



## **Strategies For Economic Recovery And Peace In Darfur; Why a wider livelihoods approach is imperative and inclusion of the *Abbala* (camel herding) Arabs is a priority.**

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Competing livelihoods in the absence of good local governance has led to localized and ultimately devastating conflict over natural resources in Darfur. The lack of comprehensive livelihoods analysis in international peace processes and humanitarian assistance risks entrenching the Darfur conflict even further. Livelihoods analysis is a prerequisite for ensuring that resources are allocated according to need between competing livelihood groups i.e. impartiality of humanitarian response, and for appropriate planning/ implementation of future recovery and development. To date, the humanitarian response has favoured certain groups while marginalizing others, specifically the Abbala arabs. Based upon intensive field research and consultation, this briefing note explains the background to the livelihoods and economic crisis in the Darfur region, and lays out specific recommendations for how it can be addressed.

The Abbala arabs have suffered from long-term processes of social and economic marginalization, resulting in low levels of literacy and educational achievement, and restricted access to health and other public services. Competition between farmer and herder thus increased over the past 30 years and put pressures on local tribal reconciliation mechanisms, which could not be sustained in the face of government interference. In this context of chronic and increasing insecurity and climatic vagaries, the Abbala arabs were extremely vulnerable to manipulation from a seemingly sympathetic or partial government, who ultimately enlisted them in their campaign against the rebels and their sympathizers with reported promises of land and other rewards. Their exclusion from the wider peace processes has almost certainly exacerbated this sense of marginalization and lack of representation. Unwittingly the international community has

enflamed the local conflict by ignoring this group, and jeopardized the reputation of humanitarians as impartial (which in itself has security implications). While this is recognized and understood by many international actors on the ground in Darfur, the challenges are growing in that these groups are increasingly hard to reach and will remain so, until their needs are prioritized more broadly and loudly by the international community.

At a local level within Darfur significant steps have been made to redress this situation. More than 180 local and international actors recently came together at four regional workshops, (July 2007) and collaboratively developed a shared and common understanding of the impact of conflict on livelihoods and the economy of Darfur, and based on this, developed a more strategic approach for humanitarian support of livelihoods. This process was facilitated by a small team from Tufts University, who have been engaged in livelihood analysis since 2004. The participatory analysis was remarkably consistent across the region and echoed the earlier livelihoods analysis by Tufts and others. In advance of the workshop final report, the Tufts team proposes the following recommendations based on this recent experience.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Promote shared conceptual understanding of livelihoods and conflict to inform the political process, humanitarian response and planning for recovery**

**To ensure a more strategic and coherent approach to supporting livelihoods,** there is a need for continued comprehensive and in-depth analysis of livelihoods, conflict and the management of natural resources using the livelihoods conceptual framework. This should be based on a shared and common understanding between all livelihood stakeholders, using a common livelihoods conceptual framework. This analysis should lead to a wider range of humanitarian actions that support livelihoods, including specific actions directed at strengthening household assets, and supporting appropriate policies, processes and institutions.

As part of the analysis above, analyse the impact of the conflict on markets, trade and the local economy in order to better understand who are the winners and losers, and develop strategies for promoting equitable access to markets at all levels for buyers and sellers.

### **2. Address the continued exclusion of marginalized groups from broader political processes and humanitarian response**

**Prioritise the provision of humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of the Abbala arab groups.** These needs differ from the needs of IDPs and need to be considered in the context of the long-term and more recent processes of marginalization faced by this group. Careful assessments will be required to ensure that any humanitarian action is indeed impartial, neutral and independent and does not contribute to the local dynamics of conflict.

**Identify and engage GoS stakeholders in pastoralism in a process of participatory policy review of pastoralist issues in Darfur, with a view to positive policy change.** This should include community-based participatory reviews separate from humanitarian action described above. Experience of pastoralist policy change from the region should be drawn upon, including the experience of the African Union.

**Within the ongoing peace processes develop and promote an improved and shared understanding of the pressures on Abbala arab groups,** including long-term processes of social and economic marginalization and their current situation. This should be achieved through participatory processes (semi-formal) with the Abbala, in order to promote dialogue and identify critical humanitarian needs for supporting livelihoods.

**3 . Ensuring Principled Humanitarian Action:** This close proximity between competing livelihood groups reinforces the critical importance of a “principled” approach to humanitarian action, i.e. an approach that is guided explicitly by humanitarian principles, including humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

**Strengthening strategic coordination and leadership.** Coordination and leadership of livelihoods approaches needs to be strengthened within the current UN coordination structures. For example; by expanding the work of the existing Food Security/ Livelihoods working group (led by FAO) to include a wider range of livelihood initiatives; by undertaking sectoral reviews from a livelihoods perspective; by promoting the work of specific thematic groups e.g. the UNOCHA pastoralist forum . While FAO play an obvious lead role in coordination, the framework for coordination needs to be expanded to include other sectoral lead agencies and UNOCHA.

**Promoting sustainable resource management approaches.** Sustainable resource management must be integrated fully with livelihoods programming and also wider humanitarian programming, in order to protect and sustain limited natural resources. This requires awareness-raising, impact assessments and appropriate actions to mitigate negative effects.

**Prioritising capacity building of local actors,** including LNGOs, CBOs, programme committees and national staff. Capacity development of local institutions and personnel is a priority, particularly given the unpredictable humanitarian access, and forthcoming demands for local personnel. Participation and participatory ways of working must be prioritised with a view to promoting dialogue and stronger partnerships with local groups, and where possible support indirectly dialogue between neighbouring livelihood groups. Capacity building of CBOs and programme committees should be wide ranging and not limited to the specific project tasks.

**Background to the Darfur Conflict and its impact on the economy and livelihoods:**

Prior to the conflict, the economy of Darfur was based on two pillars; trade in cereals, cash crops and horticulture; and the livestock trade (camels, cattle, sheep and goats of export quality). Previously, Darfur was a net earner of foreign exchange; livestock used to generate 20% of national foreign exchange earnings before the discovery of oil, more than 20% of these livestock originated from Darfur and was predominantly produced by pastoralists. But since the conflict, livestock trade has collapsed completely and sales are almost entirely for local consumption rather than export. Markets in local produced cereals, including millet and sorghum, have similarly collapsed, and the current agricultural markets are sustained only by the trade in food aid (*Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006,p53*).

The previous well-established regional trade was based on the complementary livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists. Since the 1970s both pastoralists and farmers have faced increasing numbers of drought years, culminating in devastating famine in the mid eighties and disturbing forever the moral geography between farmer and herder. While most groups of farmers and pastoralists traditionally enjoyed customary rights to their own homelands, the camel herding northern Rizeigat did not, and their traditional system of long-distant migration that cut across the three Darfur states from the Libyan border to the Central African Republic came under increasing pressure. Other pastoralist groups responded by diversifying their activities to include some cultivation (for example the Zayadia, the Meidob, the Zaghawa who had their own tribal homelands or Dars). Others, particularly the Zaghawa migrated southwards and in the seventies and eighties secured their own farms in the homeland of others and thus were able to adapt to some extent.

But while some groups had access to extremely fertile agricultural land, the lack of pasture in the north was forcing their pastoralist co-habitants to migrate southwards earlier than usual thus encroaching and browsing farmland before the harvest. In addition earlier conflicts between the Zaghawa and the northern Rizeigat also caused groups to move south. For example Musa Hilal and his group moved to Misteriya in Kebkabiya locality from his northern home in Amou North of Kutum, in 1997. At the same time farming expanded across the traditional rangelands in the central belt of Darfur that previously provided pasture for the pastoralists livestock. Thus the Abbala arabs were being squeezed on two sides; restricted access to pastures in the north, and increasing land under cultivation in the central rangeland. To this mix add the lack of diversification of livelihood strategies among the Abbala and also the meddling or interference of the central authorities. Security incidents increased as a result of this competition, and local police and judiciary failed to adequately respond, and from the farmers perspective appeared to be partial towards the Abbala groups.

This process is somewhat different in South and West Darfur but the essence is the same; a governance gap, environmental pressures and land tenure issues lead to competing livelihood systems, and increasing conflict between livelihood groups

– farmers and herders, which in turn negatively effects livelihoods (by restricting access, destroying crops etc) thus creating further conflict. In this context the more marginalized groups in terms of access to land, pasture and education became easily liable to the involvement of the GoS and their partial support of certain groups set the scene for rebel insurgency, counter-insurgency, failure of the peace processes and the recent Darfur Darfur tribal conflicts.

### **The economic repercussions of the conflict in Darfur:**

**The collapse and loss of local rural markets for buyers and sellers of livestock and cereals.** As the primary markets, these small local markets are the foundations of trade in Darfur – where farmer and herder exchange produce, and agents bought commodities that fed into the wider market chains.

**The wider collapse in agriculture and local cereal markets, which is now propped up by the trade in food aid grains.** The massive forced displacement of the farming livelihood groups has ripped away the cornerstone of the Darfur economy, driving many traders out of business. However, several have made the switch to cereal food aid, and business continues – albeit largely based on an imported rather than a locally produced commodity.

**The closure of the main trade routes to Libya, Egypt, Omdurman including livestock exports and imports of food and non food commodities.**

**Increased market prices of basic goods, because of insecurity restricting transport.** With the exception of cereals and livestock products (meat) which have dropped, other commodities are increasingly expensive.

**The cessation of remittance flows and labour migration as a result of insecurity.** Previously Darfur had a long tradition of labour migration and remittance transfers from Libya, Egypt and other arab states, which has all but ceased as a result of the conflict.

**The blocking of livestock migration routes** through insecurity and loss of rural services in small market towns, has led to livestock concentrations and subsequent increased livestock morbidity and over-grazing of pasture. Livestock migraton is probably the most important feature of pastoralism as a livelihood system, as it is designed to carefully manage the limited natural resources. Where this is blocked transhumant pastoralism is no longer viable.

**The organized targeting, looting and recycling of humanitarian assets (particularly thuraya phones and vehicles).** The number of vehicles lost in West Darfur in 2007 was approximately 80.

**Aspects of the economy that have flourished as a result of the conflict and related processes,** for example, the construction boom, (brick-making), alternative livestock trade routes. How this in turn has exacerbated conflict has received little attention.

These economic repercussions have occurred as a result of the continuing insecurity, in large part caused by the continued competition for what are now marginal livelihood activities.

Competition over natural resources (farmland, pasture and water) between livelihoods groups has been a feature of local level conflict in Darfur for decades, although the focus of this competition has recently broadened to include other natural assets (firewood, fodder and wood for construction). For example, a recent shift in some areas is that some groups use gender based violence against IDPs as a means of controlling the lucrative trade in firewood. Firewood collection and trade has therefore become the focus of continuing conflict between competing groups. The link to livelihoods has not been well understood by the international community who describe this issue only in terms of the livelihoods of IDPs, and ignore the livelihood implications for other groups involved in this trade. This partly reflects the wider failures of the international actors to be impartial -- particularly in relation to the specific situation and needs of all groups. But also it suggests a lack of understanding of the broader economy of Darfur.

These linkages and relationships between the economy, livelihoods, governance and the local dynamics of conflict are crucial to ensuring an impartial humanitarian response, and also in terms of informing the broader discussions, international and local peace processes, planning for recovery and development, and ensuring a wider shared understanding of these central issues among all stakeholders.