

SUDANESE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

OUR SELECTED EXPERIENCE

PRACTICAL RESOURCE PACK

Our context

The Sudanese Red Crescent Society was established by government decree in 1956 and recognized as a National Society and accepted into the Movement the following year. We have 15 branches and more than 75 units across Sudan, with an active volunteer base of some 35,000.

We operate throughout Sudan, in what are often extremely difficult conditions caused by a succession of internal armed conflicts, including in Darfur, South Kordofan, Abyei and Blue

Nile, and by the drought, desertification and other natural disasters that have beset eastern and northern Sudan and Kordofan.

How our acceptance, security and access were affected

In the recent and ongoing armed conflict in South Kordofan, our National Society faced huge challenges in reaching and assisting affected people. Hostilities broke out on 5 June 2011 between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-



Coordinators at the Sudanese Red Crescent's mobile clinic wearing serialized vests to facilitate identification and prevent misuse.

North and government armed forces, mainly in Kadougli, Kauda and the surrounding areas. The fighting prompted people to flee their homes and to form a sort of camp where they received assistance from us and from other humanitarian actors in the area.

However, we faced challenges relating to our legal status and its acceptance by the various groups in this context. This was further compromised when unknown persons wearing aprons bearing the red crescent emblem and pretending to be National Society personnel showed up and ordered the displaced people to leave the camp and go to the stadium where they were told, falsely, they would receive humanitarian aid.

Posing as Sudanese Red Crescent volunteers and staff was a blatant misuse of the emblem by those involved in the conflict, which endangered both the beneficiaries and the Sudanese Red Crescent as an institution including our personnel and damaged the reputation of our partners. It created doubts among the National Society's beneficiaries, donors and partners. The result was that we suffered a lack of access to the people affected by the conflict.

What we did and learned

To counter the harm done, the Sudanese Red Crescent took, or is in the process of taking, the following steps, in line with the actions and measures proposed in the Safer Access Framework.

Legal base

- ▶ The Sudanese Red Crescent Society Act (2010) includes a clause on "The emblem of the Society and privileges." The National Society is currently discussing internally the possibility of strengthening this clause with an emblem law when the time is suitable.

Acceptance of the individual/security measures

- ▶ The Sudanese Red Crescent obliges all staff to apply our code of conduct and safety rules and has explained the National Society's roles during armed conflicts and as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. We collected all old field jackets/aprons and produced new serialized ones to tighten up controls on the identification of our personnel.

External communication/Acceptance of the organization

- ▶ We have gone to great lengths to make known the Fundamental Principles, the emblem and international humanitarian law at all levels of society, including the government, local authorities and communities. This



- has helped to boost the knowledge of our own staff and volunteers as well as to enhance contacts with external stakeholders in order to promote respect for and acceptance of the emblem in both its protective and indicative senses.
- ▶ The National Society has engaged with the media, issuing a press release in coordination with our Movement partners detailing the misuse of the emblem, and organized a press conference on the issue.

From the incident and the impact it had on our ability to deliver humanitarian aid safely, we learned the following lessons:

- ▶ Coordination with Movement members enhances the Sudanese Red Crescent's image and acceptance.
- ▶ Systematic dissemination at all levels to various target audiences (both in Khartoum and in the field) is needed to improve access.
- ▶ Implementation of the approach promoted in the Safer Access Framework after the incident enabled us to carry out our role in managing dead bodies when fighting erupted between Sudan and South Sudan in the Heglig area of South Kordofan the following year.