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Sudan: Darfur crisis adds to challenge of mass return to the South following historic peace deal

New prospects for a lasting peace in Sudan after two decades of civil war have been overshadowed by the continuing crisis in Darfur. Sudan has been home to the world's worst displacement crisis. An estimated six million of its citizens have been forced from their homes, as a result of over 20 years of fighting between government troops and allied militias on the one hand and various insurgent groups on the other. In the Darfur region of western Sudan alone, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) was approaching two million by March 2005, with no end to the suffering in sight.

An historic peace deal was signed in January 2005 by the government and its main opponent in the South, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), after two years of negotiations, bringing a formal end to Africa's longest-running civil war. A cease-fire signed in October 2002 had already encouraged hundreds of thousands of IDPs to begin returning to the South. Now that a peace deal has been concluded, many more are expected to return and will need assistance to reintegrate, along with half a million returning refugees. Local communities will equally need support to recover from the devastating effects of war.

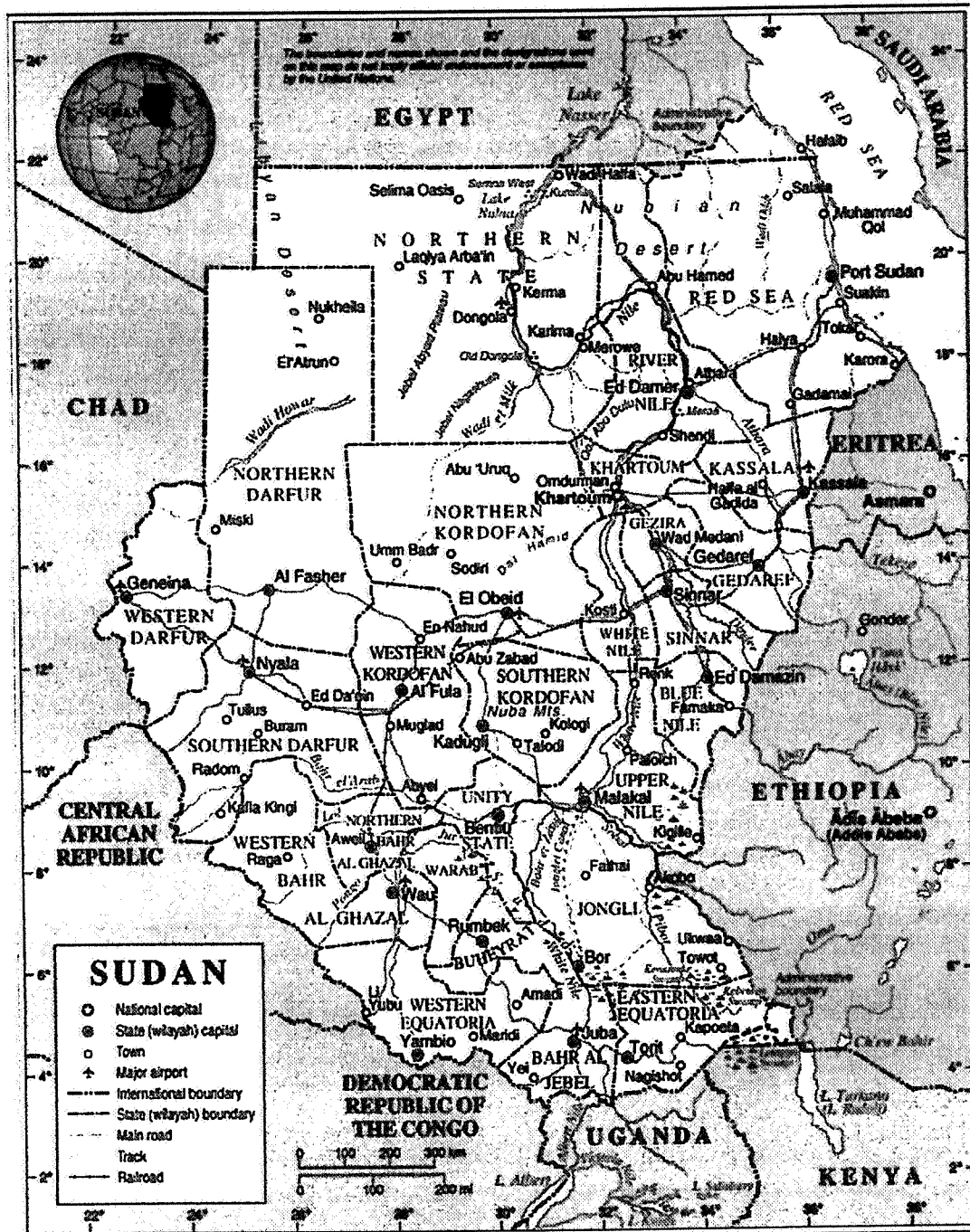
The challenges of return in southern Sudan are overwhelming, but have so far received little international attention and support. Two decades of fighting laid waste to huge swathes of Africa's biggest country. IDPs who already tried to return to their areas of origin faced continued attacks and the meagre resources and services available forced many to return to the displaced camps where they lived. The uprooted urgently need physical and legal protection as well as assistance to meet their basic needs along return routes and in areas of return. Local administrations are greatly under-resourced and unprepared for handling the return process. Likewise, return and rehabilitation activities planned by the international community have received hardly any funding during the past two years. In addition to a massive demand for basic services and new infrastructure, a functioning



judicial system will be needed to settle land and other disputes. Despite the hopes raised by the peace agreement, the reality on the ground has not improved for millions of IDPs and returnees, many of whom continue to face attacks, hunger and lack of assistance.

In Darfur, over two million people have fled killings, the systematic burning of villages and other crimes against humanity since armed conflict broke out in early 2003. Of those more than 1.8 million sought refuge within Sudan, while another 220,000 escaped across the border into neighbouring Chad. Indiscriminate counter-insurgency attacks by government troops and allied militias have continued unabated in violation of two ceasefire agreements and three Security Council resolutions. As a result of international pressure, access restrictions imposed on humanitarian organisations were eased in mid-2004 in parts of the region. However, ongoing fighting and insecurity still prevent hundreds of thousands of people from receiving adequate assistance. A number of conflicts in other parts of Sudan, notably in Greater Upper Nile, also continue to cause mass displacements, but have received little international attention and hardly any assistance.

MAP OF SUDAN



Source: UN Cartographic Section, May 2004

Background

Sudan has been virtually in a state of civil war since it gained independence from British-Egyptian rule in 1956, except for 11 years between 1972 and 1983, when the South was provided with some autonomy. However, during the last years of this decade, the Khartoum government took away the autonomy granted to the South after oil was discovered in southern Sudan, and introduced *sharia* law in the country. These steps fuelled discontent and opposition in the South, and eventually plunged the country into renewed conflict generating the largest internal displacement crisis in the world and killing over two million people. Some six million people are internally displaced, about a third of whom have fled to the north and mostly settled around the capital Khartoum (UN, 30 November 2004). The monitoring of population movements in Sudan is complicated by widespread insecurity, multiple displacements, the scale of the problem and sheer size of the country (2.5 million km²), traditional nomadic migration patterns and the fact that the majority of IDPs are not in camps. In addition, the country is prone to disasters, and famines have killed tens of thousands of Sudanese during the past 15 years.

The civil war in Sudan has simplistically been depicted as one pitting the "Arab" Muslim North against the "African" Christian and Animist South. While there is a long history of tensions caused by the exploitation of the South by the northern-based government, people all over Sudan share similar grievances stemming from marginalisation, discrimination, and inequities in economic development and power-sharing, for example in South

Kordofan, eastern Sudan or Darfur. In many regions, people have come to perceive themselves as "Africans" oppressed by "Arabs", but this reflects less an ethnic reality than a polarisation between those who feel marginalised and those who are aligned to the central government. As a result, the war has no single battlefield, and various conflicts cut across regional and ethnic boundaries. Conflicts are commonly rooted in competition over resources (mainly land, water and oil) between nomadic and agricultural communities or between various ethnic groups. The main belligerents have been the SPLM/A and the Sudanese army with its allied militias, but there are also several armed factions and splinter groups whose destabilising power should not be underestimated. The recurrent recruitment and deployment of militias from nomad or ethnic groups to fight proxy wars against insurgents, and the manipulation of identity for partisan goals have fuelled serious animosities between communities, with disastrous consequences on the social fabric of the country. These intricate conflict patterns have generated complex and volatile displacement situations. Indiscriminate and deliberate attacks on civilians, often with the intention of displacing them, is the main cause of people being forced to flee.

Recent political developments

Two years of negotiations between the government of Sudan and the SPLM resulted in the signing of a historic peace agreement formally ending over 20 years of civil war. In July 2002, the two parties signed the Machakos Protocol, which provided a framework for a ceasefire and broader negotiations. In further talks in

the Kenyan town of Naivasha, the parties reached agreement on key issues related to security and the sharing of wealth and power. On 9 January 2005 the final Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed comprising all previously agreed documents, including two protocols on the implementation of modalities and a permanent ceasefire signed on 31 December 2004. Key provisions of the CPA include procedures for the development of an interim constitution and provisions for autonomy for the South during a six-year interim period which would end with a referendum on independence.

As of March 2005 the UN Security Council was planning to deploy about 10,000 peacekeepers to Sudan in order to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. The contingent would include 750 military observers, a protection force of about 4,000 and an enabling force of round 5000 (UN SRSG, 4 February 2005). The UN peacekeepers would be deployed in addition to the already existing African Union Mission in Darfur (AMIS). However, support for the deployment of UNAMIS peace troops has been "very limited" according to the UN Secretary-General (UN SC, 4 March 2005).

The challenges ahead to ensure that the peace agreement and its protocols are implemented are great. A number of issues included in the peace agreements remain to be resolved, particularly with regard to the so-called transitional areas of Southern Blue Nile (Funj), South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Abyei, located between the North and the South. The demarcation of Abyei, for example, is yet to be agreed upon. The dissolution

of Western Kordofan State and its re-absorption into Southern Kordofan is unpopular in the region and parties disagree on the location of its capital (Justice Africa, 15 November 2004). A new movement, the Movement of the Elimination of Marginalisation, has also emerged in Kordofan.

The peace process has been criticised for not being inclusive and not addressing other conflicts in the country, as well as for lacking any provisions for a truth commission, prosecution or other accountability mechanisms for past abuses (HRW, 6 January 2005). This environment of impunity has not been conducive to dissuading warring parties in other parts of the country from perpetrating further abuses, particularly in Darfur. The negotiations mainly involved the government of Sudan and the SPLA, but other opponents or people with similar grievances in other regions such as Darfur, Kordofan and the East were sidelined from the talks (Justice Africa, 7 January 2005). Unaddressed conflicts and grievances in marginalised and border areas risk jeopardising the recent gains and have the potential to degenerate into full-scale war, with destabilising effects on the whole region.

Ethnic cleansing in Darfur

In February 2003, shortly after the Naivasha peace process started, a long-overlooked conflict flared up in western Sudan. Two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), took up arms in protest at the marginalisation and underdevelopment of their region as well as the lack of gov-

ernment protection against recurrent raids by nomads on sedentary communities (ICI, 25 January 2005). Although the population of Darfur is divided into nomadic and sedentary people, they are all Muslims and belong to the same Fur, Zaghawas and Massalit ethnic groups (ICI, 25 January 2005). The government responded with a massive counter-insurgency campaign of air and ground attacks, but mainly relied on local nomad "Arab" militias, the so-called "Janjaweed", to fight the rebels. The offensive has been accompanied by deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including massacres, rape, torture, abductions, forced recruitments and systematic looting and burning of villages. As a result, over 1.8 million people have been displaced within Darfur during the past two years, and about 220,000 have fled across the border into Chad (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 70,000 displaced people had died between March and October 2004 alone, about 10,000 per month (WHO, 15 October 2004).

Human rights crisis

The International Commission of Inquiry for Darfur established by UN Security Council Resolution 1564, concluded in January 2005 that the government of Sudan and its allied militias were responsible for massive war crimes and crimes against humanity. While the Commission found no evidence of genocidal intent, it did not rule out this possibility. In a separate sealed document, the Commission identified individuals responsible for atrocities and recommended that these cases be referred to the International Criminal Court for prosecution (ICI, 25 January 2005). However, as not all Secu-

rity Council members recognise the jurisdiction of the Court, no decision on implementing this recommendation had been made as of March 2005 (HRW, 25 February 2005).

In violation of the April 2004 ceasefire, three Security Council resolutions and a November commitment by the government to cease aerial bombardments, all sides continued to carry out heavy military operations. The authorities have failed to fulfil their obligations to adequately protect civilians, disarm militias and prosecute those responsible for abuses (UN SC, 4 March 2005). The depopulation of villages and attacks against civilians continued unabated and with impunity throughout 2004 and into 2005, in what leading human rights organisations described as a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" (HRW, 25 February 2005). An upsurge in military activity displaced over 180,000 people during December 2004 alone (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005).

There were reports of government troops and militias preventing IDPs from seeking refuge in towns and from returning to their villages (ICI, 25 January 2005, AI, 3 February 2004). Many of those who tried to return to their villages or tend to their fields were killed, as was reported in late February 2005 in South Darfur (UN CT, 1 March 2005). Villages were burnt to the ground even after people had fled, in an attempt to prevent farmers returning to self-sufficiency and there was evidence that nomads had begun to settle on lands previously inhabited by the displaced (ICI, 25 January 2005, para.329).

Displaced women continued to be subject to rape and sexual violence at gunpoint in camps and in the vicinity of camps. It has

been widely reported that women venturing outside camps to carry out activities indispensable for daily survival, such as searching for firewood or water, have been gang-raped (MSF, 7 March 2005). Due to fear of arrests and stigmatisation faced by the victims, sexual violence was believed to be greatly under-reported (UN SC, 4 March 2005).

Despite dire humanitarian conditions, IDPs in some camps have requested agencies not to deliver food, fearing that this would fuel further assaults and lootings (UN, 3 March 2005). There are concerns that the integration of militia members into the military and civilian law enforcement structures will not contribute to protecting IDPs, as many of them have perpetrated crimes against civilians.

Several mechanisms have been put in place to address protection gaps, with mixed results. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was mandated by the UN and the government of Sudan to "oversee and assist in the voluntary return of displaced persons" in August 2004, but there were persistent reports of IDPs being forcibly relocated and returned against their will by the authorities, in spite of their stated fear and security conditions not being conducive to safe, voluntary and dignified return (HRW, 15 November 2004; RI, 10 November 2004; GoS, IOM, UN, 21 August 2004). While protracted and overcrowded camp situations should be avoided in general, any population movements must be strictly voluntary (UN, 3 March 2005).

Several inter-agency protection working groups were set up in Khartoum and Darfur, to collect information, monitor re-

turns and follow up cases of abuses. UNHCR assumed full responsibility for the protection and voluntary return of IDPs in West Darfur, at the request of the Secretary-General in October 2004, and expanded its presence in the field (UNHCR, 11 February 2005). But in North and South Darfur, where the presence of UN agencies with protection expertise is limited, leadership on protection issues and a coherent strategy to facilitate and monitor returns were still lacking (UN, 3 March 2005; HRW, 15 November 2004). IOM and OCHA have not been able to adequately fulfil their coordination roles in these two regions, leaving serious gaps in the areas of protection and IDP camp management (UN, 3 March 2005). At the initiative of OCHA, "lead agencies" among international NGOs and ICRC were appointed to coordinate 27 IDP locations, leaving about 600,000 people displaced without a clearly-identified coordinator in the remaining camps and areas, as of end-2004 (UN RC, 25 January 2005; UN, 3 March 2005).

Response to humanitarian needs

Although the Darfur crisis has been widely acknowledged as one of the world's most serious humanitarian disasters, the international community took over a year to start responding to it. Despite insecurity, the number of humanitarian workers in Darfur increased from 200 in March 2004 to about 10,000 a year later, mostly owing to the expanded presence of NGOs (UN DIP, 16 March 2005). However, the number of war-affected civilians has increased at a rate which outpaced the ability of aid agencies to provide for their basic needs: from one million in June to an unprecedented total

of 2.4 million by the end of 2004, most of them IDPs (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). This number has soared due to consecutive droughts and exhaustion of local resources. Prioritising assistance to IDP camps risks creating a "pull factor" to these sites, attracting other war- and drought-affected populations in need of assistance. De-centralising assistance to rural and non-camp settings remains a serious challenge to avert further depopulating the countryside (UN, 3 March 2005).

Humanitarian needs were not adequately met in Darfur until mid-2004 owing to insecurity and lack of human and financial resources on the ground. A total of \$1.14 billion has been pledged for Darfur since September 2003 (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). But it was only in the final third of the year that funds became available (UN RC, 25 January 2005). The food sector was the best funded in 2004, benefiting some 62 per cent of the 2.4 million war-affected people at year's end (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). By February 2005 the World Food Programme (WFP) had received over half of the \$438 million it appealed for to feed 2.8 million people in Darfur for 2005 (IRIN, 24 February 2005). Nevertheless, WFP warned that there was a large shortfall in non-cereal food items and that it needed to pre-position food stocks before the rainy season in July, as huge areas would become inaccessible by road.

By contrast, the agricultural sector was the least funded (16%) with close to half a million households in need of seeds for 2005. Conflict and drought resulted in a near total crop failure in 2004. Most of the displaced are subsistence farmers and could not access their fields for planting

(UN, 30 November 2004, p.99). Coping mechanisms have been nearly exhausted over years of drought and conflict, meaning that food insecurity is likely to increase throughout 2005. In addition, the disruption of traditional migration routes and the inaccessibility of grazing areas will undermine livestock production. Half of the households did not have enough food to meet their minimum nutrition requirements and IDPs were markedly worse off than local residents. While malnutrition rates remained well above the 15 per cent emergency threshold, there were relative improvements during 2004. The percentage of malnourished children under five fell from 39 to 22 between spring and September 2004 (WFP, CDC, 26 October 2004).

Most IDPs have lost all their possessions and means of survival, and thus are completely dependent on humanitarian assistance. While some displaced have received help from local communities, many have been hiding in isolated areas; others camp at overcrowded sites where shortages of water and sanitation services resulted in a major epidemic of Hepatitis E during the second half of 2004, affecting 18,000 people (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). Over half of Darfur's population had no access to clean water, and continued insecurity hampered interventions to provide water supplies. Most children's deaths in the region were attributed to acute diarrhoea brought on by the lack of clean water and sanitation facilities, and exacerbated by malnutrition. Injuries and violence were the main cause of death among adults. Death rates in Kalma IDP camp in southern Darfur were seven times the average rate in Africa (WHO, 15 September 2004).

International political response

No tangible progress had been made by March 2005 with regard to a political settlement of the Darfur conflict. Peace talks convened in Abuja in November 2004 broke down after the government of Sudan had launched another major military offensive. Conflict escalated again in southern Darfur in December 2004 and January 2005.

The Sudanese government agreed to the African Union deploying an observer mission to Darfur, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), at the end of May 2004, mainly to monitor implementation of the April 2004 ceasefire. In October its mandate was strengthened to include securing an environment conducive to the delivery of humanitarian aid, assisting in the process of confidence-building, and monitoring and enhancing the service delivery of local police (EC, 26 October 2004). By March 2005, the AU had only about 1,900 troops deployed, mainly in the state capitals, out of a planned 3,500, to monitor a region the size of France (BBC, 7 March 2005). It has outspokenly condemned violations by all sides and has managed to protect some civilians and prevent some attacks. These efforts have, however, not received adequate support from the international community. As a result of its small numbers and inadequate resources and logistical capacity, the AU mission's impact remains limited (HRW, 6 January 2005). As suggested by the protection working groups, the AU has deployed civilian police teams to support under-staffed local police stations in dealing with abuses (UN SC, 4 March 2005).

Forgotten conflicts

Persisting conflicts in other parts of Sudan have been nearly eclipsed by the North-South peace negotiations and the Darfur crisis, which together have attracted most international attention.

In the South, oil-rich Upper Nile is one of the regions most racked by violence. Since early 2004, some 120,000 people have been displaced in the Shilluk Kingdom by clashes between government-backed militias and armed groups that used to support the government but changed sides to ally themselves with the SPLM/A in October 2003 (Christian Aid, 6 May 2004; IRIN, 11 May 2004). Since then, the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), set up to investigate violations of the Geneva Conventions, reported an increase in military action and human rights abuses. These involved deliberate attacks on civilians, including systematic destruction and burning of villages, gang rapes, killings, looting and extortions, committed by all sides (CPMT, 2 October 2004, 25 May 2004, 19 August 2003). This is in violation of the October 2002 ceasefire and its February 2003 addendum, whereby the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A committed themselves to facilitate the return of people displaced in the region. The January 2004 agreement on the sharing of oil resources has done little to end the fighting.

The link between forced displacement and oil exploration in Greater Upper Nile has been highlighted by successive UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights and several NGOs. Observers have consistently reported that the Khartoum government deliberately depopulated oil-rich

areas, using violence and sophisticated weapons to assert control and enable oil firms to exploit new sites (ICG, 10 February 2003; HRW, 25 November 2003). The government used proxy wars and divide-and-rule tactics to weaken the southern-based opposition, notably by sowing tensions between Nuer and Dinka ethnic groups.

There is a further threat of violent conflict in Kassala state in eastern Sudan where clashes between the Beja National Congress and government forces in late 2004 and early 2005 escalated into bloody confrontations. The Beja people have been excluded from the Naivasha process and have no forum to negotiate their political demands with the government (Justice Africa, 23 February 2005).

In Greater Equatoria, incursions by the Ugandan rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to displace people, destroy livelihoods and hamper humanitarian operations in 2004 (UN RC, 15 January 2005). The area along the Ugandan border remains unstable, particularly since the Ugandan army was allowed to deploy its troops inside southern Sudan to pursue the rebels.

Challenges of return

Return in Sudan is inextricably linked to peace, access to land and the provision of services. Despite ongoing fighting, the two-year-long peace negotiations have raised the expectations of millions of uprooted people eager to return home. Hundreds of thousands of IDPs have already returned spontaneously and some go-and-see-visits to the Nuba Mountains have been ongoing since the 2002 ceasefire

agreement (F.A.R. et al, 19 January 2005, p.25). An estimated 360,000 IDPs returned from Khartoum during 2004 mainly to Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile and Southern Kordofan (IRIN, 21 February 2005). Between 500,000 and 1.2 million people are expected to return during 2005 along with half a million refugees (UN, 30 November 2004, p.44-45). Systematic mechanisms to monitor returns have yet to be set up, but movements are likely to be gradual rather than massive, as IDPs will wait and see whether services and peace come along (Care, IOM, F.A.R., 1 February 2004, p.4). In addition, nearly one third of the country's displaced have fled within the South, and will also need support if they decide to move back to their southern areas of origin or resettle elsewhere.

The challenges of return are overwhelming. Southern Sudan's current capacity to cope with large numbers of returnees is severely deficient, as the region totally lacks basic infrastructure and local administrations are unprepared. In order to reintegrate IDPs, roads, water-points, medical centres, schools and buildings will need to be constructed. Massive population movements and multiple displacements are likely to create conflicts over land, resources or allocation of aid, and in the absence of an effective civil administration have the potential to spiral out of control. Support for the establishment of the rule of law is urgently needed as well as protection mechanisms along return routes. To adjudicate disputes, local conflict-resolution mechanisms will need to be re-habilitated and strengthened. Information about land ownership and property-restitution is lacking. Returning populations will need legal support to tackle these issues and should be

provided with adequate documentation (IRC, 1 May 2004).

Nearly a third of the expected returnees are IDPs currently living in Khartoum. The capital hosts nearly two million IDPs, most of whom appear to be willing to go back to their places of origin. There are concerns about the rising number of displaced children left behind in the city by their parents, who think they will have better job and education opportunities there than back in their villages (UN, 18 November 2003, Vol. II, p.332). However, such opportunities are lacking in towns as well. A survey found that three-quarters of IDPs in Khartoum were unemployed, with 44 per cent having received no formal education. Over half of them were under 20 years old (CARE/IOM, 28 February 2003). There should be plans to facilitate the integration of IDPs wishing to stay in the North. Many "urbanised" IDPs will choose to return to urban areas of the South, which still totally lack infrastructure and services. In rural areas, massive investment in services, agricultural inputs and infrastructure will be needed to boost agricultural recovery and provide sustainable livelihoods for millions of returnees. Many IDPs who had spontaneously returned were forced to go back to camps in Khartoum due to insecurity, taxation, drought and lack of services (CARE, IOM, F.A.R., 1 February 2004, p.4).

So far assistance for returnees is embryonic and ad hoc at best. One of the first priority needs identified by IDPs was transportation; the UN, however, planned to provide transportation only to refugees and vulnerable and "skilled" IDPs (F.A.R. et al, 19 January 2005, p.24-5). An IDP stated: *'We are all vulnerable.*

Whoever thinks that we can walk from Khartoum to Juba in dignity should step in our shoes and walk with us' (IRC, 1 May 2004, p.11). Beyond the ethical debates this may raise, the lack of transportation will deter returns. Most IDPs cannot afford the cost of the trip (many had to sell assets to pay for transport), and while walking across a nation half the size of Europe, IDPs will be exposed to numerous abuses (UNR/HC, 15 September 2003, p.11). In addition, families are likely to be separated in the selection process, which is highly undesirable especially during return and reintegration (IRC, 1 May 2004).

In 2004, two inter-agency mechanisms – a Displaced Persons Task Force and a Sustainable Returns Team – were created under the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, to plan and coordinate assistance and protection activities for returning IDPs. Both are chaired by a senior IDP adviser and include participants from the government's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the SPLM/A's Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), the UN and NGOs. The UN Country Team has also agreed with the government and the SPLM/A on a joint mechanism for tracking return movements and work has begun on its implementation (UN, 30 November 2004, p.14).

The UN plans to establish feeding, health, and shelter centres along 14 major routes and closely monitor returns. While some food supplies have already been pre-positioned, much more remains to be done. There is no organised registration or provision of assistance to new arrivals in the South. Local authorities completely lack resources to meet their needs. While refugees will be provided with basic re-

turn packages, no such assistance is planned for returning IDPs. Start-up kits would enable IDPs to contribute rather than being a burden to already impoverished local communities; in addition it would enable them to settle in uninhabited areas (IRC, 1 May 2004, p.14-15).

IDPs seriously unprotected

A lot remains to be done in order to create an environment conducive to sustainable return in Sudan. Although the government has officially undertaken to ensure the safety and protection of IDPs, displaced people all over the country continue to be exposed to serious violations of human rights and the laws of war, including along return routes and in areas of return. One million mines could also obstruct return and agricultural recovery, if not cleared. While 21 out of 26 states were affected in Sudan, information was only available for 11 states (JAM, 25 January 2005).

In the October 2002 ceasefire agreement and its February 2003 addendum, the government and the SPLM/A committed themselves to protect civilians and to allow the immediate and voluntary return of IDPs. However, during 2003 and 2004, the CPMT international monitors reported violations of the ceasefire and gross human rights abuses against civilians, many of whom had recently returned. In both Upper Nile and Abyei – a key transit areas for returning IDPs – the Team reported that returnees had been victims of gang rapes, killings, lootings, extortions, abductions and denial of freedom of movement and choice (UN, 30 November 2004, p.45; CPMT, 25 May 2004, 7 December 2004, 19 August

2003). In both regions, the authorities had failed to punish the perpetrators and take preventive measures. The capacity or willingness of local authorities to guarantee the protection of returnees en route and in areas of return is very limited and needs to be reinforced.

Humanitarian situation

IDPs in Sudan are among the most destitute in the world. Most of them do not live in camps but are scattered across isolated areas, and insecurity has often prevented agencies from assisting them or assessing their needs.

Many areas remained short of food in 2004, as a result of population movements, heightened insecurity and drought. IDPs and returnees are commonly worst affected by malnutrition (FAO, 12 February 2004, p.23). In areas affected by displacement, malnutrition rates were particularly high, with rates ranging between 21 and 40 per cent in Darfur, Greater Upper Nile, Northern Bahr El Ghazal, Red Sea and parts of Eastern Equatoria (FAO, 12 February 2004, p.23; UN, 18 November 2003).

WFP anticipated that 3.2 million people in Sudan (excluding Darfur) would need food aid in 2005. The areas worst affected by food shortages were Kordofan, Bahr el Ghazal, Kassala and the Red Sea State. But out of \$302 million appealed for to cover shortfalls, only about eight per cent had been received as of end February 2005, standing in sharp contrast to the 50 per cent already received for the Darfur emergency (IRIN, 24 February 2005).

Disease and lack of adequate food were rampant in Upper Nile where intense conflict and late rains resulted in widespread crop failure. For example, as a result of food shortages and the population influx of over 25,000 IDPs in Malakal town, food prices sharply increased (IRIN, 24 February 2005; IRIN, 7 March 2005).

Shortages of safe drinking water and a critical lack of access to health facilities were also common in areas of displacement. There was only one doctor per 100,000 people in southern Sudan, and Bahr el Ghazal reportedly had no doctors at all (IRIN, 7 March 2005; Brookings/ect, 25 November 2002, p.5). Estimates also suggest that less than 40 per cent of the population in southern Sudan had access to clean drinking water. As a result, one in every four children dies of preventable and water-borne diseases every year in Sudan before reaching the age of five, and one in nine women dies in childbirth (UN, 30 November 2004, p.46).

Khartoum house demolitions

Despite an encouraging government initiative to grant land to IDPs in Khartoum, the actual way this process has been carried out has raised serious concerns about the government's commitment to the project, as thousands of displaced families have been left homeless. Out of some two million IDPs in Greater Khartoum, the vast majority are living in squatter areas and about 270,000 are settled in four overcrowded camps (F.A.R. and CARE, 27 January 2004, p.1). Since the government started re-planning the camps in 2003, over 40,000 displaced families

have had their houses demolished alongside schools, health facilities and latrines (F.A.R. et al, 19 January 2005). Thousands of families have been left with no place to live, because plots allocated are too few and no alternative shelters have been provided. There appeared to be no government policy addressing the needs of those excluded from accessing new plots, especially IDPs who have no identification, female-headed households and those having arrived in Khartoum after 1996 (Interagency, 19 January 2005).

Less than a quarter of the households have received a new plot, and only very few could afford to start re-building their houses (Interagency, 19 January 2005). By November 2004, 80 per cent of the IDPs were living in improvised shelters and many were forced to return to the South as a consequence of the demolitions (F.A.R. et al, 19 January 2005). Many IDPs have been relocated to isolated and barren areas without basic services and job opportunities. Thirty per cent of displaced children around the capital were malnourished in 2004 with less than 10 per cent able to eat three meals per day (F.A.R. et al, 19 January 2005, p.24-5).

Access

During 2004, the security situation remained very volatile throughout Sudan, with great access problems in Darfur, an upsurge of conflict in Upper Nile, mounting tensions in the East and continued LRA attacks in Equatoria, which hampered the delivery of humanitarian assistance to IDPs. The UN expects security to further deteriorate in 2005 particularly in the East and potentially in the North as

well as in the states of Southern Blue Nile, Upper Nile and Darfur (UN, 30 November 2004, p.5).

While international advocacy and pressure temporarily improved access in Darfur during 2004, the situation deteriorated towards the end of the year and was not expected to improve again in the short term. During the first half of 2004, ongoing conflicts and government restrictions on travel permits allowed humanitarian agencies to reach less than five per cent of the displaced, and only 13 per cent of the war-affected people in the region (UN, 4 May 2004; UN R/HC, 10 January 2004). However, the government eased visa and access restrictions following the signing of the Joint Communiqué with the UN Secretary-General in July 2004, allowing the deployment of some 10,000 personnel who were believed to reach about 88 per cent of the affected population by the end of the year (UN R/HC, 1 January 2005). At the same time, an upsurge of fighting during the last months of 2004 and early 2005 curtailed many humanitarian operations, and whole areas were intermittently cut off from assistance. Incidents involving the killing, abduction and harassment of relief workers including attacks and looting of humanitarian convoys have been on the rise since September 2004 (UN RC, 15 February 2005). Save the Children-UK pulled out from Darfur in late December 2004, following the death of four of its staff members.

National response

Since 1988, the government has developed several initiatives to respond to the IDP crisis at the policy and institutional

level. In 1995 it set up the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) which is responsible for managing protection and assistance to IDPs and in 2003 it created a Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs. In 2002, the government revised its 1990 national IDP policy and committed itself to creating an IDP department within the HAC, as well as an IDP Support Fund (GoS, 1 October 2002). Neither of these initiatives, however, materialised and the government's response to displaced people remains insufficient. The HAC has offered minimal assistance, and its early warning system appears to focus exclusively on natural disasters rather than man-made risk factors (UN, November 2002, p.21). In addition, government officials appear to treat IDPs around Khartoum, including those recently displaced from Darfur, as "economic migrants" rather than people displaced by war with a legitimate right to humanitarian assistance.

The SPLM/A established a relief organisation, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), in 1985. While it seeks to coordinate and facilitate humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation intervention in SPLM/A-controlled areas of Sudan, its impact has been limited due to poor funding. In SPLM/A-controlled areas, an IDP policy was also drafted in 2002. Although never endorsed, it was an attempt by the international community to engage a non-state actor in assuming its responsibilities for protecting IDPs on the basis of international humanitarian and human rights law.

In order to assist return and reintegration following the signing of peace, the SRRC appealed for \$866.7 million to donors. The pledge was intended to cover basic

needs and services, transport, food, health, housing, and education for returning IDPs and refugees (SRRC, 1 January 2004).

The HAC and the SRRC also moved towards a harmonised strategy to prepare and facilitate return and reintegration by jointly identifying a set of "urgent needs" in 2004 (GoS, SPLM, 29 September 2004). These included transport, road repair, food, shelter along routes of return, mine action, protection, health and HIV/AIDS and a community-based approach to resettlement and reintegration.

International response

Humanitarian agencies in Sudan have been operating in a very complex environment with great logistical challenges given the sheer size of the country and the dispersal of IDPs. Since 1989, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) has been the main mechanism for negotiating access with warring parties in order to deliver humanitarian assistance in SPLM/A-controlled territories of southern Sudan. Under the overall coordination of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in Khartoum, OLS, led by UNICEF in Nairobi, delivers international relief to SPLM/A-controlled areas of southern Sudan from its logistical base in Lokichoggio (Kenya). For coordination in the South, the UN HC in Khartoum is assisted by a Deputy HC, based in Rumbek and Nairobi.

During 2005, humanitarian needs are expected to rise significantly as people will return to the war-ravaged southern region, which lacks most basic services and infrastructure. In addition, significant

emergency assistance will also be needed as there is widespread crop failure, and conflicts are expected to continue unabated and may escalate in some areas (UN, 30 November 2004, p.8). In 2005, the United Nations and its partners requested a total of \$1.48 billion, a significant increase compared to 2004. As of March 2005, the UN 2005 Work Plan had received only about five per cent of the required funds (UN DIP, 16 March 2005). While support to the return and reintegration of displaced Sudanese is a key priority of the 2005 Work Plan, nearly half of the requested budget is planned to be spent on food aid (UN, 30 November 2004). UNHCR, which will assist returning IDPs in areas of refugee return in southern Sudan, has appealed for \$62 million for their activities in 2005, but so far, the programme has received no funds (UNHCR, 22 February 2005). In order to create conditions conducive to return, donors will need to better support reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, which received little funding in 2004. Without adequate and timely funding, attempts to stabilise the humanitarian situation of millions of uprooted Sudanese and lay the foundations for recovery will be seriously hindered.

As of late November 2004, total donor contributions towards assistance activities in Sudan amounted to \$839 million, covering 70 per cent of the total funding requirements for 2004 (UN, 30 November 2004, p.15). This represented nearly three times the contributions received for 2003, but was largely driven by the response to the Darfur crisis. By November 2004, 77 per cent of the requirements for Darfur were met, while the massive needs of returning populations to southern Sudan

received only 35 per cent of requested funds (UN, November 2004, p.16).

During his third official mission to Sudan in 2002, the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons made several recommendations in view of the return of IDPs, notably that IDPs should be allowed to make a free and voluntarily choice on whether to return to their areas of origin, resettle somewhere else, or stay in areas of refuge and be assisted accordingly (UNCHR, 27 November 2002, p.18, para. 58). If the South was to become independent, IDPs who wished to stay in the North should have the same rights as any other citizens, and should not be forced to return (OCHA, 18 December 2002, p.17).

While the increased number of humanitarian workers in Darfur has improved "protection by presence" it is no substitute for concrete measures to end impunity, and it cannot alone build an environment conducive to the respect of human rights and protection (UN, 3 March 2005). The lack of political solutions may endanger the work of humanitarian workers altogether, as clearly exemplified by the case of Safe the Children-UK. Effective international engagement is needed to ensure that belligerents respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. As recommended by the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs during his last mission to the region, donors should also expand their support to the African Union, given its position as an authoritative conflict resolution institution in Africa (UNCHR, 27 September 2004). Its monitors have already begun to improve the protection

environment in Darfur, albeit with limited resources.

In reaction to the deteriorating crisis in Darfur, the UN launched a revised humanitarian appeal for over \$141 million in May 2004, followed by short-term action plans adopted in June and September 2004, as well as in early 2005. The UN 2005 Work Plan for Sudan also identifies key priority areas for Darfur including protection, voluntary returns, and quality of assistance, camp management, registration and common services.

The peace deal reached between the government and the SPLM/A in early 2005 is a historic achievement in Sudan, but the challenges of implementation over the next six years are unmeasurable. The consolidation of peace should go hand in hand with adequately addressing the grievances of people in areas so far neglected, ensuring security and the sustainable reintegration of uprooted people. An international peace mission with a strong human rights component should be deployed in Sudan in order to monitor the ceasefire and create the conditions conducive to a safe and sustainable return. Unless the current momentum for peace in southern Sudan is sustained by international assistance and respect for human rights is strengthened throughout the country, another opportunity could be missed.

Note: This is a summary of the Global IDP Project's country profile on the situation of internal displacement in Sudan. The full country profile is available online [here](#).

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Note: All documents used in this profile summary are directly accessible on the [List of Sources](#) page of the Sudan country page.

About the Global IDP Project

The Global IDP Project, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1996, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Geneva-based Project contributes to protecting and assisting the 25 million people around the globe, who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Global IDP Project runs an online database providing comprehensive and frequently updated information and analysis on internal displacement in over 50 countries.

It also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In addition, the Project actively advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

For more information, visit the Global IDP Project website and the database at www.idpproject.org.

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