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Livelihoods, migration and remittance flows in times of crisis and conflict: case studies for Darfur, Sudan

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Introduction

War and conflict have long been known to destroy livelihoods, either directly through looting and the scorched-earth tactics of war, or indirectly by limiting freedom of movement and so restricting livelihoods strategies and access to wider trade and market networks. Much less is known about the impact of conflict and displacement on labour migration and remittance transfers.

Darfur has a long tradition of trade, migration and, during the past 30 years, remittance transfers from the Darfurian diaspora. A recent study of the impact of the crisis and conflict on livelihoods in Darfur provided an opportunity to explore how conflict had affected remittance flows. The aim of the wider study was to investigate the effects of the humanitarian crisis on the livelihoods of selected communities in Darfur in order to help refine strategic humanitarian interventions (Young et al. 2005). The study generated a wealth of information and analysis related to labour migration and remittance transfers and flows. Thus, the objective of this paper is to review the role and importance of remittances in the livelihoods of rural Darfurians before the current crisis and at its height in September 2004, and also to review the impact of the conflict on migration patterns, remittance transfer mechanisms and remittance flows.

This case-study differs from earlier work published from this research in that it focuses on the recipients of remittances in Darfur and the role of remittances in their livelihoods; the previous published work focused on the diaspora in Libya (their characteristics and livelihoods) and also on the effects of conflict on the entirety of people's livelihoods in Darfur (Young et al. 2005).

The historical importance of trade and migration

Migration has shaped the social, economic and even the political profile of Darfur. Historically, Darfur was an important centre for both trade and religion. Migration and trade have been central features of livelihoods in Darfur for the past 100 years or more. Several studies, surveys and information systems in Darfur have remarked on the scale of labour migration, and the significance of the remittances sent back to the region. In fact, the Food Economy profiles of North Darfur developed by Save the Children UK in 1997 included an 'agro-migrant zone'. While millet farming was the dominant livelihood strategy, men tended to migrate to central Sudan or (less commonly) to the Gulf States in search of work for usually between one and two years, while women tended to migrate to South and West Darfur in search of seasonal agricultural employment between the months of November and January (SCUK DFIS 2004).

The Darfur conflict – what link with livelihoods?

Rural livelihoods in Darfur have gone through profound changes in the past 40 years as drought, environmental degradation, population growth and competition over natural resources have put pressure on livelihood systems and pitted livelihood groups against one another. These processes, combined with other transformative processes (including government policies and evolving tribal administrative systems) brought about major changes to livelihoods long before the current conflict and counter-insurgency.

Livelihoods as a source of inter-tribal tensions and local conflict is not a new phenomenon in Darfur. Although this has escalated dramatically over the past decade, pressure on livelihoods leading to increasing inter-tribal conflict was not the major cause of the conflict between the rebel insurgents and the central Sudan government in Khartoum. Additional factors took this local conflict to a level previously unseen in Darfur, as it involved national, transnational and international factors. Thus, while the focus of this paper is on livelihoods, labour migration and remittances in the context of conflict, a wider appreciation of the causes of the conflict is important in order to understand the precise role that livelihoods have played and the potential role of labour migration and remittances in the recovery process.

The current conflict has a long history, dating back to the nineteenth century. Aspects of the current conflict have echoes with former times, and also much in common with the long-running civil war in Sudan, including government mobilisation of ethnic militia as part of counter-insurgency operations. Young et al. (2005) identified four broad clusters of causal factors (Box 1).

Box 1: Underlying causes of the Darfur conflict

1. The continuing economic and political marginalisation and neglect of Darfur by the central government of Sudan. Over time, local grievances have developed into armed resistance, which sparked the current hostilities and humanitarian crisis. On the local level, the economic and political marginalisation of Darfur led first to failing institutions, including judicial systems and policing, and second to failing development, including education, health care, transport, veterinary and other services.
2. Wider regional conflicts, which have contributed to the development and use of ethnically distinct armed militias, and also to the increased numbers of firearms owned by Darfurians generally. These conflicts include the civil war, as well as the long-running conflicts within Chad and between Chad and Libya, which have affected the relationship between these countries and Sudan.
3. The tactical manipulation of ethnic identities within Darfur (including through racism) by the government of Sudan and by political parties (e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood and Umma Party) has contributed to political polarisation between Arab and non-Arab groups in Darfur. This includes the mobilisation of armed militias and political mobilisation based on religious and ethnic identity (Mahdism, and later Islamisation and Arabism).
4. Environmental degradation and demographic pressures have undoubtedly contributed to social and resource-based conflicts within the region, which have led to increased local insecurity and ethnic rivalries, setting the stage for the current crisis.

The causes of the current conflict play out at different levels, internationally, nationally and within Darfur. While they are interconnected, it is helpful to separate them out in order to understand at what level these processes are initiated, and therefore at what level it is necessary to effect change.

Methods

The broader investigation of the impact of the crisis and conflict in Darfur on livelihoods was based on a livelihoods conceptual framework used by the Feinstein International Famine Center adapted from DFID's sustainable livelihoods framework (DFID 1999) and the Collinson framework (Collinson 2003). The research took a case-study approach, purposively selecting five geographic locations drawn from South, North and West Darfur States to provide a range of experiences of the conflict, different tribal groupings and a range of livelihood strategies. This fieldwork took place over four weeks between September and October 2004.

A research team also undertook field research in Benghazi and Kufra in Libya in July 2004, among the Sudanese diaspora there (only briefly referred to here). The team used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, including sequencing of a range of participatory research techniques with key informants, focus groups and individual interviewees. This was supported by a literature review. A fuller description of the methodology is available in Young and Osman et al. (2005). In the discussion of results that follows, all data and findings are drawn from the above field research unless referenced to another source.

In Sudan, it is common to quote prices and wages in Sudanese Pounds (SP), which have one-tenth of the value of the official currency, the Sudanese Dinar (SD). The text has tried to keep to the original currency quoted by the informant, though figures have also been converted to US dollars, using the exchange rate current at the time (US\$1 = SD 256).

Results/findings – the five case-studies from North and West Darfur States

Background on livelihoods

It is possible to characterise livelihoods in Darfur according to geographic area, for example the six food economy zones in North Darfur identified by Save UK. However, this type of classification suggests that there is a certain homogeneity within livelihood zones, and heterogeneity between them. But this belies the reality, which is that all rural livelihoods in Darfur are based on a similar range of livelihood strategies, with farming and herding predominating. These core livelihood strategies are supplemented with other activities, including trade, collecting wild foods and other natural resources, and finally labour migration and remittances. There are of course local variants, for example the production of tombac (chewing tobacco) and artisanry (leatherwork, metalwork etc), membership of the military or militias and a range of illegal activities, but in essence all livelihood groups in rural Darfur practice these same five livelihood strategies. The precise profile of livelihood strategies is what defines the livelihood group; in Darfur, the main distinction has always been between the sedentary farmer and the more mobile herder.

Even today, the terms farmer and herder in Darfur loosely correspond to different tribal groups (but this is not a straightforward distinction between tribes of Arab origin and other tribes, as is widely assumed internationally). In Darfur, distinctions are often made between types of rural production systems, for example between the Abbala (camel herders) in the north and west and the Baggara (cattle herders) in the south, which represent multiple tribes of varied origins. All Darfurians would know precisely to whom these groups referred.

The livestock migration routes criss-cross the length and breadth of Darfur, traditionally passing through the territory of many groups and fertilising their land with the manure from the livestock, indicating again the interconnectedness between the livelihoods of different groups. Darfur is traditionally divided up into a number of tribal homelands or 'Dar', which have a traditional tribal or 'native' administration managed by the tribe whose Dar it is. Within each Dar there are multiple other tribes who fall under this native administration.

Over the past 20 or 30 years, the livelihoods of farmers and herders have converged, as most farmers raise livestock (either as sedentary farmers, or by hiring herders to take their livestock on migration routes), for example the Fur and the Masalit, and many herders endeavour to cultivate crops, for example the Zayadia around Mellit. This has eroded the traditional symbiosis described above, and competition over limited resources has brought these groups into conflict with each other.

The five case-study areas represent some of the diversity that is found in the Darfur region, including different tribes, climate (rainfall) and ecology, and subsequently different livelihood patterns. In each case-study area, the research focuses on only one specific group, and so should not be taken to represent the area as a whole. In the larger study, results are presented for a range of tribes within the same area. The case-studies include:

- Kebkabiya: Fur IDPs, formerly farmers from Jebel Si
- Mellit: Zayadia (arab) agro-pastoralists
- Disa: a mixed group of tribes in rebel-held areas
- Seraif: Beni Hussein (arab) agro-pastoralists
- Geneina: Masalit IDPs (previously farmers)

Kebkabiya: Fur IDPs, formerly farmers from Jebel Si

By September 2004, the provincial town of Kebkabiya in North Darfur was a place of refuge for nearly 50,000 displaced Fur and Zaghawa, who fled there following the government counter-offensive and the Janjaweed attacks on villages in 2003. Initially, the IDPs lived in camps just outside the town, but following attacks in December 2003 they moved into the town, dwarfing its resident population of 21,000 (UNOCHA 2004).

The original tribes in Kebkabiya were the Fur and Tama, joined later by Northern Riizeigat Arabs and Zaghawa groups, who had migrated south in the 1970s and 1980s (Tubiana and Tubiana 1977; Ibrahim 1998); and by the Gimir from the west (some from Chad). The town is home to both pro-government (Northern Rizeigat, Tama and Gimir) and pro-rebel groups (Fur, Zaghawa). Not all of Kebkabiya Province was affected to the same extent by conflict. Arab groups in rural areas west of Kebkabiya, and also Gimir and Tama residents and IDPs in Kebkabiya town, are pro-government and are therefore not attacked during the government's counter-insurgency operations.

The livelihoods of the Fur IDPs were obviously very different when they lived in their home areas of Jebel Si. The Fur in Jebel Si were sedentary farmers, farming and raising livestock (goats, sheep and cattle) on terraces. Wild foods were available, but were only eaten in the drought years – for example *mukheit*. In other areas, households reported income from fruit trees, including oranges and mangoes. Land-holding and livestock ownership were the key features distinguishing rich and poor.

Labour migration was common among these groups. IDP focus groups estimated that, before the current crisis, about 30% of households had a male member who travelled in the summer to Khartoum and who returned in the autumn. In Khartoum, they worked as labourers or in ‘traditional trade’ in small shops, or selling cigarettes, soap and hats. Fewer men travelled to Libya or to Saudi Arabia (about 5% went overseas). Very few women went, and then only to accompany their husbands.

Migrants sent both clothes and money back from Khartoum. A typical remittance before the crisis might be SP 100,000 monthly (US\$40), and this would be used for basic needs, such as meat, sugar, clothes and schooling. From Khartoum, labour migrants were able to send money back either hand-carried, through banks or through the trade-based *hawala* system.

Many young Darfurian men went to Libya for a period of a few years, saving their resources and bringing them back on their return, rather than sending remittances periodically. From Libya, the only way to send goods or cash to rural areas in Jebel Si was to personally hand-carry them.

Livelihoods after the crisis

The focus groups of IDPs had been in Kebkabiya for up to 14 months, living in visibly crowded conditions with up to 20 or 25 families crammed into a single compound. The current livelihoods of displaced people in Kebkabiya bear very little resemblance to their previous livelihoods, as a result of their massive loss of assets and limited livelihood opportunities in the over-crowded conditions of Kebkabiya. Women have a chance of finding work as domestic servants and are paid SP 1,000–2,000 per day (about \$0.5), but for men there is very little chance of finding work. There is some work for labourers constructing buildings (at SP 3,000 per day, or just over \$1). The high level of unemployment has led to a fall in wages – previously, casual labourers received SP 5,000 per day.

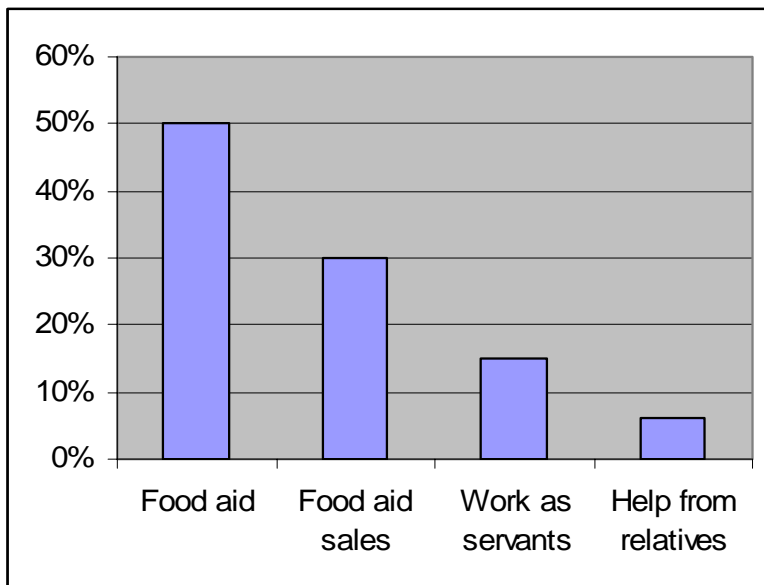
Their main source of food and income is currently food aid. The first food distribution was in October 2003, and they now receive food assistance every month. They sell a part of the wheat they receive to meet their other needs, and get SP 400 for one kora (US\$0.20 for about 1.7kg), which is only a fraction of its actual value.

Insecurity forces IDPs to stay within the boundaries of Kebkabiya town. Many tried to venture out to collect firewood, but the women were chased and frequently raped, while men risked fatal beatings. They must therefore buy their firewood from the market at considerable cost; one donkeyload costs SP 12,000 (\$4–\$5). They are not able to borrow money because, as IDPs, they are deemed uncreditworthy. IDP

groups in Kebkabiya were able to communicate with their relatives in Abou Shouk IDP camp in El Fasher, via a public telephone located in the El Fasher *souq*.

All focus groups claimed they were receiving no remittances or help from members of their community outside of Darfur. For a community where previously more than 30% of men migrated to find work and sent back remittances, this represents a major loss of income. According to Save UK analysis of this area, the poor will be disproportionately affected as they depend for up to 40% of their income and food sources from labour migration, while for the medium food economy group this accounted for 15 to 20%. As IDPs in Kebabiya, these people are entirely dependent on international aid (Figure 1), and have no prospect of recovering their livelihoods or developing alternative livelihoods in the current context.

Figure 1. Sources of food and income for IDPs in Kebkabiya



Mellit: Zayadia (arab) agro-pastoralists

Before the conflict, the provincial town of Mellit in North Darfur State was an important and vibrant commercial centre with strong economic and trade links with Libya and Egypt for the export of livestock, the import of goods from Libya and trade with Khartoum and Omdurman, as well as with other parts of Darfur.

The major tribal groups include the Berti, Meidob and Zayadia, and there were also Zaghawa, Fellata, Fur and other smaller groups. In the current conflict, the Zayadia belong to the pro-government alliance, while there is broad support for the rebel opposition among the other groups. However, the Berti

leadership is strongly represented in local government, which suggests that as a tribe they do not support the rebels. The Zayadia have become increasingly polarised from the other tribes. There had been rebel attacks on Zayadia communities outside the town (occurring at a time when only Janjaweed/government attacks were being reported internationally).

Zayadia livelihoods before the current conflict

The Zayadia include both farming communities and herders (agro-pastoralists), and have been described as ‘nomads in the process of becoming settled’ (Ibrahim 1984). The northern Zayadia have remained camel-herding nomads, while members of the tribe further south around Mellit and El Cuma have become settled millet farmers since the famine years of the mid-1980s. During the transitional stage, women were responsible for cultivation while the men migrated with their livestock (camels and sheep) (Ibrahim 1984). Female-headed households are common (about 25%), partly as a result of the migration of men to Libya and elsewhere.

The livelihoods of the two Zayadia focus groups interviewed were predominantly agricultural, with approximately 40% of their annual food and income coming from *goz* and wadi cultivation. Farming is combined with other livelihood strategies, including livestock rearing, labour migration, trade and the production of handicrafts (Zayadia women are known throughout Darfur for their distinctive leatherwork and handicrafts).

With the first rains in June, camels and sheep would be taken to South Darfur, after which they migrated northwards to the pastureland around Mareiga (Dar Meidob). They returned to the villages in September and stayed near local boreholes during the dry season. In recent years, the northern migration routes had become closed to Arab tribes.

The Zayadia have a long history of links with Libya, for labour migration as well as trade. One focus group estimated that four out of every ten families previously had a male family member working in Libya. The migrants who had wives and families in Darfur may stay in Libya for about two years, while single men may stay for 5–10 years. The focus group estimated that approximately 40% of labour migrants did not send back any remittances, while 20% sent about \$100 every six months (\$200 annually), and 40% sent around \$150 every 3–6 months (\$300–\$600 annually).

Remittances were usually hand-carried by the worker himself or by friends or family travelling back to Mellit. Remittances were also closely connected with trade from Libya: traders would use the remittances

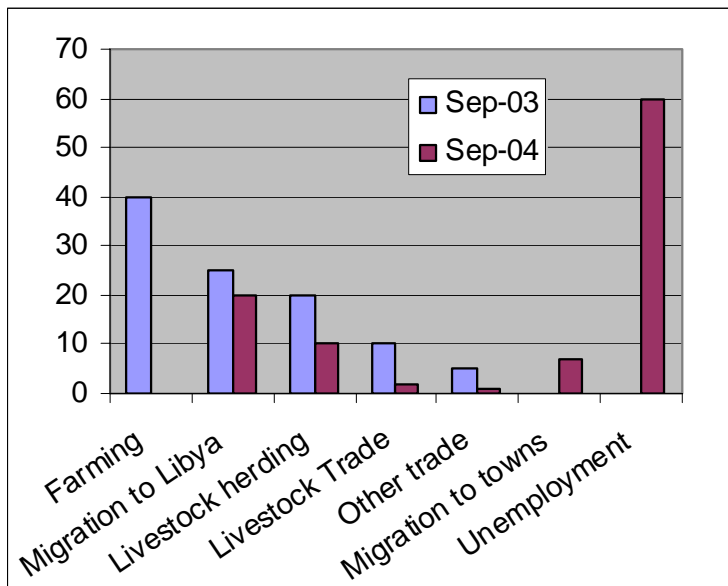
to buy goods to send to Mellit, which were then exchanged for cash, which was passed on to the end recipient.

Zayadia livelihoods since the crisis

The biggest change in livelihoods was the restriction of movement as a result of insecurity. The Zayadia believed that to move more than 1km outside the town’s boundaries was to risk attack by rebel groups. As a result, they were unable to cultivate their fields. Livestock herding as a source of household food and income has also decreased from 20% to 10%. This is because of livestock looting, and also because of general insecurity combined with localised tribal conflicts and the destruction of dams and wells. As a result, the condition of animals is deteriorating, as they are trapped within a confined area which increases risk of disease transmission.

Income from leatherworking has also decreased. Before the conflict, there were around 200 *rakuba* (temporary shops) in Mellit selling handicrafts; these have been reduced to about 13, as a direct result of the closure of trade routes and the general decline in Mellit market. Nevertheless, leatherwork still makes an important contribution to food security for people in the town. In addition, Zayadia women put themselves at risk of attack by collecting grass, wild fruits and firewood outside the town.

Figure 2: Activities of the Zayadia in Mellit



Labour migration to Libya used to contribute 25% of Zayadia households’ food and income sources, of which 18% was derived from labour, while 7% related to various trading activities with Libya. This has

now been reduced to 20%, due to the closure of the Sudan–Libya border and the looting of commercial herds by rebel groups.

One of the consequences of the loss of trade is a loss of capital, which will reduce the capacity of households to resume these activities when trade routes are eventually reopened. Many Zayadia traders have moved to Kebkabiya market. Migration to towns is a new strategy for the Zayadia; about 7% of the men have moved to towns such as El Fasher and Omdurman. Thus, while migration to Libya has fallen, migration of men to urban centres in Darfur has increased. However, the overall value of remittances has fallen substantially.

The Zayadia's close links with Libya have been broken as a result of the conflict: firstly, by the closure of the national border between Sudan and Libya, which has prevented labour migration and the flow of remittances; secondly, by the general state of insecurity (rebels control the main routes); and finally by large-scale attacks, kidnappings and looting of camel caravans en route to Libya. In one incident near Nukheila in early 2004, about 2,100 camels were taken, with a market value of between \$500,000 (at Darfur prices) and more than \$1m (at Libyan prices).

Because of the border closure, remittances from Libya have been very restricted. What remittances have been received consist mainly of cash, which is hand-carried by people travelling by air from Kufra in Libya to El Fasher, or sent via the *hawala* system based in El Fasher (two hours' drive south of Mellit, about 60km). Losses of in-kind remittances make people more dependent on local purchases, which because of the local high inflation erodes the value of cash remittances.

Disa: a mixed group of tribes in rebel-held areas

Disa is located within the rebel-held areas of north Darfur and is the local headquarters of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army. Tribes in the area include Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, Tunjur, Meidob, Fellata and Birgo. A Northern Rizeigat group (Owlad Hamid and Mahariya) previously living in the area left once the conflict escalated.

Disa was attacked in 2003 by Government of Sudan (GoS) military, supported by armed militia – Janjaweed. People fled their villages during the conflict, and only returned in October 2003. The security situation appeared far better than elsewhere, in terms of freedom of movement for the general population.

Livelihoods before the crisis

All groups were engaged in the same six broad categories of livelihood strategy: agriculture (*goz* and wadi cultivation), livestock rearing, labour migration and the sending back of remittances, collection of wild foods, casual labour and trade. Focus groups identified themselves as predominantly herders or farmers.

Better-off families would depend, in order of importance, on agriculture, livestock and trading, while poorer families would depend more on wild foods, labour migration and working for others locally (casual labour), as they owned far smaller numbers of livestock and had limited access to land. Wild foods were commonly used in the hungry season before the harvest.

Before the crisis labour migration was considerable, with most households having one or more members working away from home. For two focus groups, labour migration and remittances were the second most important source of food and income, after agriculture. The most common destination for labour migrants was Omdurman (68%), followed by elsewhere in Darfur (25%), and then beyond Sudan's borders to Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq (8%). The smaller numbers travelling outside Sudan were because only a few could afford the costs of travel (unless they worked their passage as herders). Focus groups identified two types of labour migrant overseas: those with work permits, who transmitted money through the bank in El Fasher, and '*silkawel*' – people with no legal status, who purchased goods and sent them back hand-carried by friends.

Previously, remittances included money and some goods that were hand-carried on the various lorries and buses coming to Disa, particularly on market day. Remitted goods could be sold by friends of the remitter in El Fasher, who would pass on the money to the family. Remittances were sent at periodic intervals, including monthly, quarterly, bi-annually and annually, and the amounts varied accordingly. Every six weeks to three months was the most common, with sums ranging from SP 50,000 to SP 100,000, which amounts to between \$78 and \$350 per annum. The chief purpose of the money was 'to support people in their daily lives – to help pay for their basic needs', and for investments in livestock.

Before the conflict, the existence of public transport between Disa and Omdurman meant that most remittances could be hand-carried all the way to Disa by friends or family of the migrant worker. Some goods and cash were also hand-carried by individuals travelling from Libya. Remittances in kind included clothes, money, sugar, rice, flour, edible oil, biscuits, mats, perfumes, radios and TV sets.

Livelihoods after the crisis

Months of land and air attacks, and associated looting and destruction of homesteads, have led to a massive loss of core livelihood assets, including loss of livestock, granaries, fruit trees – even the bushes and shrubs used for grazing or wild foods were destroyed. Local estimates are that 80% of livestock has been lost. Some of these losses have been caused by disease. Dams and *hafir* (used to catch and store rainwater) were destroyed, and wells poisoned.

In 2003 the cultivation season was completely lost, as it coincided with the attacks on Disa and the battles between SLM/A and GoS forces. While people were hiding in the mountains it was impossible for them to cultivate crops. Seed stores were destroyed, and new stocks were available only from the eastern and northern parts of El Fasher, which are difficult to access. Principally for these reasons, agriculture was no longer a major source of food or income. These groups have increased their reliance on wild foods. Some wild foods have a resale value and would have been sold in Kutum market.

The market in Disa no longer functions and people in the area depend mainly on women travelling to Kutum market by donkey to buy cereals and other essential foods. For safety the one-day journey is extended to seven days, but remains hazardous. Once in Kutum, the women must purchase a permit from the offices of Military Intelligence and Security, in order to transport goods beyond the checkpoints at the boundaries of Kutum town. These types of government restrictions represent further limitations on hand-carrying of remittances.

Labour migration has all but ceased, as the route to Libya is closed and other parts of Darfur are insecure. Omdurman is currently the main destination for labour migration and the main source of remittances, although to a far lesser extent than before.

All but one focus group reported that no remittances had been received from either Libya or Chad. For this focus group, remittances actually increased, because of strong kinship ties involving Chad. Their relatives outside of Sudan and Chad transfer money to groups in Chad close to the Sudan border, which is then collected by the group in Disa. Sometimes these cash remittances are used to buy goods from Chad and brought back to Disa to sell.

Communications between the Disa area and the outside world have been seriously disrupted, and this has severely curtailed the flow of remittances. Before the crisis there were telephone landlines between Disa and Kutum, but the only source of communications is via the regular trips made by women to Kutum.

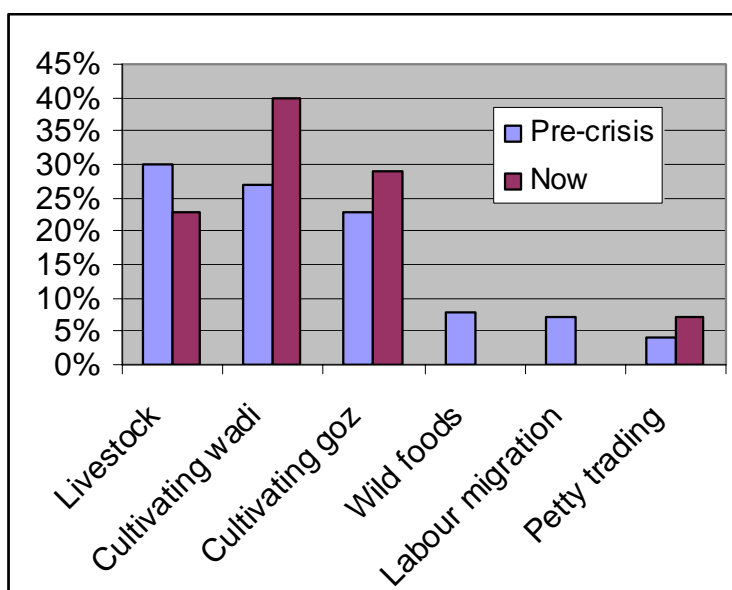
Regular transport between Disa and Omdurman has also ceased. This lack of communication with towns means that those with bank accounts can no longer access them. In particular, communications with people outside Sudan have been cut off. Communications with Omdurman were somewhat easier – either through merchants based in Kutum who were in touch with merchants in Omdurman, or by sending hand-carried messages with travellers going to Omdurman from Kutum. There is no direct communication between families in Darfur and their relatives in Omdurman.

Seraif: Beni Hussein (arab) agro-pastoralists

Seraif town is situated in the west of Kebkabiya Province in North Darfur. The Beni Hussein are the majority tribe, while other tribes include Fur, Zaghawa, Tama, Gimir, Masalit and Arab groups. At the time of the study, the Beni Hussein Native Administration in Seraif was adamant that it was not supporting either the rebel groups or the government, despite having been approached by both sides for its support. It was striving to maintain security and stability in the tribal homeland. Traditional security systems were still intact, but the local administration was not equipped to deal with the wider level of conflict that was occurring.

The livelihoods of the Beni Hussein have been among the least affected by the crisis of all tribes in Darfur, yet the indirect impacts of insecurity on access to markets, the availability of goods in local markets and mobility (both of livestock and labour) have significantly affected their livelihoods. Changes in livelihood strategies are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Livelihood strategies in El Seraif



The relative importance of cultivation (of both *goz* and wadi) has increased as the importance of livestock has declined. Currently, livestock movements are severely restricted, and herds can move only within the *dar*, or tribal homeland. Since the crisis, livestock as a source of food and income has declined from 30% to 23% of the total, although this masks the changing uses of livestock. Before the crisis, about one-third of livestock-based food and income came from milk, meat and skins, while the other two-thirds was from livestock sales. This pattern has now been reversed, with less than one-third of livestock revenue coming from sales, while the rest is direct consumption.

Labour migration – mostly to Libya, but also to Egypt and Saudi Arabia – was very common before the conflict. According to one focus group, every household had a member living and working in Libya (out of a population of 39,000, this would mean 6,500 men). The numbers of men going to Libya peaked in the drought years of 1973, 1984 and 1991. Libya was a popular destination as it was easy for men to travel there by lorry or as herders working their passage with the camel caravans. The majority of those in Libya are there illegally, with no identity papers or passport, working as herders, farm labourers, guards, construction workers, etc. The period spent in Libya varies from one to two years.

In the past, groups of men from Beni Hussein travelled to Libya together and stayed together as a group. Remittances for the entire group were hand-carried back by an individual member returning home. The amounts sent back varied between SP 100,000 and SP 150,000 (\$39–\$58) a year. Apart from remittances sent to cover basic household needs, money was sometimes sent back to pay for festivals or to pay for marriages or funerals.

The numbers working in Saudi Arabia, by contrast, were very small, with only five men from Seraif known to be working there at present. Most of those who go to Saudi Arabia do so legally. Remittances from Saudi Arabia were sent through the banking system and collected from banks in El Fasher, Kebkabiya or Zalingi, indicating that the work these labour migrants were undertaking was on a more official basis and was better paid. There is no *hawala* system in Dar Seraif because there are none of the larger traders who are needed to make it work.

Labour migration and remittances have been dramatically affected by the closure of the established trade route between Kufra in southern Libya through north Darfur to Tina and onwards to Nyala via Seraif. With the border closure, men from this community in Libya have to travel back to Sudan via Egypt, which is a

much longer route and incurs high taxes from multiple taxation points along the way. Insecurity on the roads and the high risk of attack are further disincentives for hand-carrying remittances.

This case-study is important as it illustrates that even those groups who have been least affected by the conflict and humanitarian crisis – in that they are able to remain in their home areas, farm and raise livestock – have been dramatically affected by the indirect effects of the conflict on labour migration and remittance flows, which have essentially all but ceased.

Geneina: Masalit IDPs (previously farmers)

El Geneina is the capital of West Darfur State, situated close to the national borders with Chad and the Central African Republic. The Masalit, who are sedentary farmers, are the largest tribe and are concentrated in Dar Masalit in the southern half of the state. To the south are the Sinyar, and to the north are the Erenga, Jabal and Gimir. Other significant farming groups include the Maba, Tama, Zaghawa, Daju, Burgo and Marariet. Arab groups include the Turgem, Hottiyya, Otryya, Mahadi and Darok to the north-east of El Geneina. In addition, the northern Abbala camel herders have long used the numerous *wadis* that cross the state for their dry-season grazing. Many of the tribes in West Darfur have sub-tribes and/or territories (*dar*) on both sides of the international border, a factor that has eased relocation or resettlement, especially in periods of crisis.

In the current conflict, attacks on villages as part of the counter-insurgency started in 2003, and large numbers of Masalit fled to Chad as refugees, or to towns in the region that sheltered displaced people. Those who could afford to do so left for Khartoum or Omdurman. Scattered remnants of Masalit communities were left behind in rural areas, consisting of older women, women and children and men trying to cultivate whatever crops they could, to supplement the meagre humanitarian relief they had received.

The Masalit are traditionally sedentary farmers. Their activities include the cultivation of *goz* and wadi soils, and sedentary livestock production. Fruits, including mangoes, guava, oranges and watermelons, were an important cash crop for Dar Masalit. Farmers used to combine agricultural cultivation with livestock production. Livestock was sold in local markets or taken to the larger livestock markets, such as Geneina, Habila and Fora Boranga. These are the primary markets linked to the terminal livestock export markets of Nyala. Fora Boranga is an important centre for cross-border trade, with links to the Central African Republic and Chad to the west. The livelihood strategies of the poorer farmers included the

collection and sale of wild foods, the collection and sale of firewood, growing grass for fodder and the hiring out of labour. Medium-income households might also hire out horses to plough wadi soils.

As long ago as the 1940s, the Masalit were engaged in both temporary and permanent labour migration outside of their homeland. This was been motivated by increasing living standards and the need for cash income, combined with opportunities for waged employment, especially in rain-fed mechanised agriculture in Eastern Sudan. Early studies and censuses noted a marked deficit of males in Dar Masalit both in the 1950s and in the 1970s as a result of this migration, especially in the 11–50 age group (Tully 1985).

Before the current crisis, migrants from Dar Masalit sent back both cash and commodities, such as clothing, beds and food. Temporary, short-term migrants usually brought their savings back with them when they returned home at the end of their stay. The size of the remittances sent back to relatives in Dar Masalit varied according to the migrant's responsibilities at home (i.e. single man or family provider).

According to one focus group, labour migrants in Libya with families in Dar Masalit would be able to send back approximately SP 300,000–400,000 (\$117–\$156) every six months. Those who were single would send back around SP 100,000–200,000 (\$39–\$78) every year. Another group broadly concurred with this, suggesting that the amount sent back by family providers was around SP 200,000–300,000 (\$78–\$120), two or three times a year.

Like the short-term migrants in Libya, migrants working in Saudi Arabia waited until their return to Dar Masalit to bring back their money. Cash remittances were either hand-carried, sent through the *hawala* system, or very occasionally sent through banks. Only the better-off, including traders and those working legally with a regular income, had bank accounts. Some Masalit migrant workers in Khartoum used to send money back to Darfur through the bank accounts of traders they knew and trusted.

Masalit livelihoods after the crisis

At the time of the field research in mid-2004, the vast majority of Masalit had been displaced at least once. A significant proportion had left for Khartoum/Omdurman, or had fled to refugee camps in Chad. Most of those remaining in west Darfur were in displacement camps. Most Masalit IDPs moved to camps between November 2003 and January 2004. Their villages had been attacked and burned down in August 2003. These IDPs lost most of their capital, particularly their livestock and all their household assets, during the systematic attacks on their villages. Few if any livelihood strategies were available to them.

None of the men or women interviewed from the camp was cultivating land in preparation for the next harvest, although some older family members (who were considered less vulnerable) had returned to their villages, to plant and harvest what they could with the intention of returning to the camp after the harvest.

For the most part, the IDPs depended on food assistance (which provided 85% of their food and income). Some men work in Geneina as casual/daily labourers, for pay of SP 2,000 per day. Day labouring, firewood collection and begging are the only livelihood strategies available to them, but these are extremely restricted, incur risks and produce low returns. IDPs were unable to collect firewood outside the boundaries of the town as they will be attacked by Janjaweed militia, who beat men and rape women. Older women, and some children, continue to gather grass for fodder and firewood, as the risk of them being attacked is less.

Labour migration is not an option for most IDPs, due to insecurity and their lack of funds for travel, although large numbers of Masalit remain outside their *dar* from before the conflict started, working as labour migrants. A survey in West Darfur by Concern International in 2004 showed that one in four families had a family member working away from home (Anon 2004). The Libya border closure and insecurity on the roads further limited communications and transfer of remittances. While in Kufra the research team met groups of Masalit farmers, who were trying to return to Darfur but were unable to because of the border closure. They had effectively become cut off from their home communities, which no longer existed. It is little wonder that contact had been lost and that remittances were no longer getting through.

Discussion

Labour migration as a traditional livelihood strategy

Labour migration and the transfer of remittances are a long-established livelihood strategy in Darfur, which as a source of food and income closely compete with the two principal livelihood strategies of rural groups (farming and herding), providing up to 40% of food and income. Labour migration allowed Darfurians to diversify their income sources and thereby increase their resilience to periods of hardship and food insecurity. In a context of minimal waged labour employment, labour migration and trade were the main sources of cash income or goods in kind available to rural households. Labour migration therefore has to be considered in the wider context of people's livelihoods, and their strategies to diversify sources of food and income, particularly in terms of acquiring sources of cash income, and also in terms of reducing risk in times of food insecurity.

Unlike farming and herding, labour migration is not subject to the vagaries of the weather, and in the past was an option even in periods of profound drought and famine. However, while migration is impervious to rainfall it is influenced by a range of wider economic and political processes and policy changes. The oil price rises of 1973 meant that Arab countries expanded their economic activity with a concurrent increase in demand for labour, which was met by labour-exporting Arab states (Choucri 1986). As a member of the Arab League Sudan has strong ties with other Arab states, including a common language. This, combined with unemployment in Sudan, fostered an environment conducive to labour migration. This period was regarded as one of 'unregulated market determined labor movements' (ibid). In the latter half of the 1970s the Gulf States began to recruit large numbers of South Asian workers and, by the end of the decade, the size of expatriate workforces in the Gulf States had reached a combined 9 to 10.2 million workers (40–46% of the workforce). The 1990s saw a stabilisation in the total number of migrant workers (ibid). US, EU and UN sanctions on Libya almost certainly affected Libya's economy, which had a knock-on effect on demands for foreign workers, which suffered during this period.

Migration patterns and shifting migration routes

Within the case-study areas of Darfur, respondents distinguished between three broad categories of migration and source of remittance transfers before the conflict:

1. *Seasonal and other short-term migration within Darfur.* Movement to other parts of Darfur is usually temporary or seasonal: for example, from Geneina to El Fasher with the livestock trade, and from North and West Darfur to South Darfur for three to four months' seasonal agricultural work from November to January. Because of the different rainfall patterns in Darfur – for example

in Disa the rainy season starts later than further south where the agricultural season is extended – people work on their own farms and, out of season, migrate southwards for work elsewhere. Urban areas of Kutum, El Fasher and Nyala also offer opportunities for casual work. Such work might provide the opportunity to raise sufficient resources to migrate to other destinations.

2. *Internal migration to other regions within Sudan.* This dates back to the development of rain-fed mechanised agriculture in Eastern Sudan. When mechanised rainfed agriculture was introduced in the late 1960s, the Sudanese government called on farmers to migrate towards areas of high production potential. A survey in Darfur in 1986 found that 2.3% of Darfurians had left for Central and Eastern Sudan during the two previous years, implying a total of 76,000 migrants (de Waal 1989). The study concluded that, largely because of the distances involved, migration to Eastern Sudan is not a short-term crisis strategy, but instead was viewed as a long-term livelihoods strategy (ibid). In Gedaref Darfuran communities, especially the Masalit, have established villages in the area and are engaged mostly in agricultural activities (and to some extent non-agricultural activities) as their primary occupation. In more recent years, Khartoum has attracted millions of people – those displaced by natural and man-made disasters, as well as economic migrants seeking opportunities to send back remittances. Darfurians from Jebel Si reported that migrants from their areas worked as labourers or in ‘traditional trade’ in small shops, or selling cigarettes, soap and hats.
3. *Transnational or external migration abroad.* Decreasing wage rates in Eastern Sudan and the oil boom in the Middle East in the 1970s and early 1980s made destinations outside of Sudan more attractive. Because of its relative proximity Libya provided the most feasible option, compared with Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Travel to Libya was cheaper, required minimal (if any) processing of travel documents and, most importantly, labour migrants from Darfur enjoyed strong support from an established diaspora in Kufra and elsewhere in the country. From 1973 Chad was engaged in a protracted conflict with Libya over the Libyan annexation of the Aouzou Strip, a claim which was finally rejected in 1994. Also compared with Libya, Chad offered very limited economic opportunities, as oil production only started in 2003. With the imposition of international sanctions on Libya in the 1980s and early 1990s, the economy contracted with high inflation and a backlash against migrant workers. While illegal migrants had few other options beyond Libya or Egypt, legal Sudanese migrants sought opportunities further afield in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

There are clear gender and age profiles among Darfurian labour migrants. The majority of migrants leaving the region are men aged between 18 and 35 years, while women in the same age group traditionally seasonally migrate within Darfur during the agricultural slack season. Women sometimes accompany their husbands, particularly if they are professionals or traders and working professionally in neighbouring countries.

The importance of each of these destinations varied in the different case-studies. It was noticeable that the Arab communities of Zayadia in Mellit and Beni Hussein in Seraif had much stronger links with Libya, probably as a result of the strong trade ties based on export of livestock and also the opportunities for Arab pastoralists to travel to Libya as herders, a principal livelihood strategy for these groups. Libya historically has been an important destination for Darfurian labour migrants, although its relative importance is changing, with migrants perceiving Libya as a gateway to Europe rather than as an end destination in itself. According to some key informants outside of Darfur, Iraq was an important destination before the war, but during the field study it was hardly mentioned. Very small numbers of Darfurians were reportedly working in Saudi Arabia, for example, with only five men from Seraif known to be working there at present. However, an important difference is that almost all of those who go to Saudi Arabia do so legally and therefore have access to foreign currency and banking services.

The Masalit IDPs in Geneina reported a strong tradition of labour migration particularly to the east of Sudan, but also to Libya. Migration to Omdurman and Khartoum was traditionally more important for the Fur of Jebel Si, and also for the mixed tribes in the rebel-held areas of Disa, who both commented on the expense and difficulty of travelling outside Sudan.

Since the conflict started in 2003 these traditional migration patterns and the associated push and pull factors have changed, with additional forces making it more difficult for either people to leave or send back remittances. For many young Darfurians, a major push factor was the risk of being conscripted by the rebels or the Janjaweed, or alternatively ending up in the IDP camps. Failing livelihoods and limited opportunities in Darfur for employment, skills training or education must also have represented a major push factor. A further push factor, particularly for the IDP groups, was the threat of armed violence against young men; this was considered a greater risk than sexual violence against women.

Labour migration was further hindered by insecurity throughout the region, and particularly along the routes to Libya in the north of Darfur, which is largely controlled by rebel groups and therefore only open to their supporters. The border closure between Sudan and Libya in May 2003 had a huge impact on

trans-saharan trade and human traffic between north Darfur and southern Libya. Shortly after this closure the government of Sudan closed the six customs points in north Darfur, indicating the complete fall-off in trade with Libya. Alternative routes are either risky and longer (through Chad or illegally through North Darfur) or very expensive and available only to a few (bi-weekly flights from El Fasher to southern Libya costing nearly \$200 one way). The overland journey to Libya via Chad or Northern Darfur is long and hazardous, covering more than 1,000 miles of desert and with very carefully rationed water supplies (three cups per day). A vehicle breakdown would mean death for all travellers. Fatalities are commonly reported; between 1997 and 2004, the Sudanese Popular Committee in El Kufra recorded the deaths of 486 travellers after crossing the Libyan border, and who were buried inside Libya. Deaths of travellers inside Sudan are not recorded.

Since 2003, the impact of the conflict on recipient communities in Darfur has been huge, with an overall fall in men leaving to work outside of Darfur, and a shift in destinations, with migration to Khartoum and Omdurman becoming increasingly important. However, this was occurring alongside two other phenomenon – an out-migration of refugees to Chad, and an out-migration of households that could afford it to Omdurman to escape the conflict. At the same time, the rate of return of migrants outside of Sudan certainly slowed given the difficulties of border closures and internal travel. These shifts undoubtedly contributed to a dramatic fall in remittances, and loss of contact with relatives outside of the region.

Remittance transfer mechanisms, types and flows

Darfurian migrants remit money and/or goods back to recipient communities in Darfur using three mechanisms:

- Through the hawala systems that connect Darfur with Omdurman/Khartoum and a range of diaspora locations externally. These systems may be either trade-based (i.e. involving an exchange of goods for trading purposes), or are financial transactions which take advantage of exchange-rate differentials and also may charge a fee.
- As hand-carried transfers in cash or in kind, either personally or sent with a close relative, friend or truck driver known to them.
- As a bank transfer, internationally or within Sudan.

The hawala system

The hawala system is based on a network of financial intermediaries known as Hawaldar. The system depends on trust: the agent knows the migrant worker personally, while the worker trusts that the money will be handed over to the right people in a timely manner.

The trade-based hawala system is closely linked with the trading of goods between Khartoum/Omdurman and Darfur, and also between Libya and Darfur. Cash remittances are sent in the form of goods between two hawaldar agents, who are traders, one in Omdurman and one in Darfur. They agree on a transfer of goods from Khartoum to Darfur, to the value of the monies being sent. The Darfur-based trader then pays the remittances to the migrants' families. Because it is a trust-based system payments are often made within 24 hours, making it much faster than the banking system.

The hawala system in Darfur depends on functioning markets, particularly the secondary or tertiary export markets, and also the reliability of communications, particularly functioning telephone landlines, mobile networks, or even sat phones. Thus in small towns like Seraif, or in rural areas like Jebel Si, there was no hawala system. The hawala system is therefore only available to the inhabitants of provincial towns where larger traders are operating, or to people who have trusted contacts there.

Hand-carried remittances

The hand-carrying of remittances in cash or in kind is often the preferred way of making transfers, particularly for the near diaspora in Khartoum/Omdurman, Eastern Sudan and Libya. The journey south from Cairo into Sudan and then westwards to Darfur involves multiple taxation points, and so where possible the route through Libya is preferred. For example, migrants in the Gulf States will often route their in-kind remittance transfers through Benghazi and Kufra, rather than through Egypt. Many young Darfurian men leave Darfur to go to Libya for a period of a few years, and then save their resources and bring them all back with them on their return, rather than sending remittances periodically. Remittances in kind included clothes, electrical goods (radios and TV sets), foodstuffs (sugar, rice, flour, edible oil, biscuits, pasta), household goods (mattresses, blankets, pans, crockery, plastic goods, mats) perfumes and jewellery.

Hand-carried remittance transfers depend on the ability of migrants to travel without hindrance and at reasonable cost. Transport networks and ease of travel were severely disrupted by the conflict, with border closures, localised militias and bandits harassing vehicles, multiple checkpoints controlled by

rebels or local militias, and protection rackets, which might incur taxation. The risks of road transport were therefore very high, deterring the transfer of hand-carried goods or cash.

Banks

Before the conflict the larger towns in Darfur had working bank systems. These banks served primarily professional workers, businessmen and large traders with regular income and investments. However, bank accounts were not an option for the vast majority of Darfurians, as ID papers or a passport were a requirement for opening an account. Examples were often given of professional or technical migrant workers in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iraq being paid in foreign currency which was paid directly into official bank accounts. However, many of the provincial banks were closed in 2003, including in Kutum. This has meant that many of those who previously had bank accounts no longer had access to them, and those in rebel-held areas had no access to their former accounts.

Only the bank transfers are formally recorded as private capital flows into Sudan, while the other two mechanisms – hand-carrying and the hawala systems – are unrecorded. Thus the formally recorded remittances represent a tiny fraction of the total ‘hidden’ economy. Estimates of informal channels are imprecise and difficult to come by.

The form of remittance was also affected by the conflict, with a preference for cash over goods. For example in Disa, women travelled to Kutum where they would seek out travellers going on to Omdurman to pass on messages to relatives there. These same travellers then brought back messages and remittances for people in Disa. However, the women could not bring back goods or remittances in kind from Kutum, because of government market restrictions, which controlled and vetted all goods leaving Kutum. Also, there was a higher risk of robbery of highly visible goods from Khartoum on the route back to Disa, thus cash tended to be favoured (albeit theft of hand-carried cash remittances was reported in the Geneina area).

Communications

Before the crisis telephone communications linked the main towns, and even smaller more remote towns like Disa in North Darfur. Since May 2003, communications have become extremely difficult, with the cutting of telephone landlines between rebel-held areas and government-controlled areas. Phoning via landline or mobile phone to the major towns of Darfur was still possible, but prohibitively expensive for many migrants (Benghazi to El Fasher cost US\$1 per minute).

While sat phones are widely used by the warring parties, they are not generally available to IDPs or rural people in Darfur. In Seraif, the local tribal administration had established a communication centre in 2003, providing a public phone service which was still operating in September 2004, 18 months into the conflict. The state capitals of El Fasher, Nyala and Geneina all had working mobile networks, but coverage did not extend to the neighbouring IDP camps, and the networks were regularly were shut down by the government.

Previously, messages were often conveyed on the regular transport networks and buses. For example, Disa had a regular bus to Omdurman via Kutum, which no longer functions. Communications within Darfur and Sudan were considered somewhat easier than communications with diaspora outside of Sudan. There was still regular traffic between Omdurman and the main towns in Darfur, which provided a means of sending hand-carried messages. In addition, for some people messages could be sent through the merchant trading network. For many senders of remittances, for example in Libya, there was no communication between them and their displaced relatives in Darfur, as they had no way of knowing where they had been displaced, nor did they have any means of tracing them.

Utilisation of remittances

Remittances take various forms, including cash and other financial transfers, in local and foreign currency, goods in kind (for consumption and capital) and also the skills, knowledge, ideas and experience newly available within the local community. In the past, these remittances were used mainly to meet consumption needs, including daily expenses of food, school fees, transport, water and healthcare, and also to pay debts and to make investments in livestock. It is likely that the patterns of utilisation have changed, although this was not adequately captured in the study. As other sources of food and income have shrunk it seems likely that any remittances would increasingly be used for consumption purposes.

Remittances also take the form of social and political capital established among the diaspora, which flows back to the receiving community. In fact, in many areas the diaspora represent a strong social and often political network. Among the long-established diaspora communities in Gedaref, there is a long tradition of sending back a portion of remittances to support the poor in their home communities. This gains the remitter social standing and respect, an important form of social capital. As remittances in general have dramatically fallen it is likely that these forms of positive social investment have also declined.

The financial value of cash remittances is strongly influenced by the prevailing rates of exchange between the sending and receiving communities and the exchange rate with the US dollar. High inflation in Libya in the 1990s and a falling exchange rate with the US dollar reduced the remittance earning potential of Sudanese migrant workers. Recently, while exchange rates between the US dollar and the Sudanese dinar remained fairly stable, inflation in Darfur has increased as a result of the conflict, thereby reducing the value of cash remittances. Utilisation of remittances is also influenced by access to markets and the availability of goods, both of which have been drastically reduced as a result of insecurity and conflict.

During conflict, patterns of labour migration and the transfer of remittances have changed and to some extent adapted to the new conditions. For example, traditional migration routes and transfer mechanisms were disrupted, and new means were found. Some diaspora found new ways of sending remittances to their relatives, for example, the sending of remittances by far diaspora to the near diaspora in neighbouring countries such as Chad, who were able to more easily access the receiving communities in Darfur. Remittances themselves became a highly prized resource attractive to thieves and even warring parties, although how they were utilised in support of wider political or military goals is not yet understood.

Current and future scenarios

Since this field research was done in July 2004 the situation in Darfur has changed considerably. The total affected population has almost trebled, from about 1.3 million to 3.6 million, and the number of IDPs has increased from 1.1 million to 1.8 million (UNOCHA 2006). The conflict is affecting the livelihoods of people who were not directly attacked during the counter-insurgency, but who nevertheless either lived in fear of attack and therefore moved, or alternatively whose livelihoods had suffered as a result of conflict and who were therefore forced to move. Since that time the nature of the conflict itself has also changed. In a 2006 livelihoods assessment Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006) describe the main changes as:

- More localised and smaller-scale displacement in areas of strategic interest.
- Attacks becoming more individualised, targeted at households for personal gain rather than being politically motivated, including increasing banditry and looting on the roads.
- Fighting between and within SLA factions.
- Deteriorating relations between the Sudanese government and Chad, as reflected by skirmishes and insecurity on either side of the border.

- Increasing politicisation and radicalisation of tribes within some IDP camps, most evident in the largest camps (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars 2006).

This more recent assessment was done before the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed in May 2006, and since then all of the above factors have escalated even further. The DPA has been controversial from the outset, with a refusal to sign by two out of three rebel factions. More broadly, the DPA has been met with a combination of criticism, disappointment and rejection by different groups and organizations in Sudan, international Sudan analysts and even the UN special envoy for Sudan, Jan Pronk. Subsequently, violence and anger has erupted across Darfur

The spread of localised insecurity and violence, combined with increasing ethnic and political polarisation between previously allied tribes, have negative implications for labour migration and remittance flows, which depend on security, freedom of movement and communications, and strong social networks. Until these improve it is unlikely that remittance transfers will be re-established. A second concern is the war economy, and control of vital trade routes with Chad, Libya and Egypt and also Khartoum. The close associations between remittances and trade mean that, where trade is restricted or controlled in the interests of specific groups, remittance transfers are likely to suffer.

Conclusions and potential response options

The case-studies illustrate the direct and indirect effects of the conflict and crisis on livelihoods and specifically on labour migration and remittance flows. In previous periods of hardship related to famine and food insecurity, labour migration and remittances were a livelihood strategy that people could continue to rely on while farming and herding came under threat. In the current context, conflict has taken its toll on the entire range of livelihood strategies open to Darfurians principally as a result of loss of freedom of movement linked with localised insecurity. The major factors (processes) impacting on labour migration and remittance flows as a result of conflict include:

- Insecurity, border closures and other restrictions on movements of labour migrants. The high visibility of remittances in kind, which might attract looters.
- Government restrictions on movement of goods from urban to rural areas e.g. the permit system in Kutum, and also the closure of custom points affecting trade.
- Government closure of banks in North Darfur through which formal remittances would be transferred from overseas.
- The deterioration in communications, caused by loss of phone landlines, limited coverage and government control of mobile networks.
- The loss of contact between labour migrants and their families caused by repeated displacement within Darfur, the break-up of families and loss of tribal leadership.
- Loss of income-earning potential in Darfur that would pay for the journey to Khartoum and other destinations. This includes the loss of opportunities to work as a herder on the livestock caravans to Egypt or Libya.
- Conscription pressures on men, which are likely to reduce the proportion of young men able to migrate.
- High inflation in Darfur, which reduced the economic value of remittances sent.

Given the importance of remittances to the livelihoods of the people of Darfur, the protection, support and facilitation of labour migration and remittance transfer mechanisms are an immediate priority. Examples of potential response strategies are summarised in Box 2.

Box 2: Examples of response strategies to support, protect and facilitate labour migration and remittance transfers

Improve communications

Extend mobile networks in urban areas to ensure they provide coverage for IDPs in outlying areas.

Review the feasibility of extending mobile-phone networks to provincial towns.

Reinstate the telephone landline network, and install a network of communication centres in areas of large population concentrations (>10,000 people).

Family tracing

Extend and improve the family tracing operations of the Red Cross/Red Crescent to include Darfurians located in all parts of Sudan, and the refugee camps in Chad. The Red Crescent societies in Arab states host to large Darfurian diaspora could explore instigating family tracing within their areas.

Lifting of travel restrictions

Border restrictions should be lifted, and safe access to markets should be ensured.

Skills development and support to diaspora

International organisations should support community-based organisations working with Darfurian diaspora particularly in terms of education and skills training, with a view to equipping them for skilled work opportunities in the destination country and for when they return.

Reintegration of illegal migrants into the formal economy in Libya

Libya has significant demand for labour migrants which is in part met by Darfurians. However, a high proportion of migrants are working illegally. Steps should be taken to give Sudanese workers legal status, and provide them with the option of returning to Sudan or applying for identity papers and working in Libya legally.

Capital loans to hawala traders and livestock exporters

Traders have been put out of business by the conflict in Darfur. Banks should be encouraged to make available low-cost loans to traders with a previous track record in either livestock trade or hawala trade with hawaldars in diaspora locations.

Banking and microfinance services

Banking services need to be reopened and complemented by a range of microfinance services. In communities that were traditionally remittance receivers, the demand and supply of microfinance services should be assessed, with a view to extending microfinance services to communities where cash remittances could serve as collateral.

Despite the all-time low level that remittances have reached in Darfur, it is highly likely that they will recover as the situation stabilises and eventually progresses towards peace. The international Darfurian diaspora has more than likely grown in size, and their failure to remit is a result of barriers beyond their control. Once these barriers are lifted, remittances will become re-established, and their overall importance to livelihoods will increase given the failure of other livelihood strategies and the unprecedented depletion of capital assets in Darfur. Where remittances are transferred directly to receiving communities with minimal diversion or loss en route, this is a very efficient and direct means of targeting conflict-affected communities in Darfur, and will contribute directly to the rebuilding of productive livelihoods in Darfur.

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