

Introduction

Livelihoods in the Darfur region of Sudan are closely linked to conflict, especially the pastoralist livelihoods of the camel-herding nomads – the Northern Rizaygat. Since 2004 they have been excluded from various forms of international action on Darfur, as compared with the conflict-affected farming communities. For the Northern Rizaygat this was partly a result of their politicized image as Janjaweed militia and their alienation due to their pariah status. This study of the Northern Rizaygat used a livelihoods lens to illustrate their vulnerability and the processes that shaped it.



Figure 1. Northern Rizaygat camels, and putting up the tent

Engineered Marginalization

Longstanding and inequitable systems of land tenure and natural resource management became entrenched by successive governments and created a hierarchy of rights to natural resources, to the disadvantage of the Northern Rizaygat. Their lack of political representation and presence in local government structures was attributed to their relatively poorer access to education and limited land rights as compared with sedentary groups. Their impoverishment and marginalization has taken place within the broader context of the marginalization of Darfur.

The research argues that it was the particular vulnerability of the Northern Rizaygat's livelihoods that drove their decision to join the government's counterinsurgency in early 1993, and their subsequent militarization.

From the start of the counter-insurgency in 2003, the livelihoods of the Northern Rizaygat were directly affected as a result of; active militia recruitment and the impact of insecurity on their livelihoods.

Many pastoralists lost assets and were forcibly displaced to safer areas as a result of violent attacks, livestock raiding, blocked migration routes, kidnappings, and killings, —a reality not generally reported nationally or internationally.

From Marginalization to Maladaptation

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2003 the marginalization and vulnerability of the Northern Rizaygat has continued and deepened, as reflected by:

- Processes of militarization
- Increasing sedentarization and dropout from pastoralist livelihood systems
- Constriction of the pastoralist domain, and increasing concentration of herds for security reasons.
- Dependence on a war economy and captive IDP market e.g. profiting from firewood sales.
- Control of natural resources through intimidation, coercion and sometimes violence.

Mal-adaptive livelihood strategies have emerged that offer short-term incentives, but by their nature inflict serious harm and undermine the livelihoods of others or damage the environment. The conflict is further exacerbated and fuelled by these extra-legal, sometimes criminal acts linked to livelihoods – thus generating a vicious conflict-livelihoods cycle.

Pastoralist livelihood systems and lifestyles are going through rapid transition as a result of conflict causing:

- Denial of access to favoured pastures in the north
- Restriction of seasonal migration to less preferred but safe zones
- Blocking of transnational livestock trade routes to Libya and Egypt by insecurity
- Reduced labor migration to Libya

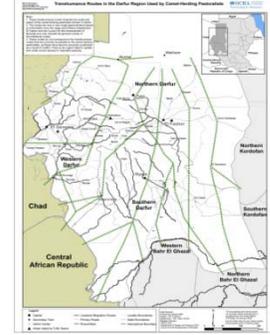


Figure 2. Pre-conflict camel herding transhumance routes

Pastoralism Under Threat

Camel-based pastoralism is seriously under threat as a livelihood system. Pastoralist's traditional goals of seeking status and power through camels and camel herding are now being supplanted by modern goals of militarization and education. Disparaging attitudes towards nomads, spurious notions of ethnicity and demonization of the Northern Rizaygat for becoming embroiled in a conflict not of their making, must be reversed if more equitable and sustainable livelihoods are to be promoted.

Acknowledgments

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References

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