



A woman labors in an agricultural field outside a camp for displaced people near El Fasher, Darfur, Sudan. Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam America

WE NO LONGER SHARE THE LAND

Agricultural change, land, and violence in Darfur

Most analyses of violence in Darfur ignore the local dimension of the crisis, focusing instead on the region's economic and political marginalization and climatic variability. However, agricultural change and other changes relating to the land-rights and land-use systems have led to competition and exclusion, and have played a major role in the collective violence that has raged throughout the region. Understanding these questions is essential for the successful resolution of political and policy debates in Darfur.

SUMMARY

Small-scale traditional agriculture provides the foundation of economic, political, and social life in Sudan's Darfur region. Traditionally, it included shifting crop cultivation and agro-pastoral livestock herding, with different ethnic groups specializing in each activity. Under this system, rights over land were not exclusive; various overlapping rights prevailed, and land use was not permanent. These arrangements allowed for the exchange of production inputs (manure for fertilizer, crop residues for animal feed), and permitted the different ethnic groups to coexist peacefully to their mutual advantage.

This system has changed dramatically over the past three decades in the Kebkabiya area of North Darfur. Overlapping land rights have given way to exclusive land use, with the emergence of a stable agricultural system of mixed farming and horticultural production, and settled livestock husbandry. Exclusionary land control has generated competition, exclusion, and conflict. These changes have taken place in a context of rapid economic and demographic changes, climatic variability, and a deepening national governance gap. With the decline of local-level institutions for settling conflicts and disputes, violence frequently results and has led to the crisis of the past decade in Darfur.

Policy interventions moving forward can benefit from an understanding of these developments and can attempt to reduce polarization, threats to livelihoods, and perceptions of gross inequity. Peace processes and political solutions supported by the international community need to address local-level issues, rather than leaving them for the post-conflict era.

Agricultural interventions remain a major component of international aid. These run the risk of actually doing harm in Darfur if they ignore the evolution of the agricultural system. In order to improve understanding both of that system and the changes that it has undergone, academic and policy researchers should continue to study the agricultural roots of the crisis. This in turn will lead to more informed programming linked to traditional mechanisms that fostered co-existence, prevented violence, and sustained livelihoods.

Within a framework of a comprehensive political settlement that addresses the grievances underlying the violence and the crisis in Kebkabiya and Darfur more generally, the Government of Sudan, the Darfur regional council, and the Darfur state governments should:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of land tenure and land administration in Darfur, in order to reduce the prevailing uncertainty and to establish a clear system of property rights that ensures that the different resource users have secure access to land and landed resources;
2. Establish a comprehensive system of land use planning and control that is:
 - based on thorough research;
 - developed through a transparent process that involves broad public participation;
 - implemented in a way that allows for the mediation and resolution of

- conflicts over land use;
- consistent with the 'continuum of tenure rights', recognizing their diversity (from individual to community rights);
 - in conformity with the internationally agreed Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forest, and Fisheries (VGGTs);¹ and
 - managed so as to protect the routes and associated water resources that pastoralists use.
3. As part of 1 and 2 above, convene conferences of leaders of the various ethnic, tribal, and resource-user groups in order to air grievances and advise the national and state governments on plans to ensure sustainable livelihoods for all residents as part of the peace-building process; such conferences should use empirical research findings as their foundation;
 4. Assess the economic and environmental impacts of irrigated agriculture in the area, so as to define a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable strategy for its future direction;
 5. Formulate a policy to promote rehabilitation and development of Darfur's range and pasture resources, with particular attention to the range and pasture areas in the northern parts of the region;
 6. Maintain the availability of animal feed resources, including the crop residues;
 7. Ensure that women enjoy equal economic opportunities and access to land and other resources;
 8. Improve dispute-resolution mechanisms, drawing on both the traditional local-level institutions and the modern court system, so as to allow peaceful solutions to conflicts;
 9. Expand the available livelihood options by:
 - developing programs in the region that create new job opportunities;
 - strengthening vocational training that is linked to long-term employment; and
 - creating a social protection system, including temporary public works employment; and
 10. Put in place the administrative and institutional arrangements necessary to undertake the above tasks.

Aid donor agencies and international financial institutions should provide financial and technical support for these initiatives and programs, so that the people of Darfur can appropriately and transparently manage their fragile land resources and achieve peaceful and sustainable development. In particular, donors should support the implementation of the VGGTs, helping to bring land policy in line with these guidelines on land tenure, which recognize community rights and the importance of gender equality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Violence has engulfed the Darfur region of Sudan over the past 30 years, escalating into open rebellion in 2003. As of December 2013, the fighting has left 3.5 million Darfuris in need of humanitarian assistance, including two million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Intensified conflict in 2013 had added 300,000 people to the IDP ranks.²

Analyses of this violence generally characterize it as an inevitable clash between farmers and herders from different ethnic groups in the face of diminishing natural resources. Climate change is thought to have greatly exacerbated these tensions.³

However, few studies discuss the role that agricultural change has played in sparking Darfur's conflict. This briefing paper, based on research carried out in the Kebkabiya area of North Darfur, examines (1) changes in agricultural practices, land rights, and land use; (2) the ways that these changes have affected traditional multiple and overlapping land use rights, mutual interdependence of different agricultural production systems, and local-level conflict-resolution institutions; (3) the links to violence; and (4) the policy implications of the foregoing factors.

Traditionally, people in Darfur engaged in subsistence agriculture, either small-scale, shifting crop cultivation or agro-pastoralism (livestock herding, which the herders usually couple with cultivation when they move with their animals northwards during the rainy season), with different ethnic and tribal groups specializing in different activities. Until the 1970s, land was usually plentiful, and rights to use it were usually non-exclusive, with various overlapping rights and non-permanent land use as the norm. Different groups of users succeeded each other in different seasons. These arrangements allowed farmers and herders to exchange production inputs, with manure from pastoralists' herds fertilizing the soil, and farmers' crop residues providing livestock feed. The different groups largely lived in a cooperative manner to their mutual advantage. Tribal leaders allocated land use rights according to need, and plots reverted to common property status when users abandoned them.

This peaceful, symbiotic system has undergone sweeping changes over the past 40 years. The polarization between agro-pastoral livestock herding and stable agriculture is a major factor in the conflict in Darfur; ethnic and tribal groups that once cooperated peacefully are now pitted against one another. Shifting crop cultivation has given way to settled farming that includes both staple and cash-crop production along with settled herding. The shift to settled, year-round farming stemmed in part from an effort to boost agricultural production in response to periodic droughts. These changes have blurred traditional lines between farming and herding. Land rights are now exclusive, with permanent land use and individual ownership. Land acquisition is determined by the market and inheritance, rather than by tribal leaders, as in the past. Grazing land and crop residues

are no longer common property. Farming and herding no longer exchange crop residues and manure, and group interdependence has collapsed. Competition has replaced cooperation, and relationships between different resource users have become violent.

This evolution of Darfur's agriculture has taken place in a context of limited economic opportunities off the farm, marginalization of the region generally, and climate variability. Both the British colonial administration (1916–1956) and the government of independent Sudan (1956 to the present) have neglected Darfur. Between 1958 and 2003, the international community provided \$13.4bn in development aid to Sudan, but only two per cent went to Darfur, although the region was home to about 17 per cent of Sudan's population prior to the independence of South Sudan.⁴ The context of this neglect is an overall allocation of public resources that favours security at the expense of development: In 2012, more than 76 per cent of the government budget went to security expenditures.⁵

Exclusion from the agricultural system—the principal source of livelihoods and the social and political anchor of life in Darfur—could lead to destitution. Since 1972, the region has experienced 16 drought years, with a severe famine from 1983 to 1985.⁶ Economic and ecological deprivation has resulted in tensions and a deepening sense of grievance and despair, which in turn are often expressed with violence.

2 BACKGROUND

Traditionally, Darfur's farmers and pastoralists enjoyed overlapping land rights; no one had exclusive ownership. The right to gain access to common property resources such as rangeland, pastures, crop residues, and trees provided these communities in general, and poor Darfuris in particular, with livelihood opportunities and the capacity to cope with environmental shocks.⁷ This system transferred nutrients, especially nitrogen, from animals grazing the rangelands and pastures to the croplands. Disputes and conflicts arose, but these were resolved routinely through local conflict-resolution systems, and were low in intensity, generally involving crop destruction by livestock, trespassing, and animal theft.⁸ This relatively peaceful system based on mutual interdependence was not entirely equitable: Although women accounted for a considerable share of agricultural labour, men generally controlled the revenue.⁹

Land rights and related patterns of land use have gradually changed since the 1960s, however, and these changes have provoked intensified conflicts that lead to highly generalized violence of all sorts, including tribal conflicts fought along ethnic lines, land-related disputes, and armed banditry.¹⁰ Traditional principles of compromise and reconciliation have become difficult to apply.

As we will explain in subsequent sections of this paper, by the end of the 1980s, widespread and persistent violence had torn apart the social fabric of Darfur, thereby intensifying ethnic polarizations.¹¹ Political elites have exploited this, triggering the mass killing and complex humanitarian emergency that began in 2003, as part of the elites' political strategy of employing violence to maintain power. The erosion of Darfur's economic, social, and political foundation has left many people desperate, unable to maintain their traditional livelihoods, and struggling to cope with a changed reality.

Although the violence in Darfur has attracted considerable attention, few studies analyse the local dimension of the crisis. Most research on Darfur's conflicts has focused instead on national and regional issues and their interplay with economic neglect, climate variability, and the region's political marginalization. The local dynamics of the violence, and particularly their links to changes in agricultural practices, land rights, and land use, have drawn less attention. These changes have led to competition and exclusion, sparked the collective violence of the past three decades, and shaped the power strategies of Darfur's belligerents. In turn, the violence in Darfur has accelerated changes in agricultural practices and land use.

THE CONTEXT FOR DISASTER: A CONFLICTING SYSTEM OF LAND TENURE

The colonial and independent national governments of Sudan have maintained two overlapping and conflicting systems of land tenure in Darfur. The first is the customary system. It is unwritten and is subject to varying interpretations.

In contrast, statutory law during British colonial rule and in independent Sudan places all land ultimately in the hands of the state. Individuals own land as private property and enjoy exclusive use rights; they secure their ownership through formal registration with government authorities.¹²

The coexistence of these systems makes disputes between land users more likely, and increases the potential for violence. The traditional system promotes multiple use rights, whereas statutory law endorses exclusive individual control. Both ideas lie at the heart of current struggles over land in Darfur. One major problem is the confusion ensuing from the state's de jure ownership of land and customary authorities' de facto control over land allocation.¹³ Until the early 1980s, land availability exceeded need, and this defused potential conflicts.¹⁴ However, conflicts have become inevitable with the increasing pressure on the land of the past three decades due to population growth of 2.8 per cent annually,¹⁵ drought, desertification, and the declining effectiveness of dispute resolution systems.

Sudan's political and economic elites have sought to define and enforce the rules of access and exchange to ensure their control over rural resources, including land, crops, livestock, and oil,¹⁶ and more recently, gold.¹⁷ Their control and management of land shapes agricultural production, accumulation, and income distribution.¹⁸

3 STABILIZATION OF CULTIVATION

Land use in Kebkabiya has changed fundamentally since the 1960s. By the early 1980s, in part due to the drive to boost production in the face of serious droughts, farmers had abandoned shifting cultivation on rain-fed arable land and the alluvial land, that is, land with adequate rainfall or near rivers, where rain-fed agriculture and horticultural gardening are practiced. Instead, the most common form of production changed to continuous farming, with no fallow periods. Irrigated agriculture near seasonal rivers has expanded and grown into intensive cash cropping, with heavy use of commercial fertilizer, synthetic pesticides, and purchased seeds.¹⁹ These changes undermined the multiple land-use system and transformed the interaction of the groups and individuals involved, from cooperation for mutual benefit to competition.

END OF PRODUCTION SYMBIOSIS

One significant change in the interdependence of crop and livestock producers was the erosion of the exchange relationship involving crop residues and manure. Traditionally, following the harvest, farmers allowed livestock free access to feed on residues such as stalks, leaves, and the like. Until the early 1980s, farmers welcomed pastoralists and often paid them to camp for several days on their farms right before the cultivation season began, from April to June. By the mid 1990s, agrochemicals and modern technology had replaced manure in irrigated agriculture; rain-fed cultivators had their own herds to provide manure; and farmers increasingly kept their residues.

The growth of settled herds was a key factor in the demise of this “herding contract” between cultivators and pastoralists. Farmers invested in livestock, but until the early 1980s, they usually trusted their animals to pastoralists, which allowed the former to focus on their crops. The pastoralists kept the milk and grazed animals on crop residues. Since the end of the 1980s, farmers have increasingly relied on their own arrangements, such as livestock cooperatives, or have paid herders to care for their animals. Pastoralists themselves are also now hiring herders. Still another change involves farmers’ reduced rental of pastoralists’ pack animals, especially camels, to transport produce to market. By the early 1990s, farmers had turned to cart animals and, increasingly, trucks, thus cutting off another exchange relationship with the pastoralists.

In short, what was once a symbiotic relationship has become a competitive interaction filled with mistrust, tensions, and grievances, with an increasing likelihood of conflict between the resource users.

FROM MULTIPLE TO SINGLE LAND RIGHTS

Traditional land allocation by the sheikh (village chief) and land acquisition by clearing it for farming have disappeared in Kebkabiya.²⁰ Today, farmers usually obtain land through inheritance, purchase, rental, and fencing. Table 1 shows how land acquisition through market channels has developed in three Kebkabiya villages that were established at different times and inhabited by different tribal groups. In each instance, land property rights have become concentrated in the hands of single-right owners, although farms remain relatively small-scale. The traditional communal mechanisms now allocate little or no land.

Table 1: Market- and inheritance-based land acquisition in three villages in Kebkabiya

Village	Established	Tribe	% land inherited	% land gifted	% land purchased	% land rented
Girgo	1920	Fur	60	0	20	20
Margoba	1948	Tunjur	40	0	50	10
Ora Shimal	1920	Tama	50	10	30	10

Source: A.M.K. Osman, *Agricultural Change, Land and Violence: An Examination of Darfur*. PhD dissertation, Tufts University, 2012.

The shift to market mechanisms has occurred in the context of conflicting government law and customary land tenure. The result is that there are unclear property rights and land tenure security, and a deficient private property legal framework. Moreover, there is overlap and friction between customary and statutory law in land dispute cases. This situation is not unusual in sub-Saharan Africa, where, according to the World Bank, 90 per cent of land is unregistered, a situation that leaves users vulnerable to displacement.²¹

The changing system of land allocation has also resulted in increased exclusionary practices. Islamic Sharia law governs inheritance-based acquisition, and this restricts heirs to sons, daughters, and parents. It is biased against women's land ownership, as daughters receive half the share of their brothers. Moreover, Sharia law permits migrants and absent cultivators to retain their land rights indefinitely, whereas customary law terminates the right to access land after three years of non-use, at which point the village sheikh can reallocate it. In addition, by the late 1980s, some farmers in North Darfur had started to prohibit or charge fees to pastoralists grazing their herds on common pasture and crop residues.²²

Changes in land use have also deprived women of economic opportunities, as men have come to dominate irrigated farming in the plains. The traditional gardeners, women now mainly work as agricultural labourers for

settled farmers.

Exclusive individual land rights deprive other resource users of their traditional access to land, and in the absence of functioning conflict-resolution mechanisms to address grievances, the excluded users often violently contest the individual land ownership that restricts their livelihood opportunities. Both elements—exclusionary processes and the threat to livelihoods—aggravate the excluded groups' grievances. Resistance to exclusive land possession is seen in the violent alternative livelihood choices to which some individuals and groups resort and the frequent disputes and conflicts between and within the different livelihood groups in Kebkabiya. Disputes involve land boundaries and ownership as well as access to pastures and stubbles for grazing.

At the same time, those who have maintained access to and control over parcels do not enjoy secure property rights. Land rights remain grounded in customary law, which does not provide for individual ownership. De facto control is exercised over state land; it is not registered and, accordingly, is not recognized by statutory law. The rise of insecure and contested individual land possession drives cultivators to seek ways to emphasize their ownership and their parcels' boundaries. Land fencing has spread for all of these reasons. It has made violent access and appropriation of resources the norm in the region in the absence of rule-of-law structures that could adjudicate disputes.

PRIVATISATION OF THE COMMONS: ANIMAL FEED RESOURCES

Changes in farming practices have restricted herds' access to the main forms of feed in Darfur—natural grazing, crop residues, and acacia-tree browsing. Traditionally pastoralists moved their animals from rainy-season natural grazing areas into farming zones to graze on harvest stubble. After the herds had exhausted the remnants of the harvested fields, they remained in the plains and seasonal river valley, where acacia trees provided shade and protein-rich pods for feed.

Changes in land use and control have affected Kebkabiya's rangelands. Farmers and herders alike increasingly fence pockets of rangeland to safeguard fodder and forestry products for their own use or for sale in times of scarcity, or both. Rotational grazing has declined with the development and growth of settled herds. Settled farmers keep their herds permanently around the village to raise them on crop residues and grasses within the enclosures, which puts high pressure on pasture year 'round.

Permanent land use around the seasonal rivers has undermined the ecological linkage between pastoral livestock production and crop cultivation. Cultivators started to expand winter, or dry season, gardening and rain-fed cultivation in response to droughts in the 1960s and 1970s. This led to increased irrigation and the use of purchased fertilizer, pesticides, and seeds. Farmers have removed the acacia trees, thereby depriving pastoralists of a feed source, and no longer need either the manure of pastoralists' herds that fed on the trees or the trees' self-

fertilizing properties.

Pastoralists also have increasingly lost access to crop residues. Farmers with sedentary herds feed their residues to their own animals before the pastoralists' dry-season arrival. Cultivators also use the stalks for building material, as a source of income, and as windbreaks. Kebkabiya is a primary livestock market that attracts animal traders from other parts of Darfur who seek to export to other parts of Sudan and North Africa. The settled and commercial herds have taken the bulk of the crop residues. These herds are very well tended and guarded when they graze on irrigated farms' residues, to avoid any crop damage. Irrigating farmers are the main users of residues for windbreaks. These protect crops from wind, enable plants to maintain moisture, and help reduce topsoil erosion, all of which improve yield. The exclusion of pastoralists from use of the crop residues transformed these stalks and stubble from an element of cooperation into an element of competition, conflict, and bloodshed.

4 AGRICULTURAL CHANGE IN DARFUR: COMPETITION, EXCLUSION, AND VIOLENCE

The British colonial authorities ruled Darfur indirectly through traditional tribal governments. Each tribal head was assisted by officials who oversaw local courts and negotiated with other groups over land, grazing, and water rights. Sheikhs were local executives, responsible for land allocation, tax collection, and social welfare. The tribal authorities made and enforced the rules, allocated and administered rights, and settled disputes within their ethnic and tribal territory. This system fostered relative peace and stability. Since independence, tribal governments have remained the custodians of customary law and communal assets, especially land, doing so largely informally, without a clear definition of their authority, at times functioning with a politicized mandate.

The evolution of exclusive land tenure poses a considerable threat to the role of tribal authorities, which is based on communal tenure and administrative reallocation of land to community members, which in turn is based on status and need. This approach to land allocation does not recognize permanent private land rights.

The tribal governments manage and maintain social and political security through redistributive communal tenure. Although this does not necessarily alleviate poverty or ensure equality, it remains a vital mechanism for reducing rural unemployment, poverty, and inequality, and for safeguarding food security. It also ensures people's sense of identity and belonging.²³ The rise of exclusionary individual land ownership has undercut village and tribal chiefs in allocating rights and resolving disputes, leaving Kebkabiya's communities at the mercy of increasingly violent resource conflicts.

ETHNIC AND TRIBAL POLARISATION

Ethnicity and tribalism, land, and local power struggles are all deeply entwined in the history of Darfur, a colonial legacy now maintained by the Sudanese state. This history can in turn lead to serious ethnic tensions when conflicts over land or power crop up. At the same time, these links make people susceptible to political appeals based on ethnicity.

Traditional interdependence accommodated ethnic and tribal identities without major instability. Although power struggles between tribal and sub-tribal elites arose before the 1960s, they did not lead to violent conflicts. Over the past four decades, however, agricultural change associated with social exclusion and competition over land disrupted group interdependence.

At the same time, there has been a growing struggle over local power tied to tribal autonomy claims, which are often associated with land. This has triggered and intensified ethnic and tribal tensions. Grievances related to land have taken on an ethnic dimension through political leaders' appeals that emphasise tribal affiliations, particularly Fur versus Arab, Fur versus Zaghawa, or Zaghawa versus Arab. It is important to note that there are no readily visible racial or religious differences among the people of Darfur, who are all Black, African, and Muslim.²⁴ But as political leaders have used rhetoric with a strong emphasis on identity, localized conflicts have easily scaled up into ethnic and tribal polarization.

CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

The roots of contemporary violence reach far into the past of Kebkabiya and Darfur. The violence has socioeconomic causes related to agricultural change and access to land; political causes related to local and national power struggles; and causes based on the intimate links among ethnicity and tribalism, land, and power. These multiple causes have generated a wide range of social conflicts and violence, including nonviolent disputes and conflicts, violent conflicts, and nonconflict armed violence.

Disputes and conflicts

Disputes in Kebkabiya involve land boundaries, land ownership, and crop damage. Farmers dispute boundaries and ownership, whereas crop damage conflicts occur when animals trespass on fields. Parties take their grievances to the local sheikh, a local mediation group called an *ajaweed*, or local courts.

Traditionally, a community member established the right to cultivate a plot by marking the trees that constitute the boundary, and disputes were rare.²⁵ Boundary conflicts, however, proliferated with changes in land tenure, permanent land use, and fencing.

Ownership conflicts result from inconsistencies in the traditional system as to when the right to use a specific field passes from one person to another. When a person engaging in labour migration allows someone else to use the land, the question arises as to whether the original user retains use rights when returning to the village, especially if the new cultivator has paid money.²⁶ Increasingly, land users recruit witnesses and obtain written contracts to secure their dealings.

Crop damage by animals encroaching onto farms usually involves nomadic Arabs and settled Fur or other non-Arab cultivators. Typically, the *ajaweed* or local courts require the nomad to compensate the cultivators. These disputes have increased in frequency and intensity with the rise of exclusionary land ownership, and the fines have become exorbitant.

Violent conflicts

Violent and devastating conflicts have become a common feature in Kebkabiya and Darfur as a whole since the early 1980s. These take place in a context of increasing competition, exclusion, and grievances over access to land and common property resources. The violence has taken place between and among the different livelihood groups.²⁷ Since the late 1980s, these groups have organized themselves into paramilitaries that have formed the basis of both the rebel organizations and pro-government militia that have fought in Darfur since 2003.

Studies of the Darfur conflict ignore the dramatic changes in access to land and common property resources. Many assert that conflicts are inherent in the coexistence of farmers and herders and different tribes. These studies imply that traditional tribal reconciliation mechanisms can resolve the conflict.²⁸ Such an argument distracts attention from and fails to account for other serious forms of violence of the same social origin. One notable example that has devastated all aspects of life in Darfur since the early 1980s is nonconflict armed violence.

Nonconflict armed violence

The most dominant form of nonconflict armed violence is banditry, carried out on the highways and in markets and villages by organized gangs. Between 1983 and 1987, the Darfur police recorded 1,053 cases of armed banditry, or less than one a day. But between 1990 and 1992, gangs committed about 30 armed robberies a day.²⁹ Armed robbers have even targeted tribal leaders. Debates on armed banditry have framed it as criminally motivated violence.

International organizations and aid donors operating in the region since the early 1980s have paid virtually no attention to nonconflict armed violence. The policy responses lie within the criminal justice system, so it does not fit within the humanitarian mandate of most of the aid groups working in Darfur. However, long-term development activities in the region have to focus on the criminal justice system as part of larger efforts to achieve security sector reform, and this is even relevant to humanitarian programs. Thus far, however, the role of exclusion, competition, and struggle over access rights to resources in driving nonconflict armed violence has remained unexplored.

Gang violence stems from competition and conflict over the diminishing resource base. The gangs are mostly composed of young Zaghawa and Arab men, who were displaced and impoverished by recurrent droughts.³⁰

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At one time, traditional agriculture based on multiple and overlapping claims and on a symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders allowed peaceful coexistence and mutually advantageous cooperation of the different ethnic groups. Change in agriculture, land use, and land rights lies at the heart of the Darfur crisis. Rapid economic and demographic changes and climatic variability, within a context of a deepening national governance gap in Sudan, have shaken the foundations of the region's traditional agricultural system and its traditional political and social relations and institutions. At the same time, change in land use and control has generated competition, exclusion, and conflict. All these changes together have driven the collective violence that has provided the background for the current protracted political crisis.

The shift to individual control of land and the ensuing disputes and violence have challenged traditional authority structures and significantly constrained their capacity to resolve land conflicts peacefully. It is not possible to go back to the way things were. But policy interventions moving forward can benefit from the past and seek to reduce polarization, threats to livelihoods, and perceptions of gross inequity. Peace processes and political solutions supported by the international community need to address local-level issues rather than leaving them for the post-conflict era.

Recently, disputes over land—and, increasingly, mineral resources—have intensified in Darfur. Foreign investors have begun to acquire large-scale land tracts in various parts of Sudan.³¹ The country's current foreign investment legislation imposes weak regulations on these acquisitions. In addition, the recent discovery of gold in the Jebel Amir area in North Darfur has resulted in tribal militias fighting over control of the mines.³²

Also, after more than 10 years of war, Darfur's population is much more urban than in the past, and many displaced Darfuris can no longer return to their ancestral villages. Donor and government policies must reflect this reality and focus on alternatives to rural livelihoods and improved social protection programs.

That said, agricultural interventions remain a major component of international aid. These run the risk of actually doing harm in Darfur because they are based on inadequate knowledge of the evolution of the agricultural system. In order to improve understanding of both that system and the changes that it has undergone, academic and policy researchers should design interventions which draw upon the historical interdependence of tribes in Darfur. In addition, they should continue to study the agricultural roots of the crisis to better inform programming by linking it more thoroughly to traditional mechanisms that fostered co-existence and prevented violence.

Within a framework of a comprehensive political settlement that addresses

the grievances that underlie the violence and the crisis in Kebkabyia and Darfur more generally, the government of Sudan, the Darfur regional council, and the Darfur state governments should:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of land tenure and land administration in Darfur, in order to reduce the prevailing uncertainty and to establish a clear system of property rights which ensures that the different resource users have secure access to land and landed resources;
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opportunities;

- strengthening vocational training that is linked to long-term employment; and
- creating a social protection system, including temporary public works employment; and

10. Put in place the administrative and institutional arrangements necessary to undertake the above tasks.

Aid donor agencies and international financial institutions should provide financial and technical support for these initiatives and programmes, so that the people of Darfur can appropriately and transparently manage their fragile land resources and achieve peaceful and sustainable development. In particular, donors should support the implementation of the VGGTs, helping to bring land policy in line with these guidelines on land tenure that recognise community rights and the importance of gender equality.

NOTES

- 1 The guidelines were agreed to by the member states of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; see <http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>
- 2 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2014 Strategic Response Plan: Sudan, December 2013. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan%202014%20Strategic%20Response%20Plan.pdf>
- 3 K. Hussein, J. Sumberg, and D. Seddon, 'Increasing Violent Conflict Between Herders and Farmers in Africa: Claims and Evidence'. *Development Policy Review* 17 (1999), 397–418. S. Faris points to climate change as the key factor behind the fighting; see 'The Real Roots of Darfur', *The Atlantic*, April 2007. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/04/the-real-roots-of-darfur/305701/>
- 4 H. Young, A.M. Osman, Y. Aklilu, R. Dale, B. Badri, and A.J.A. Fuddle, *Darfur—Livelihoods Under Siege*. (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, 2005.) Population figures from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, based on data from the Sudan government's Central Bureau of Statistics; see [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/F1F17F9AB21E1C57C12577E5005418A1/\\$file/darfur_fact_sheet_v22_5.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/F1F17F9AB21E1C57C12577E5005418A1/$file/darfur_fact_sheet_v22_5.pdf)
- 5 Budgetary shares calculated by Oxfam staff in Sudan.
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