Sudan. Masha Issa, 23, registers her 20-month-old son Issa Jalal at Al Salaam internally displaced persons camp in North Darfur. Masha has lived at the camp for 16 years.
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Sudan

Internally displaced persons informing durable solutions action plans

1. Context

Although violent incidents have continued, the 2003 conflict between the Government of Sudan and rebel groups greatly subsided in mid-2016. Consequently, as new displacement reduced and humanitarian access gradually improved, senior government officials called on IDPs to return home or integrate locally.[1] At the end of 2016, some 3.3 million IDPs were displaced.[2] Up to that time, most of the assistance provided for IDPs in Sudan had sought to meet IDPs' short to medium-term needs through separate and rarely coordinated projects by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding players. Although it saved lives, IDPs did not see any substantial improvement in their circumstances and remained largely reliant on assistance. Dwindling financial resources and new humanitarian crises in other parts of the world also made it increasingly challenging for the international community to sustain its level of assistance.

This period coincided with discussions, as part of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including by better linking lifesaving interventions with longer-term development programming to end protracted internal displacement situations.[3] The UN Country Team, international NGOs and donors in Sudan endorsed the emergent "New Way of Working"[4], aimed at improving collaboration between humanitarian and development action. In particular, international players in Sudan sought to develop "collective outcomes," which were led to the "concrete and measurable results that humanitarian, development and other relevant actors want to achieve jointly over a period of 3-5 years to reduce people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities and increase their resilience".[5]

International humanitarian, development and peace players in Sudan came together at the Collective Outcomes Conveners Group meeting in July 2018 to agree a set of collective outcomes, and the Durable Solutions Working Group, established in 2016 and backed by the Government of Sudan,[6] began working on a pilot project, with the support of a Durable Solutions support cell set up within the Resident Coordinator's Office. Durable solutions for IDPs were seen as being the key to lasting peace in Darfur, as evident from the joint political commitments made by the parties to the conflict.[7] However, the diverse set of international players engaged in the Durable Solutions Working Group lacked updated, jointly owned evidence to better understand IDPs' vulnerabilities, coping mechanisms, capacities, perceptions and settlement intentions so that durable solutions programmes could be crafted. Political tensions between national and sub-national authorities during this period also hindered any national durable solutions strategy being drawn up.

2. Description of the practice

Given these constraints, in late 2016, the Durable Solutions Working Group launched a pilot project to develop area-based durable solutions plans of action in two parts of Darfur: Um Dukhun, a rural location in Central Darfur, and El Fasher, an urban location in North Darfur. Rather than establishing a national durable solutions strategy,[8] local-level plans of action would be used to develop joint humanitarian-development-peacebuilding programmes addressing the needs of a displacement-affected community as a whole using an "area-based approach", be that area an informal settlement, a neighbourhood, village or town[9], and not just programmes for IDPs or refugee returnees alone. The hope is that the project will ultimately contribute to the international community's wider efforts to develop collective outcomes at national level and will lead to the establishment of a national durable solutions strategy.

Two different approaches were used in the pilot project. The first step was to gather and analyse information about the communities concerned to establish a basis for developing action plans, emphasizing the role of IDPs' contributions in each case.

Both processes drew from global guidance that emphasises consultation and joint planning with displacement- affected communities at the basis of any durable solutions plan. The Um Dukhun action planning process drew on the 2017 "Durable Solutions in Practice" guide prepared by the Global Early Recovery Cluster that sets out a methodology for placing "consultation and joint planning with displacement-affected communities at the basis of any durable solutions plan".[10] The guide describes five steps in the process: "i) initiate the durable solutions process; ii) become better informed about the displacement-affected communities; iii) develop durable solutions

targets in consultation with the displacement-affected communities; iv) develop a long-term action plan; and v) ensure implementation and monitor the action plan".[11] The El Fasher profiling is based on the Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library and Analysis Guidance[12]. The objective of both processes was to arrive at a priority list of key issues to include in the action plans.

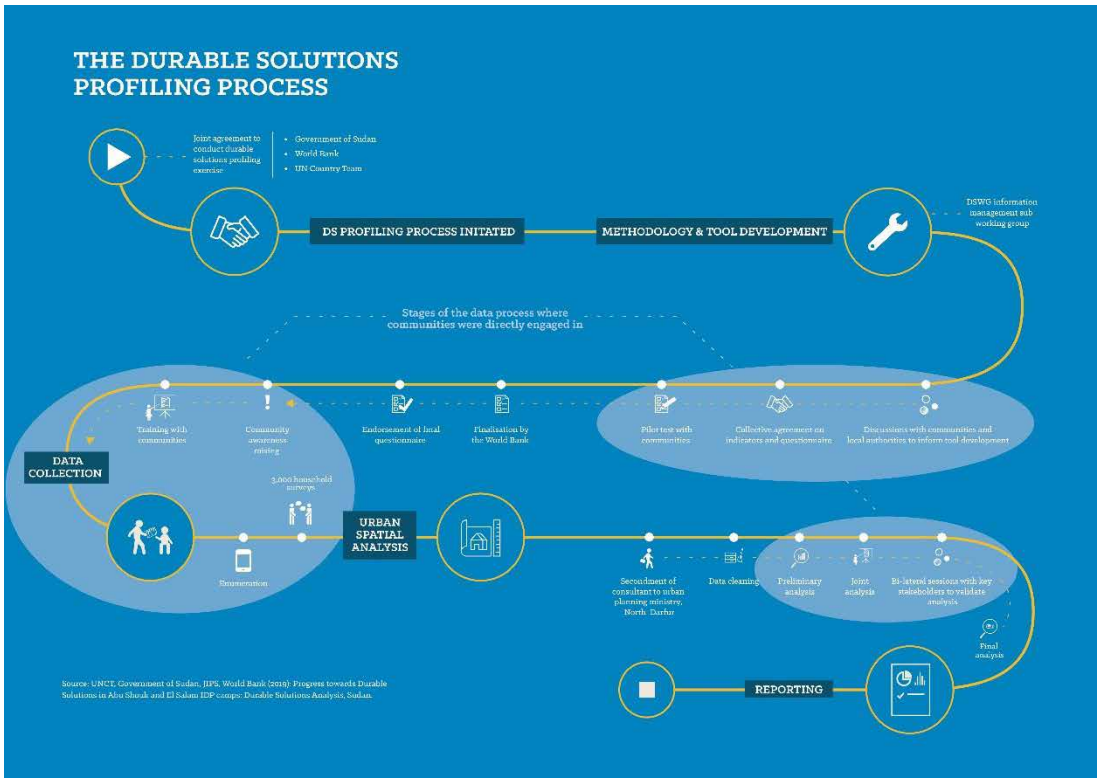
Durable Solutions in Practice, p. 2

El Fasher

In 2017, some 80,000 IDPs, more than half under 18 years old, from various ethnic groups were still living in two large encampments in Abu Shouk and El Salam in El Fasher's periphery.[13] Intended as temporary settlements, the camps had become *de facto* extensions of the city[14] where IDPs faced poverty and struggled to access basic services.

The profiling process, which began in 2017, sought to understand how IDPs' protection and assistance challenges in Abu Shouk and El Salam compared with the larger population in El Fasher using two main technical

components. A survey of 3,000 households, representing IDP households in the two sites as well as non-displaced households in peri-urban and urban areas of El Fasher, compared households' perceived living conditions and future prospects. Context analysis of El Fasher's urban area assessed potential options for local integration and relocation by reviewing land availability, social service provision and infrastructure.[15] Supplementary data collection included mapping and enumeration, key informant interviews, and three separate focus group discussions with elderly persons, youth and women. The process as a whole was a collaborative effort between the Government of Sudan's Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions that brings together multiple government institutions,[16] the international humanitarian and development community represented by the UN Country Team,[17] and local players, including government line ministries, local councils and tribal leaders, IDP communities and their non-displaced neighbours, and civil-society organisations. The World Bank and the Joint IDP Profiling Service provided technical and financial support for the process.



Steps of the durable solutions profiling process in El Fasher. JIPS

Um Dukhun

In comparison, the 2018 process to develop a durable solutions action plan in the rural area of Um Dukhun began with broad community consultations, as set out in step III of *Durable Solutions in Practice*. Um Dukhun had previously faced two waves of displacement in 2003 and 2013 associated with the wider conflict and inter-communal violence, respectively. Tens of thousands of IDPs were living in numerous camps scattered throughout the Um Dukhun locality in Central Darfur.[18] Four villages were selected through a consultative process, including IDPs, to pilot the durable solutions project. The majority of IDPs expressed their desire to return home.

It was anticipated that large numbers of Darfuri refugees in Chad would also return to Um Dukhun.[19] Tensions between farmers, pastoralists and nomad communities had long been a source of conflict in the area due to competition for water and land for farming and grazing.

The Um Dukhun process used two rounds of consultations, in February and March 2018, followed by a validation workshop of the results the following month.[20] The Durable Solutions Working Group chose to begin with step III, rather than a profiling process, because it was felt that the findings from surveys assessing globally-set indicators would be more useful at step V of the process to inform programme design. Thus, based on the premise that IDPs are best placed to determine solutions to displacement, the Um Dukhun process engaged IDPs and other displacement-affected communities through focus group discussions with traditional leaders, men, women, elderly, youth and persons with disabilities. Open ended questions to guide the discussion included: *Do you have plans for your future? What are the obstacles to your plans? What do you think would be a solution to those obstacles? What is preventing you from implementing those solutions? What additional help do you think you need?* A stakeholder workshop endorsed the priority areas of action identified through the consultations, and proposed suggestions for how integrated programming could address identified gaps. The process was facilitated by a local staff member of the French international NGO Triangle Génération Humanitaire, applying the overall methodology approved by the Governor of Central Darfur and Locality Commissioner of Um Dukhun.

Once the priority areas were validated, the communities were consulted on the best approaches to develop the most appropriate programme for their community, taking into consideration the available natural, human and financial resources and ensuring integrated programming. Agreement was reached, moreover, on local and community-based structures to oversee and monitor implementation of the programmes, the ultimate aim being that the projects should generate stable, revolving resources and profit for the communities to render them self-sustainable over time.

3. IDP Participation

Displacement profiling exercises are collaborative processes that engage multiple local, national and international stakeholders at each step to achieve collectively agreed data and evidence. With respect to the profiling exercise in El Fasher, a dedicated profiling coordinator from JIPS, working with a local translator, facilitated community consultations across different stages of the process, using existing mechanisms rather than creating new ones wherever possible. Two hundred *sheikhs*[21] representing different ethnic groups, alongside women's groups and youth representatives engaged in the process through a range of participatory methods.[22] As an initial step in the process, focus group discussions were conducted with (male) elders or sheikhs, women and youth to introduce the profiling process and explain how the resulting information would be used. This was an important step to encouraging participation, since the community's past experiences with data collection and assessments had resulted in few improvements in their lives, and in one case had even resulted in reduced food aid.[23] Although the profiling process drew on the Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library, local community-based organisations as well as elders and sheikhs participated in a multi-stakeholder workshop to select a set of core indicators to serve as the basis for the profiling process. Through a facilitated discussion and debate using accessible language and structured around the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons,[24] IDP and CBO participants helped prioritise the most

relevant indicators for the challenges their community faced, including long-term safety, access to livelihoods and land for different settlement options.[25]

The methodology of the El Fasher profiling process itself was also adapted to address IDPs' feedback. When trained IOM enumerators were piloting the household survey questionnaire, IDP community members insisted that their educated young men and women be directly involved in implementing the survey.[26] Thus, youth representatives were subsequently invited to accompany the enumerators, with some youth also trained as enumerators themselves, guiding the survey teams through the camp and facilitating communication with participating households. Finally, once JIPS had developed a preliminary analysis, official IDP camp representatives and camp section leaders were invited to participate in a stakeholders' workshop alongside government technical focal points to discuss the initial conclusions. Camp committee members were also consulted on the preliminary analysis through bilateral meetings in the camps. The final process resulted in six priorities to advance the creation of a durable solutions action plan, including ensuring the role of displacement-affected communities in the process. These included: i) focus on urban infrastructure for integration; ii) pro-poor programming; iii) focus on return; iv) community-based conflict resolution; v) the central role of displacement-affected communities; and vi) a generation-sensitive approach.[27]

El Fasher: Actionable priority five to advance durable solutions

The central role of displacement-affected communities

"[M]eaningful participation of displacement-affected communities is key to both sustainable return and local integration. However, this requires a process of consultation, sensitization, negotiation, and conflict resolution and making sure that women, youth and all ethnic groups are represented. […] Genuine participation and voice can ensure communities' ownership and contribute to making solutions lasting, relevant and supportive of social cohesion."

In Um Dukhun, the process began by first gaining the support of local leaders, including the mayor, the governor and traditional leaders of the most important ethnic groups, by explaining the initiative and process to develop a durable solutions action plan, emphasizing that it would ultimately be their responsibility to contribute to the development and implementation of the plan. The process then shifted to engaging IDPs and the displacement-affected communities. Community members welcomed an opportunity to participate in a process that sought to support their self-sufficiency, dignity and values after years of aid dependency. The first of two community consultations took place with residents of the four IDP camps who, when identifying the obstacles to finding durable solutions, expressed a predominant desire to return to their places of origin. The second consultation took place in IDP return areas, engaging local village members to understand what support would be needed to facilitate returns and address returning IDPs' concerns. The results of both consultations were affirmed by local authorities, NGO representatives, and representatives of IDPs, IDPs and refugees that had returned, and host communities. They all participated in a validation workshop, leading to a set of six priority areas to form the basis for durable solutions programming in targeted locations in Um Dukhun. The priorities were: i) a stable security situation; ii) sustainable access to water; iii) agricultural tools and techniques to ensure sustainable food security; iv) sustainable access to education; v) income generating programmes for the youth and vulnerable persons; and vi) sustainable access to health services.[28]

In general, IDPs and members of the displacement-affected community need to be actively sought out and supported to take part in data collection and joint analysis to ensure adequate representation of different groups. This requires assuming a sociological approach before the process even begins to understand how the community is organized, recognizing informal and formal social structures. However, in many contexts, relying solely on traditional or pre-existing representation mechanisms tends to result in community engagement that is biased towards male elders, who often act as official IDP representatives and leaders. Despite having a high number of female-headed households, one in three women in the El Fasher IDP camps had no formal education and were often excluded from decision-making.[29] Nevertheless, some women, as well as youth, were among camp committee members. Research has also confirmed that literate and numerate IDP youth have facilitated negotiations between the IDP community and humanitarian actors in the past.[30] Thus, in the case of the El Fasher process, the Profiling Coordinator simply insisted multiple times to ensure that women and youth were included in discussions.

4. Challenges

In the El Fasher process, survey fatigue and mistrust about the purpose of profiling exercises given past experience initially stymied the process. The IDP camp communities were also organized, with leaders well versed in their rights and cognizant of the many obstacles potentially blocking their preferred settlement options. Similarly, in Um Dukhun, facilitators needed to assure local leaders of the value of the process. Thus, building trust with IDPs and displacement-affected communities was key to moving the two processes forward.

In both processes, trust was built by ensuring transparency in the data collection by regularly explaining in clear, jargon-free language what the communities could and could not expect to come from the process. Each process also adapted to the local political context, taking into account power relationships, including at micro level, and assessing which data collection methods would produce the best opportunities for different stakeholders and groups to share their opinions and

expertise. The Profiling Coordinator and the Displacement and Solutions Strategic Adviser, respectively, regularly visited the communities and IDP camps and provided their telephone numbers to key community members, creating additional opportunities for informal and accessible lines of communication. Youth, in particular, used this opportunity to raise questions and contribute to the process. Partnerships with community-based organisations, such as mother-to-mother groups, football clubs, pastoralist communities, health promoters and community committees on water and education, also facilitated wider community engagement. The organizations also contributed their knowledge of local structures to map community assets that might further support the local integration of IDPs and returning refugees. Active community participation in the data collection and analysis process also helped build trust.

Despite best efforts to remain accountable to the affected communities, both processes to develop and implement area-based durable solutions action plans were blocked by political instability, starting in late 2018, that ultimately led to the toppling of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019 and the installation of a new transitional government. Even before this, local government authorities in El Fasher had indicated that they were not ready to endorse the outcome of the profiling process and a stalemate ensued. Security concerns and the evacuation of UN staff members meant suspending further efforts to organize the validation workshop with the affected communities for the final analysis report. In Um Dukhun, each of the four selected villages drafted a durable solutions action plan, setting out how to overcome their obstacles to achieving solutions. In January 2019, the Peacebuilding Fund financed a multi-stakeholder workshop (including local authorities, IDP representatives, NGOs and UN agencies working in the area) in the Central Darfur capital, Zalingei, to develop cost estimates for the village plans. However, although the Durable Solutions Working Group presented the plans to donors, funding never materialised- possibly due to the growing political uncertainty that started in late 2018. The further evacuation of UN staff meant that there was not sufficient time to establish the systems required to enable the villages to push the process forward on their own, which under normal circumstances could take about two years.

This experience underscores the importance of reflecting on when and how to progress durable solutions within the context of wider peace processes and uncertain security situations, and the ability to follow through on programming commitments made to IDPs and the wider community participants. Looking ahead, the Durable Solutions Working Group is supporting profiling processes in eight locations across five regions to develop durable solutions action plans with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund,[31] drawing upon lessons learned in El Fasher.[32]

The fact that political instability and security were identified as key barriers to finding durable solutions and hindered full implementation of the data collection processes itself, also highlights why durable solutions plans and strategies need to include contributions by peace and security players alongside humanitarian and development players.[33] Notably, the UN Country Team and the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) have included area-based approaches to durable solutions in the 2017-19 Integrated Strategic Framework.[34] The 2019 Sudan International Partners' Forum, hosted in the UN Resident Coordinator's Office with membership comprising the UN, bilateral and multilateral donors, international financial institutions, and INGOs, is a promising coordination platform for developing a harmonized collective approach aligning with the priorities of the new Sudanese government, including with respect to helping IDPs achieve durable solutions.[35] For example, the Forum plans to continue prior work on developing Collective Outcomes, developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and revising the Darfur

Development Strategy. Key donors have also joined together in the Friends of Sudan group to support the Transitional Government's priorities for economic and democratic reforms.[36]

5. Lessons learned

The best methods for engaging IDPs and other displacement-affected communities in the development of durable solutions action plans may differ in urban versus rural areas. While community consultations may be sufficient to begin durable solutions planning in rural areas, in an urban context, a community consultation would not have been sufficient to undertake the statistical, comparative analysis between IDPs and the larger community required to understand the more nuanced differences between IDPs and the wider non-displaced community members. The more complex governance structures and urban planning processes of cities[37] may also require a more formal profiling process, with endorsement from the highest levels of government, to facilitate the data collection process and ensure a collective endorsement of the findings. Collecting data can also be extremely sensitive and require negotiations with multiple levels of government to obtain approval for the process, which may need to be adapted to find a win-win solution. However, ultimately, the quantitative and comparative data from the profiling process made it easier to raise awareness among government officials about the importance of investing in certain areas.

In Um Dukhun, the open-ended and people-centred interview format allowed displacement-affected communities to identify and describe their hurdles to achieving solutions. Contrary to some views, qualitative data emerging from focus group discussions and interviews is not inevitably cumbersome to analyse. It just needs to be clearly incorporated into the data collection methodology from the beginning with a clear analysis plan.[38] The process also worked well given the decentralized nature of governance structures in the region.[39] That said, Um Dukhun will ultimately require, as planned, a systematic data collection process to provide the foundation for the development of programming responses, as well as the budgetary and administrative support of sub-national and national authorities to implement programmes. Thus, durable solutions strategies ideally need to be brought within an overall national strategy to ensure the necessary support of government at all levels.

This points to a larger challenge about the how to assess IDPs' progress towards achieving durable solutions, given that both exercises only captured a snapshot in time. Durable solutions cannot be understood as a one-time physical movement, but rather a process of progressively reducing specific needs associated with displacement. Approaches to data collection may also need to evolve and adapt, using the most relevant systems and indicators for measuring durable solutions as IDPs' situations change. Looking to the future, efforts should focus on building the national government's capacity to regularly collect and verify displacement-related data as part of national statistics, as set out in the 2020 International Recommendations on IDP Statistics,[40] in order to measure progress towards achieving durable solutions over time.

6. Results for IDPs and others

Operational experience from around the world has shown that area-based approaches to durable solutions plans are more successful than a national-level process when the process is locally driven.[41] Thus, gathering information from IDPs and displacement-affected communities is not about extraction. Rather, building the evidence for durable solutions action plans is a collaborative

Sudan. Intercommunal conflict displaces tens of thousands in West Darfur.
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process undertaken with and for the community to ensure their engagement for the duration of the process. Active community participation was particularly important during the process of identifying priority indicators and questions for data collection, and in focusing on concrete actions in the final analysis, such as livelihoods and strengthening their own capacities to contribute to the durable solutions process.

While IDP and displacement-affected communities' participation ideally enriches the results, participation may also accrue other benefits, such as greater community trust, reduced intra-community tensions (such as between pastoralists and farmers), and ownership of the process and its results as they come together for a collective purpose. IDPs may acquire new skills, further building confidence and resilience through the process, as seen through the active participation of IDP youth in El Fasher. However, effectively incorporating community feedback and suggestions that arise during the process requires flexibility in terms of methods and timing.

7. Why it is a good example to share?

Different methods can be used to develop area-based durable solutions plans with the strong engagement of IDPs and displacement affected communities. This example highlights how IDPs can contribute through the methodology and design of data collection, by becoming part of the survey teams, and by participating in analysis of the data. It also illustrates the importance of frequent, informal and transparent communications to build trust in the process and ensure the active participation of community members and enable them to gain other personal and community benefits from the process. However, Sudan's experience also underscores the very real challenges of pursuing durable solutions for IDPs amidst political insecurity and uncertainty, and the need to ensure that durable solutions are embedded within the wider humanitarian, development and peace and security strategies and programmes of government, civil-society organizations and international agencies.

Endnotes

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6 Under the auspices of the State Governors, local commissioners, the Humanitarian Aid Commission and the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

7 The Collective Outcomes Conveners Group is not specific to internal displacement. However, durable solutions for IDPs featured prominently in the discussions. See Chapter IV 'Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD)' (All Darfur Stakeholders Conference 2011) <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/law-and-policy/files/sudan/DDPD-English.pdf> accessed 11 October 2020. See also Darfur Joint Assessment Mission, '2013-2019 Developing Darfur: A Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy' (Darfur Regional Authority 2013).

8 Blay and Crozet describe a durable solutions strategy as "a general outline on how to achieve durable solutions, intended as a blueprint to be endorsed by the government. The strategy is usually complemented by a plan of action that details how it will be implemented, by whom and where." Caroline Blay and Sophie Crozet, 'Durable Solutions in Practice' (Global Cluster for Early Recovery 2017) Handbook 2.

9 ibid I.

10 ibid II.

11 ibid 2.

12 The Interagency Indicator Library and Analysis Guidance can be accessed here: https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/

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15 The urban context analysis was led by UN Habitat and in collaboration with the State Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities (SMPPPU) and the Housing Fund of North Darfur State. Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions and United Nations Country Team Sudan (n 12).

16 The Sudanese Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions includes the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Voluntary Return and Resettlement Commission, the Central Bureau for Statistics, and the Ministry of Physical Planning in El Fasher.

17 The UN Country Team's representation included the Durable Solutions Working Group's Information Management Sub-Working Group, whose members included the: IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, UN-Habitat, and the Sudan INGO Forum. United Nations, 'Update: El Fasher Area-Based Profiling Pilot to Inform Durable Solutions", May 2018' (United Nations 2018) <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/sudan/docs/DurableSolutions/Elfasher.pdf>.

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19 ibid.

20 'Update: Um Dukhun Durable Solutions Process' (United Nations Sudan and the Government of Sudan 2018).

21 The *sheikhs* are the lowest level of tribal administration and approved as official camp representatives by the government and provide the formal interface between the community and the humanitarian players.

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24 IASC, 'IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons' <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_durable_solutions.pdf>.

25 Ultimately the six criteria were: i) long-term safety; ii) adequate standard of living; iii) access to livelihoods and employment; iv) restoration of housing, land & property; v) access to personal documentation; and vi) participation in public affairs. Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions and United Nations Country Team Sudan (n 12) 6–7. See also JIPS, 'JIPS' 2nd Mission to Sudan: Advancing Work on Durable Solutions through Evidence' (*JIPS - Joint IDP Profiling Service*, 1 April 2017) <https://www.jips.org/news/advancing-work-on-durable-solutions-sudan/> accessed 17 September 2020. For the following steps in prioritisation of the indicators see: JIPS, 'Selecting Core Durable Solutions Indicators in Sudan: Back from Our 3rd Mission' (*JIPS - Joint IDP Profiling Service*, 10 July 2017) <https://www.jips.org/news/selecting-core-durable-solutions-indicators-sudan/> accessed 17 September 2020.

26 Interview with the Profiling Coordinator.

27 Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions and United Nations Country Team Sudan (n 12) 9.

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29 Helen Young and Maxwell, Daniel, 'Targeting in Complex Emergencies: Darfur Case Study' (Feinstein International Center 2009) 24, 28 <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.472.8970&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

30 ibid 12. Citing Michelle Barsa, 'Genders and Generations: Analyzing the Impact of Forced Displacement on the Role of Women and Youth in Public Space.' (MALD, The Fletcher School 2008).

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32 Karen Jacobsen and Therese Bjørn Mason, 'Measuring Progress towards Solutions in Darfur' (Durable Solutions Working Group Sudan 2020).

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37 Blay and Crozet (n 8) III.

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