



SUCCESS STORY

Supporting a Model for IDP Community Mobilization in Khartoum



A primary school for internally displaced children in Khartoum before (inset) and after USAID/OTI-supported renovations.

“I can hardly believe how great the change is! Having benches and a roof is a great motivation for the students, as is chalk and blackboards for the teachers. It seems like a dream.”

– IDP Primary School Principal

December 2007 – As the north-south conflict unfolded in Sudan, displaced families from the south took refuge in squatter settlements and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the outskirts of Khartoum. In these camps and settlements, IDPs have had little access to basic education and social services. Some children attend classes in neighboring communities, but for most families, the cost to transport their children to distant schools is prohibitive. Consequently, many children cannot attend school, and without the education and ancillary information that quality school programs provide, the children and their families are less able to advocate for their rights and for services and policies that can improve their lives.

In the midst of these challenges, mothers in one of Khartoum’s IDP camps came together in 2001 to collect funds and enlist volunteers to build a primary school. The effort was a success, but in 2005 the building was battered by heavy rains – collapsing the roof, damaging the walls, and rendering parts of the structure unsafe for the school’s 400 students. In spite of the damage, however, students continued to attend classes, mopping water from their classrooms whenever it rained.

To support this commitment to education and to expand upon this model effort of community mobilization, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) rebuilt the roof and provided other basic items the school lacked, including chairs, desks, books, notebooks, pencils, a generator, and a water pump. OTI also supported an educational workshop to inform the students’ mothers of their rights under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim National Constitution, an action that has prompted the mothers to organize and advocate for improved social services.

The rehabilitation project has inspired a local community association to restore the walls and provide latrines for the school. Moreover, the school’s administrators are planning to use this model to secure local funding and start similar schools in IDP communities across Sudan.