implemented, and highly effective activities to promote increased and sustained food security. The activities include:**

(1) Farmer-to-Farmer Extension.

NEF and its partners have coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture to expand and strengthen this vital service, using a participatory-based farmer-to-farmer learning model. The RLS Project trained 125 community members to serve as lead farmers. Utilizing the SVA agricultural committees as a platform, the lead farmers each trained 15 to 20 others in their areas. These additional trainees came together as an Agricultural Learning Group to promote new farming and land use techniques, such as intercropping, modified crop spacing, water harvesting, and use of donkey plows (with 250 of them distributed to the lead farmers and their groups).

Interviewed SVA members spoke with pride about their involvement in this component. For example, a woman from Abata who is on the SVA agricultural committee stated: "Before we cultivated without anything. Now we understand how to do it. For example, we now know about plant spacing. People didn't understand it, but now they do. We have improved in our farming." A representative from Mukjar told the assessment team: "**Those trained in extension by NEF give us advice about when to plant, monitoring crop growth and health. They advise**

about the soils." Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed recorded the following from a woman farmer whose land is in the Kadlinge valley, South of Zalingei:

"First of all, I would like to thank the Near East Foundation so much for all its services, particularly the agricultural services, beginning with the workshop on the agricultural extension ending with the seeds and agricultural tools distribution... Actually I am one of those who benefited much from the agricultural workshop. The knowledge we've got changed many of the agricultural misconceptions we had... I also have benefited so much from the methods of water harvesting that we learned during the workshop, which helped me considerably in achieving a wonderful and successful farming season, especially considering that the rainy season this year wasn't that good. It is so astonishing that I still have water in my farm, and my plants are still blossoming. So, generally, my agricultural product this year is far better than the last year."



Lead farmer training includes demonstrations in soil enrichment techniques.

The learning groups have sponsored to varying degrees demonstration plots and other means for promoting new ideas and technologies (their integrated pest management campaign will be discussed separately below). The impression gained by the assessment team is that these activities offer local producers new opportunities for improving their operations. Interviews and project reports indicated that not every technique proved immediately effective or popular, such as water harvesting, which was introduced in many areas following an unusually early rainy season.¹⁹ As

¹⁹ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, July to September 2013."

the above example illustrates, however, the value of a new technique became evident later, when conditions shifted. Thus, by widening the repertoire of farming knowledge, the RLS Project is helping participants respond to the uncertainties of local weather.

(2) Distribution of Agricultural Inputs.

The provisioning of inputs, tools, and seeds directly to households by the RLS Project has been very popular. Seed fairs are being used as the distribution mechanisms for these items. The communities have been mobilized through the SVAs, with their agricultural committees assisting in the distribution process and monitoring the results. The project staff wisely ran an initial pilot fair at a village in Mornei cluster, which allowed them to make adjustments to procedures and item distribution before rolling out to the remainder of participating villages.

In the first wave of fairs in May and June 2013, vouchers for seed were valued at US\$50 and implements at US\$60, with recipients expected to contribute about US\$10 as their cost share.²⁰ About 10 percent of the 4,000 participants were reportedly classified as destitute or disadvantaged, so they were not required to pay. Sorghum, millet, peanut, and sesame seeds were distributed in these fairs, which occurred before the onset of the rainy season. The subsequent distribution, prior to the winter planting season, focused on seeds for tomatoes, onions and broad beans. It had 500 participants, who were selected by the SVA executive committees on the basis of need, including IDPs (30 percent of the total) and returnees (10 percent).²¹ The crops planted through the seed fairs generally prospered, and the RLS Project staff's impact analysis indicated that the crops had significantly increased the participants' food stocks.

Interviews and observations generally supported the view that the seed fairs have been successful in raising productivity. A farmer told Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed: **“With the good production this year I will be able to store seed for the next rainy season. My family's food consumption also increased.”** The SVA representatives who met with the assessment team emphasized that the distribution of tools, seeds, and inputs met a significant need in their communities. For example, a representative from Nertiti's SVA stated to the assessment team: **“There was a targeting of widows and vulnerable people, and this helped to improve their lifestyles.”** If anything, a drawback has been that only a limited number of people could be served by the project. Many people still lack basic tools to carry out farming. An SVA member mentioned that “more sites need to be selected for the fairs, since some people currently need to travel long distances to attend them. They cannot afford these items [without subsidies offered by the project].” Ikhlas Eissa Mohamed visited several field sites, where she recorded very positive reactions from project participants. A woman farmer from Wadi Tarobeida, Garseila cluster stated to her:

“I consider myself so lucky, because I attended a NEF workshop on agricultural extension, and I did have some seeds for this agricultural season. I am also one of those who took peanuts seeds. I was so happy that I had the freedom to take whatever seeds I wanted, this is something not often possible when dealing with

²⁰ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, April to June 2013,"

²¹ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, July to September 2013

other organizations that conduct such services. I also had a donkey plow, which helped me so much in cultivating bigger and wider land. It also helped me in achieving significant agricultural products. Before having this plow I used to do the farming process manually, which is so slow and tiring. Thank God!! **This season I was able to have more than 25 sacks of peanuts for the first time in whole my life.**”

The woman farmer from the Kadlinge valley who was quoted earlier praised the RLS Project's unique manner of holding the fairs:

“What is so distinctive about the seed distribution is that every farmer in the seed fair was given the freedom to select and choose the types of seeds they wanted according to the type of soil on their farm. This is something we do appreciate very much, as many organizations have done such seeds fairs, but they don’t usually give us the freedom to select what we want. They usually oblige you to select certain types of seeds with another one. For instance, if you select millet you must take sesame with it, and so on.”

Project participants also pointed out that the seed distributions needed to be viewed in conjunction with farm extension activities, including integrated pest management. **The skills and strategies imparted by RLS’s more comprehensive approach helped increased the output received from the seeds and inputs.**

The seed distributions did encounter some problems. The increasingly erratic nature of the wet season, including variations in when the rains arrive, complicate local planting strategies. Interviewees from a few communities, notably in Nertiti, Triage, Taleni, Kartei, and Sulu stated that the distributions should take place earlier. A representative from Nertiti's SVA told the assessment committee:

“Seeds need to be brought in at a suitable time. Having seeds in a timely manner not only increases production and yields but reduces the damage from pests. It contributes to reduced cutting of trees. Timely planting also reduces conflict. If we cultivate too late, the livestock herders come when the crops are still standing, so conflict result. Another problem with late seed delivery is weeding. A plow has to be hired to get rid of the grass.”

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the representative stressed that the *seed fairs need to be expanded*: "We need animal traction and seed to give to others." Moreover, even those who said they received seeds late still reported increased yields compared to previous years.

(3) Promotion of Local Seed Production.

The RLS Project has viewed local seed sourcing for the seed fairs as an opportunity to assist young farmers. The staff selected more than 120 of them as seed providers, working with agricultural officials to ensure quality.

Project reports have displayed a keen awareness that farmers prefer local seed varieties adapted to their conditions. The aforementioned representative from Nertiti told the assessment team

that NEF needed to make sure that, "The type of seed distributed needs to be suitable to our environment."

The assessment team did not have the opportunity to review first-hand this facet of the project, but the idea is very commendable and appears successful based on project reports.

(4) Improvement of Community Pastures through Enclosures and Enrichment Planting.



Pastoralist groups assist with demarcating boundaries for designated pastureland.

Livestock production has been aided through the seeding of pastures, which are protected by temporary enclosures and then opened for dry season usage, primarily by nomadic herders. This activity has been introduced on a modest scale, usually covering 10 to 12 hectares per cluster. It appears to represent a direct and generally effective way of drawing nomadic pastoralists into interaction with the RLS Project and its other participants. The initial effort was disrupted in four sites when pastoralists arrived earlier than anticipated, compelled to do so by conflict that cut them off from other grazing grounds.²² **This incident illustrates the importance of having grazing reserves, such as those established by the RLS project, as a means of avoiding conflict between herders and farmers,** whose standing crops might end serving as forage.

²² NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, July to September 2013,"

(5) Training of Community Paravets.

Along with enterprise development and seed fairs, the establishment of paravet services has been among the most highly praised contributions of the RLS Project. As an activity, it cross-cuts several sectors and priorities, including economic assessment development (for the 25 trainees, who now have an ongoing business), the revitalized farm extension (promoting improved animal management practices, including early detection of health problems), livestock production (through healthier animals), and food security (the net result of increased and enhanced livestock assets). The fact that only two women were selected to become paravets is indicative of local sensibilities and practices regarding gender roles. At the same time it must be highlighted that these two participants were the first women to be certified as paravets in Central Darfur, indicating that a process of change is underway.

Interviewees were extremely positive about the impact of the paravets. A community representative from Delaige's SVA told the assessment team: "Animal health has improved. Before, when outbreaks of livestock diseases occurred, we would lose animals. Because of treatments, animal deaths have declined. Their health has improved; even weak animals are now gaining weight." A woman from Abata's SVA said: "And now there are paravets. Before we had to go as far as Zalingei. People were vulnerable during travel. Now we have three paravets trained in different areas, so the service is available locally. It is improving our livelihoods. We are very happy; it has improved our lives." A member of Nertiti's SVA executive committee stated: "Regarding paravets, the communities that have them no longer have to travel to town for veterinary services. We need more training of paravets. We have 123,000 animals in our area but only three paravets." Others concurred that **the creation of 25 new technicians to serve livestock health needs reduced local vulnerability, as many people no longer need to venture into insecure areas to obtain assistance.**

(6) Introduction of Integrated Pest Management.

Given the key role of livestock in Darfur's economy, the IPM campaign has not generated the same excitement as the paravets. Nevertheless, the RLS Project participants expressed an appreciation of this activity, which has blended well with the revitalized farm extension service. **The best indicator of its value is the use made of such knowledge.** IPM trainees in Delaige alerted project staff to the presence of white flies in local onion fields. Onion is valued both for home consumption and as a cash crop, and this invasive species can be highly damaging, especially when plants are in their early growth stage.²³ The RLS Project staff informed the Ministry of Agriculture, which took action to halt the outbreak. In contrast to previous infestations, the farmers recognized earlier the presence of the insect and the necessity for prompt action. The onion crop was protected.²⁴

²³ Satti, Yassir Hassan and A. Peter Castro, "Climate Change and the Future of Onion and Potato Production in West Darfur, Sudan: A Case Study of Zalingei Locality," in A. Peter Castro et al. (eds.), *Climate Change and Threatened Communities* (Warwickshire: Practical Action, 2012, pp. 81-92).

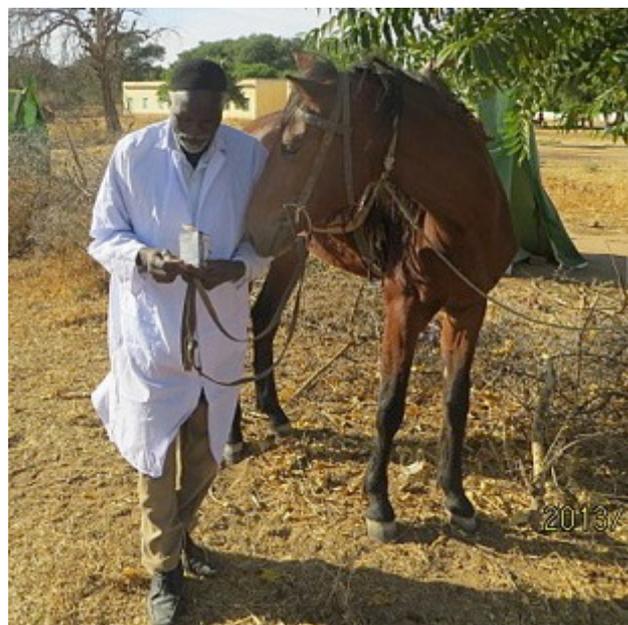
²⁴ NEF, "Resources, Livelihood and Security (Darfur), Quarterly Report, January to March 2014.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The RLS Project has straightforward objectives: strengthening livelihoods and enhancing food security in Central and West Darfur to foster early recovery. **It is successfully attaining these objectives through thoughtfully designed, efficiently organized and implemented, and well-received activities.**

RLS activities provide participants with knowledge, skills, and materials to improve their farming and livestock production, diversify their economic activities, and enlarge their repertoire of knowledge, skills, and experience. By doing so, project participants are better able to pursue peacebuilding, reconciliation, and participatory land governance. They are also able to achieve better lives for themselves and their children.

A differentiating aspect of the RLS Project has been the **attention given to ensuring the inclusive spread of benefits, including to women** (who have been especially involved in enterprise capacity building), the destitute and disadvantaged, IDPs, returnees, and nomadic pastoralists.



Paravets treat animals belonging to pastoralists and farmers.

Following are lessons learned by activity type.

(1) Supporting Early Recovery:

The RLS Project's role in supporting recovery among Central and West Darfur communities needs to be highlighted. Not only is it taking place in tangible ways, **the project has demonstrated conclusively that recovery can take place where reconciliation, peacebuilding, participatory community mobilization, and cooperation with authorities and line ministries offer a nurturing environment.** The RLS Project is effectively and efficiently meeting local needs for food security and development. Yet, as project participants repeatedly emphasize, what has occurred should be a beginning, and not a self-contained end. That is, project activities need to spread to more communities, and current project processes should be consolidated.

(2) Improving Food Security:

The RLS Project is enhancing the food security capacity of communities and their individual members through asset recovery and agrarian innovation. The distribution of farm implements and seeds has directly helped people improve their ability to feed themselves. Importantly, destitute and needy households have especially gained from this activity, though others have benefited as well. The RLS Project has revitalized farm extension, introduced

integrated pest management, and supported livestock production through the training of paravets. The seeding of pastures to increase dry season forage has especially benefited pastoral communities. Once again, **all of these activities not only increase economic development in the area, but support peacebuilding efforts.**

(3) Providing Training in Improved Agriculture and Natural Resource Management:

NEF and its partners have excelled at providing training in all facets of the RLS Project, including enterprise development, agricultural extension, integrated pest management, and para-veterinary skills. NEF and its partners have made a conscious and effective effort at being inclusive in its selection of training participants.

(4) Mobilizing Communities:

The RLS Project has **made efficient use of the structure of community mobilization** -- the Supra-Village Associations -- set up by the earlier RESP Project. Agricultural and pasture seeding activities, for example, have involved SVA specialized committees. SVA leaders, along with local authorities, have engaged in the selection of participants, demonstrating their capacity for inclusive development by including women, the destitute, IDPs, returnees, and pastoral communities in project activities. In doing so, RLS helped to strengthen these institutions, which are instrumental in promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation, as well as early recovery.

(5) Emphasizing Women's Participation:

As with the RESP Project, **the emphasis on ensuring women's participation is commendable, and needs to be pushed further.** Women are key stakeholders in Darfur's economy, including agriculture, livestock, and trading, and their capacities need to be enhanced so that they can pursue greater opportunities to improve their livelihoods and lives.

(6) Distributing Inputs in a Timely Manner:

Due to factors beyond the project's control, the delivery of inputs for business start ups to participants has been delayed. By April 2014, 600-plus approved business plans had received materials. The NEF Project staff and HAC have worked together to accelerate the procurement process²⁵. By the end of the project, 2,350 people are supposed to be supported, underscoring the need to continue to accelerate such efforts. Participants from five communities also stated that seed fairs need to occur earlier, giving farmers a chance to be prepared in case the rains come ahead of time. While the RLS Project cannot control the climate, by adjusting its schedule of seed fairs, it can help local producers adapt to conditions of greater uncertainty.

(7) Monitoring and Evaluation:

Recent staff changes, particularly the addition of Izaldien Babiker Alhaj (in early 2014), have boosted NEF's M&E capacity. The importance of M&E cannot be overstated. While the project's overall M&E performance has been satisfactory, Izaldien Babiker Alhaj has further increased the scope and effectiveness of data collection. He appreciates the need to integrate

²⁵ A total of 904 people received their supplies by the end of June, 2014

M&E information more closely into project management and decision-making. In addition, he recognizes that field agents should be trained more thoroughly in M&E.

(8) NEF Staff Capacity Building:

Although the NEF project staff has worked efficiently, they should be provided with opportunities to hone their technical skills. For example, they might receive training in procurement procedures or managing complex databases. For interested staff, assistance should be also provided in English as a second language training, including writing skills.

(9) Cooperating with Local Authorities:

Finally, the RLS Project has underscored the need to build a rapport with officials at all levels. The receipt of blanket approval for all RLS Project activities proved a watershed event, reducing the time allocated to obtaining clearances. The NEF-Sudan and project staff deserve recognition for being able to work in Darfur's complex security-laden setting while still adhering to their core values of Knowledge, Voice and Enterprise.