

# Iodized salt offers a glimmer of hope for Darfur refugees

The conflict in Darfur has generated 2.5 million refugees; many have fled to camps in eastern Chad. Getting high-quality iodized salt to these camps is an important part of relief efforts.

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The UN World Food Program (WFP), based in the Central African Region, has been active in supplying food relief to eastern Chad and to Sudanese refugees living in the massive camps. These camps are now filled to overflowing and calling for more international food aid. In May 2007, a top United Nations official warned that security had deteriorated to a point where delivering humanitarian aid had become “a nightmare”.



Besides hunger and famine among these displaced people, the organization Doctors without Borders has highlighted the importance of micronutrient malnutrition. The supply of iodized salt has been identified as a special need because of the high prevalence of goiter in the children in the camps.

Recent surveys of Sudan have reported household coverage with iodized salt is only 1% and IDD is endemic. Therefore, the supply of iodized salt by the WFP is critical in the refugee camps.



Douala, Senegal to eastern Chad, and then to refugee settlements in the Darfur region. Many international donors offer their food aid through the WFP, and on a site visit in March 2007, ICCIDD representative Daniel

Lantum identified 66 tons of iodized salt identified as Canadian donations and 150 tons identified as French donations. But the WFP is not just supplying any grade of iodized salt, they are providing the very best. Representatives of ICCIDD have been supervising quality assurance of the iodized salt coming from the Doukala Salt Refineries in Senegal. The WFP selects the highest salt quality; the salt conforms to the specifications of the Ministry of Public Health Directive of 1991, which stipulates salt should be iodized at 100 ppm. Thanks to their internal quality control laboratory, the “Société de la Purification du Sel”, this standard is satisfied. This is verified by a special WFP laboratory, under the direction of Dr. Cebron, that has certified the salt as pure, at 98% NaCl, and with an iodine content of 80 to 100 ppm.

This high quality iodized salt (Daimant Blanc) is packed in 25 kg bags that are specially labeled as from the WFP/PAM, transported from

This illustrates that the prolonged food emergency in eastern Chad sparked by the Darfur conflict has led to a regional strategy involving several partners. In this instance, the WFP, ICCIDD, Canadian and French Foreign Aid, and Doctors without Borders are tackling the severe IDD problem among the refugees, along with other micronutrient deficiencies.

