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## PRESS RELEASE

24 April 2008

### Scientific evidence supports UN OCHA extrapolation on Darfur mortality.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008, Sir John Holmes, the undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, mentioned at the Security Council that the conflict in Darfur might have caused 300,000 dead as of that day. He added this "is not a very scientifically based figure" but that "it's a reasonable extrapolation". The CRED CE-DAT team, which has been monitoring the Darfur situation since 2005, examined the scientific data to see if it supports Holmes's statement.

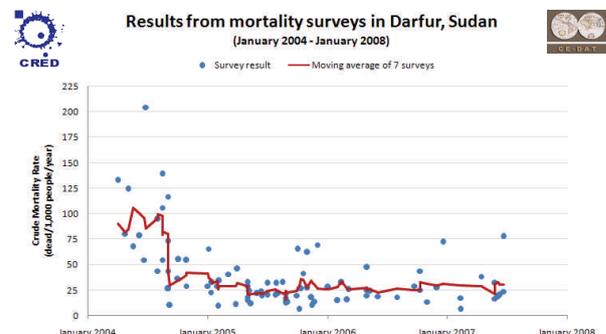
#### 200,000 from 2003 to 2006

For the last 3 years, the UN cites a mortality figure of 200,000 dead due to the conflict in Darfur, based on a 2004 WHO mortality survey, which showed around 10,000 dead per month. In spring 2005, when this figure was released, the more violent phase of the conflict – that had started in the second half of 2003 – had been ongoing for about 20 months. Twenty months at a rate of 10,000 dead per month equals 200,000. In a nutshell, this is how the number was obtained. Many other estimates followed ranging from 98,000 to over 370,000. Within a few months, the situation shifted from very little knowledge on the death toll of the conflict to one where too many mortality estimates were circulating. In that context the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) together with the US National Academy of Sciences brought together a panel of experts to analyse the validity of the different figures that had been published. Their conclusion was that the methodologies of the lower estimates were more reliable than those of the higher estimates. In general, they had more confidence in the estimates that reported mortality figures between 100,000 and 200,000 (see [www.gao.gov/new.items/d0724.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0724.pdf)). This finding makes the UN figure of 200,000 deaths in 2005 a reasonable one, albeit on the higher side.

#### 100,000 more between 2006 and 2008

Two years have passed since most of the mortality estimates were published. The conflict however did not end and over 4 million are affected in 2008. Because of the extraordinary magnitude of this conflict, even little changes can have a huge impact. The typical mortality rate for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is around 16 dead per 1,000 people per year. In order to assess deaths due to the conflict, one calculates the difference between the current mortality rate in Darfur and this "reference mortality rate" of 16/1,000/year. The level at which humanitarian workers consider a situation to be an emergency is 36/1,000/year. If the conflict had remained at the emergency level for the last 2 years, one would have expected 20 dead/1,000/year in addition to the 16/1,000/year that one can expect in Darfur (36 = 20 + 16). Applying this 20 dead/1,000 people/year to an affected population of more than 4 million and over 2 years, gives us more than 160,000 additional deaths over the last 2 years.

Although the conflict is still very active, several surveys have shown that mortality rates are probably lower than the emergency level. Based on 92 mortality surveys (see chart and [www.cedat.be](http://www.cedat.be)) that were conducted in Darfur from April 2004 to November 2007, one could estimate the current mortality rate at around 30/1,000/year. Using the same approach as above, we can calculate the excess dead toll for this mortality rate to be around 110,000 for the last 2 years. This number corresponds to what the UN has added to its estimate from 2005-2006.



#### Conclusion

Even though the OCHA extrapolation might not be formulated from scientific evidence, it is supported by scientifically sound survey data.