

THEMATIC BRIEF

NOMADS

SHIFTING LIVELIHOODS AND MARGINALIZATION

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KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

- **Actors should consult directly with nomads and seek advice from thematic experts on Darfur's nomad communities** to better understand the unique problems they face and their views on solutions.
- **Actors must pay attention to grazing lands and migratory routes but also to the housing, land and property (HLP) rights of the nomad communities**, given their shifting livelihoods and greater reliance on crop farming.
- **Pastoralists should be supported on equal terms with the farming communities, specifically in regards to their rights to land for grazing and water**, recognizing their contribution to the country's GDP and exports. This includes providing pastoralists with more support from the Government's Rangeland Departments, including a focus on providing water and veterinary services along migratory routes and in grazing zones.
- **Actors designing interventions focused on 'farmer-nomad conflicts' need to recognize the interconnection of pastoralism and rain-fed cultivation**, and use approaches that promote complementarity and cooperation between the livelihoods of farmers and herders.
- In the post-conflict context of Darfur, **programming must be conflict sensitive and 'leave no one behind'** — following the central principle of the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Actors need to be alert to nomad communities' particularly poor access to basic services, including water and veterinary services for livestock. **Resilience and development programming specifically need to target nomad communities**, whose marginalization is part of the spectrum of root causes of the conflict.

The inclusion of nomads in durable solutions and peacebuilding processes is crucial. The Juba Peace Agreement acknowledges that nomad communities are one of the groups most affected by the Darfur conflict. However, results from studies in Darfur conducted under the UN Peacebuilding Fund in 2020–2021 show that nomads remain marginalized, when it comes to basic service provision, as well as excluded from the customary land system that limits their rights to agricultural land. Such exclusion impacts directly community cohesion prospects, resolution of conflicts and eventually lasting solutions.

The Juba Peace Agreement stipulates the establishment of the Commission for the Development of the Nomads and Herders Sector. It has a wide-spanning remit that includes providing tailored education, water points along migration routes and mobile veterinary services. Crucially, it is tasked with ensuring the participation of nomad communities in public affairs and representation at all levels of governance.

This brief sets out key considerations in regard to the inclusion of nomad communities,¹ which is key to both successful peacebuilding and to durable solutions to displacement. The brief forms part of a series of five short thematic documents that present key insights and messages drawing upon the eight durable solutions and peacebuilding studies carried out across Darfur by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

A shift in nomad communities' livelihoods

Nomads and pastoralism are generally viewed in opposition to crop farming and sedentary livelihoods, and in Sudan 'nomad' refers to economic activity as well as a cultural identity. However, defining nomads against the rural sedentary population has conceptual and practical consequences. Importantly, it creates a contrast between mobility and being sedentary so that people either belong to one classification or another.² In effect, people belonging to a nomadic tribe remain 'nomads' even if they settle.

Prepared by:

Results show that there is little understanding of the pastoralists' situation by the traditional sedentary farming communities, who appear to have stereotyped perceptions of who nomads are and what they want. For example, respondents refer to nomads as 'newcomers' who are unlawfully occupying the land of IDPs and refugees,³ while at the same time they categorically state that 'nomads move with their livestock and neither want nor need land'. However, as a Jebel Moon nomad leader emphasizes, some nomads do want to cultivate land but face difficult challenges, because the current land system is based on collective tribal ownership of land (Hakura), which excludes the nomad population from owning agricultural land. 'We are being treated unjustly', the nomad leader says and states that international organizations 'do not pay attention to this issue'.⁴

The perspectives of nomads are rarely sought after or included, thus perpetuating their marginalization. A study in 2020 highlights that "poor engagement of pastoralists is not the problem of government departments alone, as many in the development sector have turned a blind eye to pastoralists' vulnerabilities and challenges".⁵ The study further concludes that many NGOs and UN agencies have not been able to engage pastoralists, particularly those who practice long-distance mobility, in their interventions".⁶ Enhancing the understanding of the unique problems nomads face and their views on solutions is key. A substantial body of research exists already on Darfur's nomads focusing on pastoral livelihoods, strategies of production and conflict between nomads and farmers. Much of this research is undertaken by the Feinstein International Center with Sudanese and international experts making up the research teams.⁷

Survey findings show that nomads' livelihoods are changing: 39% of the nomad households report that crop farming is their main livelihood source.⁸ However, most surveyed households rely on a mix of crop farming and livestock: 58% report crop farming as either their primary or secondary source of income.

This indicates that many households have either permanently settled or practise a semi-nomadic way of life. The shift in livelihoods highlights the changing needs of nomads to agricultural land access and rights. Currently, the Hakura system does not grant nomads such rights, and therefore the consideration of such rights for nomads are key to the peacebuilding process and reaching durable solutions. **It is critical that actors recognize the shifting livelihoods of nomads and their greater reliance on crop farming. They should also consult directly with nomad communities and thematic experts to foster a better understanding and ensure tailored support.**

Why are nomads increasingly practising semi-sedentary livelihoods?

For many nomad households, pastoralism is becoming increasingly unviable. This change in nomads' livelihood strategies is the result of long-term processes. Research points to the 1982–84 drought and other severe livelihood shocks that led many pastoralists to partially settle and cultivate crops.⁹ Many nomads have lost livestock, on which their livelihoods depend, due to animal diseases and environmental degradation.¹⁰

The outbreak of conflict in 2003 has accelerated the sedentarisation of nomads. As a result of blocking livestock migratory routes and insecurity, many nomads choose to stay in areas they consider safe and instead resort to short or medium distance mobility.¹¹

Results show that nomads experience theft, damage to property and robbery to a greater extent than any other population group. Pastoralists continue to be exposed to considerable security risks as there is a widespread proliferation of weapons in many areas and some nomads have lost their herds because of theft. Lastly, findings highlight that some nomads want to settle because the constant movement makes it difficult to access healthcare and education for their children.

Nomads are particularly exposed to security risks.

- HHs having experienced robbery at least once in the past 12 months
- HHs having experienced damage to property (e.g. the fts) the past 12 months

Displaced (IDPs and returnees)



Non-displaced



Nomads



Pastoralism and nomads provide a large contribution to Sudan's GDP and exports. **Pastoralists' rights to land for grazing and water should be supported on equal terms to land rights of farming communities.** Nomadic communities' livelihoods are under severe pressure and **Rangeland Departments can play a vital part in making pastoralism viable** by providing water and veterinary services for livestock along migratory routes and in grazing zones.¹² Security and upholding the rule of law is essential to nomad communities as much as it is to sedentary farming communities.

Nomads' poor access to basic service

Survey findings show that nomads have significantly lower access to basic services compared to other population groups. When looking at a key SDG indicator for health, namely the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel, results show that only 5% of births in nomad communities are attended by skilled personnel in contrast to 13% of births in neighbouring sedentary communities. When asked about obstacles to accessing health services, distance is a significant barrier for nomad households as 40% indicate distance as the main obstacle to seeking medical assistance.

Sanitation is another area where nomad communities have very poor access. While 21% of non-displaced residents practise open defecation, that is the case for 85% of nomads. This practice is a major problem as water and sanitation-related diseases, such as diarrhoea, are the leading causes of death for children under five.

Lastly, findings on education show that school attendance is dramatically low among nomad children. For primary school aged children (6–13 years of age), merely 17% of boys and 9% of girls go to school. In contrast, 59% of non-displaced boys and 57% of girls in this age group attend school.

Nomads fare worse than their non-displaced neighbours when it comes to school attendance.

- School attendance among 6-13 year olds Girls
- School attendance among 6-13 year olds Boys

Displaced (IDPs and returnees)



Non-displaced



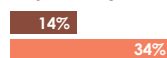
Nomads



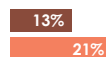
Nomads have less access to basic services, such as health and sanitation.

- Births attended by skilled personnel - SDG 3.1.2
- Sanitation: households practicing open defecation

Displaced (IDPs and returnees)



Non-displaced



Nomads



'Leave no one behind' is the central principle of the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents a commitment to eradicate poverty but also to end discrimination and exclusion and reduce inequalities. **Nomad communities have consistently been marginalized and actors need to be more alert to nomad communities' particularly poor access to basic services, including water and veterinary services for livestock.**

In the post-conflict context of Darfur, programming must also be conflict sensitive. Nomad communities have far less access to a range of services — sanitation, education, health — and the lack of development is a major source of grievance.¹³

Resilience and development programming specifically needs to target nomad communities, whose neglect and marginalization are part of the spectrum of root causes of the conflict.

Farmers and nomads: networks of interdependence

Findings also show positive social relations between farmer and pastoralist communities, and pointed to the economic relations and interdependence between communities that benefitted both parties. Relations have, however, been damaged by the conflict.

Conflict between farmers and herders is often viewed to be a fundamental problem: livestock and farming livelihoods are unavoidably locked into a competition for scarce resources and are now further exacerbated by climate change. However, this lens is simplistic and misses a history of cooperation and complementarity between pastoralists and farmers.¹⁴ Although complementarity between sedentary and pastoralist livelihoods in Darfur has been reduced,¹⁵ networks of traditional interdependence between land user groups can play their part in creating social cohesion and peacebuilding.

Resilience and peacebuilding actors designing interventions focusing on 'farmer-nomad' conflicts should use an approach that recognizes the interdependence of pastoralism and rain-fed cultivation. If pastoralism's interconnection with cropping is understood, interventions can be designed in a way that promotes complementarity and cooperation between the livelihoods of farmers and herders.

ABOUT

This analysis builds on eight studies that took place across Darfur in 2020–2021 under the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). All displacement and conflict affected communities — IDPs, neighbouring non-displaced residents, nomads, IDP returnees and also return refugees — were included in the analysis in the targeted localities of Tawila, Assalaya, Yassin, Sheiria, Gereida, Jebel Moon plus Nertiti and Um Dukhun. The large-scale sample-based survey was combined with extensive in-depth qualitative data, which together form the evidence-base for the insights and recommendations presented here.

The studies were led by UNHCR and the other PBF agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UN-Habitat and FAO), with technical guidance from the Durable Solutions Working Group in Sudan (DSWG). IOM collected the survey data and the Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA) undertook the qualitative area-level data collection. JIPS led the design of methodology and tools and conducted the analysis and reporting. The locality reports and thematic briefs can be found on the [below web platform](#).



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NOTES

- 1 Nomad communities were targeted in all eight locality studies, but only sufficient samples captured in three localities: Gereida, Um Dukhun and Jebel Moon. Therefore, the survey results provided are indicative of these localities, while qualitative data results draw upon results from all localities.
- 2 Krätli et al. (2013) Standing Wealth: Pastoralist Livestock Production and Local Livelihoods in Sudan.
- 3 The JPA uses the term 'secondary occupants' but respondents refer in a number of ways to the people that are currently living on land that was previously cultivated by IDPs. Terms used most are pejorative and include 'new settlers', 'newcomers' or simply 'those who have taken the land by force'.
- 4 Nomad leader, Jebel Moon locality.
- 5 Satti, H., Sulieman, H., Young, H., Radday, A. (2020) Natural Resources Management: Local Perspectives from North and Central Darfur.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 The Feinstein International Center at Tufts University has led research on Darfur livelihoods and conflict for the Tadoud programme (INGO consortium) and UNEP's Sudan Integrated Environment Project. Publications can be searched by author and topic: <https://fic.tufts.edu/publications/>
- 8 This proportion is even higher in Jebel Moon and Um Dukhun, where 50% of the surveyed nomads rely primarily on crop farming.
- 9 A 2019 study of South Darfur nomad communities points to the 1982–84 drought combined with a rinderpest epidemic, which led to a catastrophic loss of livestock. In response, some pastoralist households partially settled in the 1990s or even earlier; the women started to cultivate crops, while the men switched to short and medium distance mobility.
- 10 Darfur studies have documented degradation of natural resources, which in turn leads to an expansion of land cultivated and involves clearing forested areas that were sources of livestock fodder. Satti, H., Sulieman, H., Young, H., Radday, A. (2020) Natural Resources Management: Local Perspectives from North and Central Darfur.
- 11 Young et al. (2009) Livelihoods, Power and Choice: The Vulnerability of the Northern Rizaygat, Darfur.
- 12 Satti, H., Sulieman, H., Young, H., Radday, A. (2020) Natural Resources Management: Local Perspectives from North and Central Darfur.
- 13 Young, H. and Ismail, M. A (2019) Complexity, continuity and change: livelihood resilience in the Darfur region of Sudan
- 14 Krätli, S. and Toulmin, C. (2020) Farmer-herder conflict in Africa: re-thinking the phenomenon? Iied Briefing, June 2020.
- 15 For example, crop residues now have an economic value for farmers, who feed these to their own livestock during the dry season. This means that farmers often are motivated to harvest the crop residue before the nomadic pastoralists arrive at their dry season grazing areas. Satti, H., Sulieman, H., Young, H., Radday, A. (2020) Natural Resources Management: Local Perspectives from North and Central Darfur.