

CHAD

School and water: UNICEF's action for displaced and host populations

It is 54 degrees Celsius when we meet nine-year-old Ibrahima in his school – one of ten hangars built and equipped by UNICEF in 2006 to face the vast influx of internally displaced Chadian into the village of Koubigou. Apart from school, one of Ibrahima's major tasks is to fetch water for the family. "The water point is only 20 minutes away from our hut, but as often there are too many people to draw water I go to the village of Gassire, which takes me two hours until I am back home."

Four hundred metres from the school we talk to Kaldouma. "I come once every day with my donkey. This allows me to cover my family's needs for drinking, cooking and washing."

At the beginning of 2006, the only available safe water source for the 2,000 inhabitants of Koubigou village was a borehole equipped with a handpump. With the arrival of about 2,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in April 2006, the already scarce water supply was stretched to its limit, leading UNICEF to install a water pumping system to deal with the evolving situation. At the beginning, the bladder was filled twice a day, hence providing 40,000 litres of water per day (about 15 litres per person) for both displaced and host populations. When, due to the prevailing insecurity, 3,800 additional people arrived in February 2007, amongst them Ibrahima's family, UNICEF augmented the pumping hours providing up to 70,000 litres per day. Still this is not enough as Kaldouma tells us. "Sometimes you have to fight to get water and often we go to the neighbouring village of Gassire, but the long way is very tiring under the burning sun," she says.

Thanks to a contribution of US\$ 1,179,450 from the Japanese Government, UNICEF will drill two additional boreholes in Koubigou village to cover the needs of over 8,000 people. In the next few months, 14 boreholes, 2 mini water systems and 1,000 communal latrines will be built with the same funding, benefiting 48,000 IDPs throughout eastern Chad. In parallel, hygiene promotion campaigns will reach 20,000 beneficiaries. The distribution of family water kits will cover the needs of some 5,000 people with sanitary material.

When asked about their wishes for the future, both Kaldouma and Ibrahima say, "I want to go home, as soon as security is back."

With the implementation of 260 water points in 2007, some 100,000 IDPs and 20,000 members of the host communities will have access to safe water.