

On the Hoof Livestock Trade in Darfur

Policy Briefing Paper

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This is the first of a series of Policy Briefing Papers which form part of the Environment and Livelihoods component of the UNEP Sudan Integrated Environment Project, funded by UKAid from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). This paper highlights the impact of conflict on the livestock trade in Darfur and outlines ways in which that trade can be supported in the future, to benefit livelihoods and the economy in Darfur and nationally. It is based on a research report (UNEP, 2012 'On the Hoof: Livestock Trade in Darfur'), authored by Margie Buchanan-Smith and Abdul Jabbar Abdulla Fadul, with Abdul Rahman Tahir and Yacob Aklilu, that can be found on the UNEP and Tufts websites. See: <http://www.unep.org/sudan> or <http://sites.tufts.edu/feinstein/2012/on-the-hoof-livestock-trade-in-darfur>

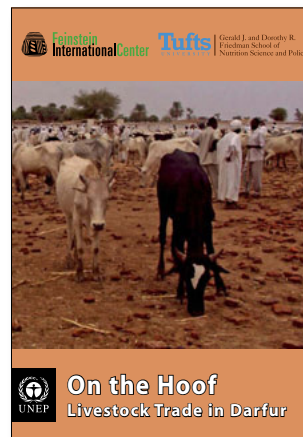
The importance of livestock

The livestock trade in Darfur has been badly impacted by almost a decade of conflict. This briefing paper presents the main findings of a research study carried out by the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University which set out to understand how the livestock trade has been affected since 2003, how it has adapted, and to what extent (if at all) it has recovered. The research for the study was carried out in Darfur and Khartoum over a twelve month period, from February 2011 to February 2012.

Livestock are a key component of most rural livelihoods in Darfur; the greater Darfur region is one of Sudan's most important areas of livestock production. Indeed, livestock are Sudan's third most important export after petroleum and gold. The findings of this study are therefore relevant at both state and federal levels. Finding ways of supporting the livestock trade, now and into the future, will be critical to the recovery of the economy and of livelihoods in Darfur. Boosting the export trade of meat and livestock can also be a major source of growth for the national economy. A policy agenda for achieving both is presented in this paper, built upon the study's findings.

How the conflict has impacted on Darfur's livestock trade, and a way forward

Early on in the Darfur conflict when there was major looting, livestock became a liability. Not only did this encourage many households to divest of their livestock holdings, it also caused bankruptcy of traders if their herds were stolen as they



moved between markets. The greatly increased risks of livestock trading resulted in many traders in Darfur switching to commerce in less risky commodities. Most of the large-scale traders from Omdurman withdrew from the region completely. Widespread displacement and insecurity in rural areas was associated with the collapse of the primary market network. The

evidence clearly indicates an overall contraction of the livestock trade within Darfur compared with pre-conflict levels, particularly in terms of volume, right up to 2012.

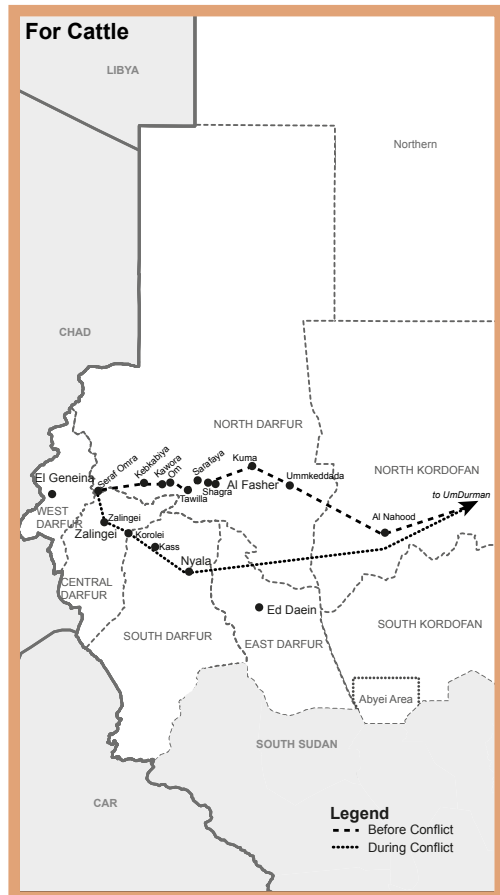
Insecurity and conflict are directly associated with a massive increase in livestock trading costs. No longer able to use direct trekking routes, traders from many markets are choosing to use longer and more circuitous but safer routes to trek their animals out of Darfur. Pre-conflict it took traders 45 to 60 days to trek cattle from El Geneina to Omdurman; during the conflict it could take as long as four months to trek through more secure areas in South Darfur. Traders must also employ armed guards to protect their herds, must now pay fees at numerous checkpoints to ensure safe passage of their animals, and have reduced the number of animals moving in one herd in order to reduce their exposure to looting. All of these measures have substantially increased trading costs, from between 100 per cent and 900 per cent in the case of cattle trekked from El Geneina to Omdurman. ►

(See bottom of page 4 for more information)

- **The single most important way of supporting the livestock sector and the livestock trade in Darfur is to improve security.**

On the Hoof: Livestock Trade in Darfur

MAP CREATED BY OCHA



THE BOUNDARIES AND NAMES SHOWN AND THE DESIGNATIONS USED ON THIS MAP DO NOT IMPLY OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT OR ACCEPTANCE BY THE UNITED NATIONS.



Darfur, livestock trade routes from Saraf Omra

Cattle in Nyala market

Not only have trading costs increased, livestock prices have also soared. Traders therefore need larger amounts of capital to operate. Yet very few, if any, are accessing formal credit, partly because of the weakness of formal financial services in Darfur but also because of the high risks associated with livestock trading and the risk of imprisonment if loans are not repaid. The livestock trade is currently dependent on informal credit, often on unfavourable terms for small-scale traders, which leaves them vulnerable to creditors defaulting in an environment in which trust has broken down. ►

- **A pilot credit scheme for livestock traders should be designed and implemented, initially on a small-scale in one of Darfur's major livestock markets, to explore what it would mean to provide credit on preferential terms in the current environment. Depending on the learning and success of the pilot, such a scheme could then be scaled up.**

Within Darfur trading activity is constantly shifting between markets, particularly between secondary markets, according to the conflict dynamics. For example the cattle trade has at least partially shifted from Rajaj to Tomat in South Darfur, which is regarded as more secure and where the hinterland is also more secure for grazing. In North Darfur Mellit market has declined in importance and Seraf Omra has become the center of the camel trade. ►

- **The physical market infrastructure in livestock markets in more secure locations which are thriving, such as Tomat and Seraf Omra, should be improved to cope with, and encourage the increase in market activity in these more buoyant livestock markets.**

Livestock traders interviewed for this study reported that fewer groups are now supplying livestock to the market implying there may have been a concentration of livestock ownership during the conflict years. Many also reported deteriorating quality of livestock brought to the market, probably for a number of reasons. Limited access to grazing because of insecurity is one cause of poor livestock condition. Certain groups, which had previously played a role in fattening animals such as camels before they came to the market, are now displaced and living in camps, negatively affecting the quality of camels now brought to markets such as El Geneina. ►

- **Research is needed to understand how livestock ownership may have changed in Darfur during the conflict years, and to understand the relative importance of different livestock production systems, in order to inform future strategies for rebuilding the livestock sector and livestock production in ways that are both sustainable and inclusive of different groups.**



The Camel market in Seraf Omra



There is a growing trade in hides and skins from Darfur

Opportunities for growth, and for peacebuilding

Darfur has undergone a rapid process of urbanisation during the conflict years that is unlikely to be reversed, creating a burgeoning local market for livestock and for meat. Yet the physical infrastructure for a local meat industry and for exporting meat is poor and has received little investment. Despite being one of Sudan's main areas for livestock production, Darfur has only one functioning abattoir in Nyala, which is frequently not operational. Transporting animals on the hoof over hundreds of kilometres to Omdurman in the dry season is inefficient and uneconomical (although this is different in the rainy season when animals are fattened en route), and deprives Darfur of the value-added from slaughtering livestock and processing meat locally. ►

- **A clear strategy for developing the meat industry in Darfur with a longer-term perspective must be developed, including developing Darfur's abattoir capacity, ensuring that improvement of the physical infrastructure extends to effective and reliable cold storage facilities and improved air transportation facilities for developing the export trade in meat, and developing processing facilities for by-products such as offal.**

The export of hides and skins from Darfur appears to have grown during the conflict years, especially to West Africa. In an economy that is otherwise under great strain, this is a pocket of growth that has undeveloped potential. ►

- **A feasibility study should be carried out to explore how the leather industry could be supported across Darfur's five states, to boost employment and income for workers in the industry, especially women. A thorough gender analysis should be included.**

In some locations, for example Seraf Omra, trade agreements have been made between traders associated with otherwise hostile groups. These might be the foundation for future peacebuilding work to rebuild relationships between those groups with a longer-term perspective. For example, could they also be the foundation for exploring the peaceful and sustainable co-management of natural resources involving different livelihood groups, and for promoting the freer movement of trade? ►

- **These trade agreements should be investigated further, with great sensitivity, to see if/ how they could be supported and built upon as a peacebuilding opportunity.**

Towards an enabling policy environment

With renewed government focus on the livestock sector in Sudan there are a number of ways in which federal policies could support the livestock trade, not only in Darfur but across the country.

As responsibility for livestock markets has been decentralised to state and locality levels there are now many different local authorities taxing the livestock trade, not only at the point of sale but also as herds are trekked through different localities. Although an opportunity to raise income, there has been little re-investment of this revenue back into the sector, a source of grievance for both livestock traders and producers. Formal taxes have risen by 100 to 400 per cent within Darfur, crippling both producers and traders and distorting the livestock trade

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as traders try to evade localities with the highest levels of taxation. Ultimately this reduces the competitiveness of Sudanese livestock in the international market. ►

► **Taxation policies must be reviewed and revised through a process of dialogue with state and locality authorities:**

- to facilitate the movement of livestock between localities and between states,
- to reduce the taxation burden to improve competitiveness, and
- to ensure that revenues are reinvested in market infrastructure and in improving livestock production.

Sudan's veterinary services and inspection policies are currently inadequate to meet ever-more demanding international hygiene and disease control regulations. Current policies of relying on inspection of livestock at the point of export increases market inefficiencies if animals are rejected at that late stage in the market chain. Combined, these weaken Sudan's ability to compete internationally. ►

► **A clear strategy must be developed to improve veterinary services, vaccination centres and inspection in areas of livestock production to reduce livestock losses late in the market chain, and to strengthen Sudan's ability to comply with international standards.**

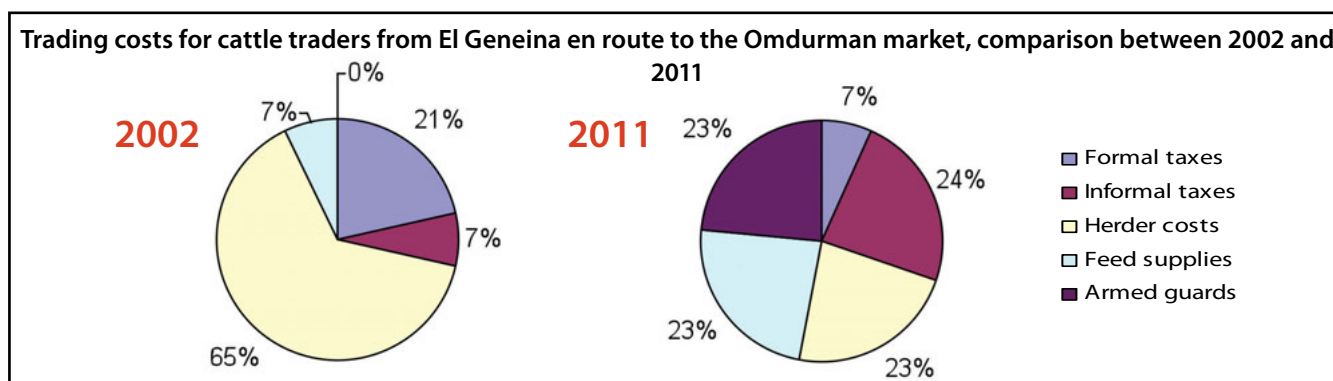
Responsibility for livestock marketing is currently scattered across a range of institutions at federal level. Since the abolition of the Livestock and Meat Marketing Corporation (LMMC), still lamented by many livestock traders, there has been no single government body with a strategic mandate for promoting the livestock trade. There has consequently been a lack of overall policy for promoting the livestock trade, including the export trade, despite the significance of this sector to the economy. ►

► **Ways of promoting the livestock trade, domestically and internationally through a streamlined institutional framework at federal level should be explored, drawing on experiences elsewhere in Africa.**

Trading costs for cattle traded from Geneina to Omdurman: herd of 50 cattle			
Item	Cost before the conflict (SDG)	Cost in 2011 (SDG)	% increase
1. Formal taxes eg, zakat etc.	5-7 per head	20 per head	
2. Informal taxes per herd (per head)	100 (2 per head)	3-4,000 (70 per head)	
3. 2 junior drovers per herd (per head)	600 (12 per head)	2,400 (48 per head)	
4. 1 lead drover for 4 herds (per head)	1,200 (6 per head)	4,000 (20 per head)	
5. Supplies per herd*	100 (2 per head)	3-4,000 (70 per head)	
6. Armed guards	Not required	3,500 (70 per head)	
Total per head	28	298	964%

* Under the current conflict conditions, supplies include the provision of sorghum and concentrates for cattle, as they must be trekked at speed to avoid banditry. As a result, 2-3 cattle are said to die from exhaustion from each herd during trekking. Formerly, cattle were allowed to trek at leisure while grazing.

SOURCE: CATTLE TRADER, GENEINA, MARCH 2011



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