



Dillon Henry Youth Centers

Safety and Opportunity for Sudanese Young People in Chad

From January 2009 through March 2010, the extraordinary generosity of Jewish World Watch and your donor allowed the IRC to provide Darfuri refugee children and youth at Ouré Cassoni camp in Eastern Chad with safe spaces to play, grow, and make their voices heard.

The IRC is extremely grateful for the support, input, and flexibility of Jewish World Watch throughout this project. With your help, we have provided comfort, joy, and hope to more than 2,000 young refugees each month, changing their lives for the better and helping them build strong, healthy communities. This final report includes highlights from the second half of our partnership (May 2009 through March 2010).

The Dillon Henry Youth Centers: A Safe Place to Be a Child

The IRC finalized the construction and furnishings of three Dillon Henry Youth Centers in June and July 2009, including painting and final placement of signs. New furnishings and equipment are serving to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for children and youth, increasing the centers' stature in the community and boosting attendance at center activities.



Children pose proudly in front of one of the new Dillon Henry Youth Centers

The centers are fully equipped with games and toys for younger children, who visit on a regular basis to participate in singing, contests, storytelling, and other games and organized activities. The safety, structure, and security provided by these activities are vital for children's healthy development as they heal from the trauma of war and displacement and cope with daily life in the harsh camp environment.

The Dillon Henry Youth Centers also provide a vital hub for older children and youth, serving as a meeting place for activities like theater, singing, debates, reading

groups, and round-table discussions. These activities not only offer positive alternatives to idleness, crime, or involvement with rebel groups, but also provide opportunities for

young people to develop skills, articulate their needs and opinions to the wider camp community, and build social cohesion.

Sports, Games, and Community Building

A range of organized games, activities, and events were held throughout the project cycle, geared to the interest and abilities of different age groups. These activities have provided a positive outlet for young people's energy, encouraged healthy physical activity, built bonds of trust and respect, fostered teamwork, and facilitated interaction with youth from other camp zones.

Sports programs included boys' soccer matches and girls' volleyball games. Within each of the camp's three zones, teams from different blocks meet for weekly matches. Each month, winning teams from the three zones compete against each other. We have also organized occasional camp-wide "championships" and special matches to commemorate

holidays and other significant events, including: Day of the African Child (June 16), International Refugee Day (June 20), and Universal Children's Day (November 20). At the request of refugee youth themselves, we held a special match between refugee teams and members of the humanitarian community on International Workers Day (May 1, 2009). The event was extremely popular and youth have lobbied for a re-match in 2010.



A championship team of refugee youth

One of the project's major successes has been the development of robust youth clubs at the centers. Now called

"Friendship Clubs" by their members, these three groups (one for each camp zone) each consist of 30 young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The groups are divided evenly between young men and young women. These Friendship Clubs have come to serve as a mouthpiece for the camp's young people, allowing members to share the concerns and interests of their peers with refugee leaders, NGO staff, parents, and community groups. The clubs organize debates and public forums on topics of special interest to young people, including the consequences of forced recruitment and forced or early marriage.

The Friendship Clubs also empower youth to act as peer educators for other young people in the camp. The clubs have been particularly active in identifying vulnerable youth and encouraging them to disengage from unhealthy or unsafe activities and get involved at the youth centers instead. These at-risk youth include young people who

spend their free time at the market, where they are especially vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups; children living on the isolated outskirts of the camp; young people—especially girls—who work at home; and young mothers who stay at home with their babies. Peer pressure in a powerful force in any culture, and Friendship Group members are often able to reach out to and influence vulnerable youth far more effectively than IRC staff or other humanitarian workers.



Girls and young women attend a knitting workshop at one of the Dillon Henry Youth Centers

Trainings, Workshops, and the Youth Newsletter

Trainings and workshops provide young refugees with useful life skills, and offer valuable opportunities to bond with one another and interact with caring adults in a safe environment. The IRC provided such opportunities throughout the grant period, several of which are highlighted below.

In August 2009, the IRC organized a month-long knitting workshop for 90 girls and young women from all three of the camp's zones. Designed to be an inclusive activity, the

workshop welcomed four girls with a hearing disability. Knitting activities are especially popular among the camp's women and girls as they help to bolster their sense of self-worth and provide a vital and safe forum in which to share problems and exchange encouragement, advice, and support. The camp environment can be especially challenging for women and girls, making the strong networks of community and support created through activities like group knitting, all the more vital.

This young man, who has a physical disability, made a crutch for himself during the carpentry training



In September and October 2009, the IRC provided carpentry training for boys living in Ouré Cassoni. Thirty six boys and young men aged 13 to 24, representing all three camp zones, participated. The training introduced camp youth to basic carpentry techniques, equipping them with skills to earn a safe, dignified living and empowering them to make improvements in their own homes and communities.

Despite several staffing-related challenges and camp operating environment concerns, in early March 2010 the IRC was able to implement an eagerly-anticipated journalism training for 24 camp youth (half girls and half boys). The training was led by a professional Chadian journalist. The intensive four-day workshop taught youth basic journalistic processes and emphasized practical applications for their skills in the camp. Using an interactive approach, the trainer journalist developed assignments for youth participants based on story ideas of greatest interest to the camp's young people, including forced marriage, the holy month of Ramadan, the potential camp move, and other topics.

The workshop encouraged youth to continue writing beyond the project's conclusion, emphasizing that writing is a healthy tool for self-expression and becomes more powerful through practice. Youth were assured that writing is a valuable skill that will remain with them throughout their lives. Participants also explored options for producing a sustainable newsletter using the basic materials and services available in the camp (i.e. without computers or access to a professional editor).

Following the training, IRC staff and workshop participants developed a plan for all stages of newsletter development. Six of the youth participants who had received higher education served as the "newsletter committee" or editorial board. Over two weeks,

participants arrived at the center anxious to move forward with the process and produce their first newsletter. The youth wrote, edited, illustrated, and selected all material for the publication's final version.

Once finalized, the IRC printed and bound 500 copies of the newsletter and distributed them to camp leaders, school directors, women's leaders, women's centers, youth centers, libraries, and the participants themselves. The youth journalists also requested that we share the newsletter with NGOs working on youth issues in three other camps in the region (Goz Beidi, Iriba,

and Gureda). These newsletters will be distributed with a cover letter from the authors that explains the project and invites youth in other camps to pursue similar projects and share their publications with youth in Ouré Cassoni.

On April 22, 2010 the IRC organized a publication party at the Zone A Dillon Henry Youth Center to celebrate the group's accomplishments and allow youth to present the



Refugee girls sing a song about the homes they left behind in Sudan during an International Refugee Day event

newsletter to their peers, community leaders, and teachers. The Ouré Cassoni's School Inspector (who oversees all education programming in the camp) attended, in addition to community members and leaders and other NGOs. Even members of MINURCAT and the Chadian Police (Détachement Integre de Sécurité) joined the celebration, an important step in strengthening community relations.

A copy of the first edition of the newsletter in the original Arabic is included with this report, as is an English translation. The finished document reflects the group's wide variety of viewpoints and interests.

Raising Community Awareness: Making Young People's Voices Heard

In addition to the Friendship Clubs, which provided an extremely effective channel for youth to share their ideas, interests, and concerns, children also participated in

awareness-raising activities like games, theater performances, songs, and speeches during camp wide-celebrations on the Day of the African Child (June 16, 2010), International Refugee Day (June 20), and International Children's Day (November 20). These forums provided an opportunity for children to express their opinions and participate in camp-wide conversations about issues that affect their lives, such as children's rights, early marriage, or recruitment by armed forces.



Thirteen-year-old Saboura speaks about children's rights during an event on International Refugee Day (June 20, 2010)

Update: Change at Ouré Cassoni

In September 2009, UNHCR and the Government of Chad announced plans to relocate Ouré Cassoni to a new site further from the Sudanese border. A new location some distance from the border would be consistent with international standards for refugee camps and would improve the peacekeeping situation at the camp. At present, camp residents' security is compromised by ongoing fighting in nearby Sudan and the constant presence of armed groups, both on the border and within the camp. A new location would reduce tensions, keep residents safer, and foster the stability that humanitarian organizations require to deliver food and services consistently.

UNHCR and the Chadian government had initially discussed moving the camp in December 2009. However, given the extreme harsh environment of Eastern Chad, the two groups have yet to locate a site that has sufficient resources—including water and

logistical access—to sufficiently support the camp community. Several deadlines for the move have been proposed and subsequently missed, and potential sites continue to be tested for suitability. It remains difficult to determine if and when a move will take place. Should the camp move, however, the IRC remains committed to exploring appropriate ways to continue recognizing Dillon’s legacy and the generosity of his family and of Jewish World Watch.

In addition, UNHCR has recently decided to re-allocate responsibility for programs in Ouré Cassoni among NGOs working in the camp. The IRC is in the process of handing over operation of the Dillon Henry Youth Centers and the activities they house to UNHCR, which will delegate responsibility for the centers and their programs to another of the camp’s implementing organizations. In the future, the IRC will continue to support the camp’s young people by providing caring, quality education, health care, clean water, and by promoting good hygiene and sanitation.

During the handover, the IRC and UNHCR are doing everything possible to minimize the impact on and disruption of the young people who use the centers, and all partners have emphasized that this vital resource “belongs” not to any one humanitarian organization, but rather to the Sudanese communities who use them daily. We are confident that the Dillon Henry Youth Centers will continue to serve as a place of refuge, learning, and fun for the children and youth of Ouré Cassoni.

Thank You

Many of the refugee children and youth living in Ouré Cassoni have grown up under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, forced to flee their homes due to violence, coping with experiences of tragedy and loss, and being surrounded by relatives and friends who have had similar traumatic experiences. Daily camp life can be crowded, tense, and dangerous. The Dillon Henry Youth Centers provide a welcome safe haven for these vulnerable young people, giving them much-needed stability and providing the skills and tools they need to begin healing themselves and rebuilding their communities.

The IRC is proud of our partnership with Jewish World Watch and honored to be a part of the good work that you and your donors make possible. Thank you for your dedication to the children and youth of Ouré Cassoni, who represent the region’s hope for a stable, peaceful, and prosperous future.

For More Information

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Financial Report: January 15, 2009 - March 15, 2010

Item	Budget	Expenditures & Commitments*
Personnel	\$40,196	\$38,835
Travel	750	21
Equipment	600	0
Supplies	47,725	50,536
Other	729	608
IRC Admin Fee @ 10%	10,000	10,000
TOTAL	\$100,000	\$100,000

* "Commitments" refers to items which have been procured but may not yet have been paid in full.