

Camp Mile



Protection Profile: In January and February 2008 the Government of Sudan began new air strikes in Darfur that pushed 20,000 new refugees to the Chad/Darfur border. For months these refugees sat on the border with little more than what they ran with. NGOs servicing Kounoungo and Mile traveled as often as possible to provide them with a little food and water, forcing them to shrink rations elsewhere. During these visits aid workers could hear, see and feel the continuing air raids in Darfur, sometimes making it impossible to reach this new population more than a few times a month. Many were relocated to Camps Kounoungo and Mile, and still many stayed behind, to try to survive in make-shift homes, until they can return to Darfur. As insecurity increases, and aid worker contracts expire, positions in this country become increasingly difficult to fulfill. And in the end with all this chaos around them, it is the refugees who suffer.

The area is rife with banditry, and NGO cars are highly prized as they are made for rough desert terrain and the high wadi waters during rainy season. The mounted UNHCR flags once protected these vehicles and declared them neutral, but here, they become the bulls-eye of the target. Drivers and workers are sometimes let go unharmed, and other times they are not so lucky.

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As of March 2008 there are 256,341 refugees in camps in Eastern Chad.

Camp Profile: Part of Camp Mile is located in the shadow of a large hill upon which the water tank for the population of 16,241 sits. The rest is spread out on uneven terrain between large, natural ditches and large boulders. There are only a few trees that create a border between this camp and the encroaching desert. The nearby remains of these and other shrubs hardly stand, striped of anything burnable. Most of the narrow passages between tent compounds are lined with eye-level walls made from dirt and water leftover from washing clothes. Women work diligently in the morning hours to repair these walls after tending to the children, washing and collecting of what can still be used to make a fire.

Many children attend school in the morning hours, and after class is dismissed they congregate to the one volleyball net that was erected years ago before that NGO was forced to leave for security reasons. Only boys are jumping around on either side of the net, most girls shy away from games such as these. The oldest class is level six and they sit under a single roof classroom with no walls and share books.

Once a month the women with newborns line up to register their babies with UNHCR. In order to be eligible they must birth them in the clinic with an official mid-wife or Doctor. If there are any complications, they must be transported to Abeche, and if need to the capital of Chad, N'Djamena. If the babies are not registered the women will not received an increase in food rations or nutritional help if the baby falls ill. Many born here are products of rape by Janjaweed and government militia. In many compounds it is only mothers, and rarely a father, to help raise the children. Many of the children under five have never lived outside of a refugee camp, have not yet experienced traditional farming, or been introduced to the proud culture that once thrived in Darfur.



Mohamed and his family live in refugee camp Mile, in Eastern Chad. He and his older brother, Saleh, love soccer. They talk about European and Brazilian stars and like to play a game with friends, when there's a ball available. Mohamed speaks a little bit of English. He is very proud of his home. His mother helped the brothers build a mud hut that serves as their own room. Mohamed and Saleh are lucky to be alive. Although they are only boys, when their villages are destroyed in Darfur, their age range and older are targeted to be killed.



Zahara is a refugee in camp Mile, in Eastern Chad. She was building a mud wall around her home area that day. Zahara has several children that are beginning to learn English. The two older boys like to play football (soccer), and they enjoy learning at school.



Aziza is a spirited woman living in Camp Mile. Her youngest boy, Halit, was quiet and wide-eyed. She welcomed the team from Stop Genocide Now into her home and shared with them the little water and sugar mix she had.



Day 7 Saleh loves to play football (soccer). He lives in refugee camp Mile, in Eastern Chad. He and his family had to escape Darfur's violence, which has been raging for over five years now. Saleh's mother has built a mud hut, so that he could have a room with his brother.