

The Dynamics of Pastoralist Livelihoods in Central and West Darfur States as a Result of Darfur Conflict

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Abstract

The impact of Darfur conflict on livestock and pastoralists livelihoods in Central and West Darfur States is a study conducted in the two states (Central and West Darfur during the period from 2003 to 2014). The objectives of the study are to find out the effects of the conflict on the dynamics of pastoralists' social status and livelihoods options. The methods applied for data collection in this study are descriptive methods of participatory approaches (Participatory Rural Appraisal PRA & Rapid Rural Appraisal RRA) through which two questionnaires (households and key informants) were developed of eighty four questions. The questionnaires were distributed in most villages and Damras within the fifteen localities of the two states. The results showed that 75% of the pastoralists were working for themselves or for their families, 16% of them working for others as labors and 9% of the community working for both themselves and other families; this meant that the labors are not available in the pastoral communities as before the conflict. 26% of pastoral livelihood groups in the two states were pastoralist, 52% of the groups were agro-pastoralists, 19% of them were farmers and 3% of them were IDPs.

Keywords

Conflict, Darfur, Pastoralists, Livelihoods, Communities

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1. Introduction

Darfur is one of the most important livestock concentration regions in Sudan and no data available in livestock situation in general since last census in 1976. The ownership and rearing of livestock is really a problem in some communities due to the ongoing conflict but there is no data to confirm it (Dawoud 2009).

Each conflict presents a different set of challenges and issues in different sectors of livestock which exerts influences on population and growth of livestock, the dynamic of livestock ownership, the migratory routes, water resources, pasture and the diseases control. The conflicts that threaten livestock in a given region ranges from slow onset (chronic) rapid onset

(acute) and to complex. The populations most affected may be pastoralists, small farmers with minimal livestock holdings, or those who manage mixed farming systems. The early stages of the conflict were associated with severe depletion of assets, either directly through looting and destruction or indirectly through loss of access to natural and economic resources. Restricted mobility has affected the livelihood strategies of all population groups, as it limits ability to farm, livestock migration, gathering of wild foods, access employment and markets (Young, *et al.*, 2005).

West and Central Darfur States have a great natural resource base and endowments. There are six livelihoods groups in West and Central Darfur with different levels of vulnerability to the potential natural and manmade hazards. Internally

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Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the camps, IDPs mixed with resident communities, returnees (cross border or IDPs), and Chadian refugees, resident communities (crop farmer and pastoralists) (FAO 2010).

The conflict in West and Central Darfur started in August 2003 in Mukjar locality, WadiSalih and Kulbus and gradually spread throughout the state. In September 2003, people started to concentrate in larger towns leaving their assets, especially crops and livestock as the situation was that they could not move with their properties. It is estimated that about 200,000 people crossed to Chad as refugees while another 500,000 were relocated as IDPs in large towns such as El Geneina, Habillah, Foroboranga, Garsila, Zalingei, Mukjar, UmKheir. etc. Some communities remained in their villages but still many lost their livestock due to looting and at the same time had to accommodate IDPs from neighboring areas especially in sharing with them food and shelter (FAO2008).

Since the start of the conflict, most agro pastoralists have been confined to IDP camps with very limited access to land for cultivation purposes. Lack of access to land and water has resulted in limited production of cereal crops and now most of IDPs and to some extent some non IDP population now depend on food aid and other humanitarian assistance (FAO 2004).

Greater Darfur and Greater Kordofan, account for one-third of Sudan's total livestock resources. The bulk of the country's live sheep and camel exports, and cattle and sheep for domestic consumption are sourced from these two regions. Federal Ministry of Animal Resources (FMoAR) figures showed that 18 % of Sudan's TLUs are from the Greater Darfur region. Livestock species in Darfur include camels, cattle, donkeys, goats, horses and sheep. According to FMoAR (2001), Darfur accounts for 21 % of the cattle, 22 per cent of the sheep and goats, 24 % of the camels, 31 % of the donkeys and 63 % of the horses in Sudan (Dawoud 2009).

Young, (2005) reported that in Darfur, livestock production is interspersed with crop production resulting in pastoralist, agro-pastoralism and crop farming cross interests. Economic activities in turn differ (overlapping in some cases) with the varying agro-ecological zones. The Baggara (cattle rearing) and the Abbala (camel rearing) are the two main pastoral groups of Darfur. They are traditionally nomadic but are increasingly becoming agro-pastoralists. The majority of these groups claim to be of Arab descent but there are also non-Arab Baggaras and Abbalas who, by adapting similar livelihoods, have assimilated with them over time. Such groups include the Fellata and Gimir in the Baggara group and the Zaghawa and Meidobs of the Abbala.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Area and Period of the Study

The study was conducted during the period from 2003 up to May 2014 in Central and West Darfur States in the fifteen localities (Genenina, Habeela, Forbaranga, Sirba, Kulbus, Kereinik, Baida, Zalingei, Nertiti, Azum, WadiSalih, Bendsi, Mukjar, and Um Dukhun).

West Darfur state is one of the five greater Darfur states; it lies at the far western Sudan bordering the republic of Chad from the west, North Darfur state from the north and Central Darfur from the east and south. The capital of the state is Geneina town. West Darfur state comprised of eight localities of Kulbus, Serba, El Geneina, Kerenik, Habila, Forubanga, Biada and Siliah (Jabel Moon). West Darfur state areas were inhabited mainly by the Masaalit ethnic groups (sedentary farmers) and other sedentary and agro-pastoralists ethnic groups such as Gimir (originally from Kulbus), Fur, Dajo, Bargo, Hausa, and Zaghawa. There were also pastoral groups who have co-existed with the sedentary agro-pastoralist communities along the corridor since time immemorial. There were also nomadic ethnic groups from elsewhere who also frequented the area in search of pasture and water for their animals the BeniHalba, Taisha, Rezigat (Maharia) and Misseriya originating from South Kordofan and chad. The sedentary and agro-pastoral ethnic groups and pastoralists (Non-Arab and Arab decent groups) before the Darfur conflict had close social and economic ties. The Darfur conflict widened the gaps and created rivalry and enmity attitudes between different ethnic groupings (Non-Arab and Arab decent ethnic groups). The social fabric of peaceful co-existence among the ethnic groupings was eroded and socio-economic inter-dependencies and inter-communal interactions restricted. High incidences of localized insecurity along the entire corridor, concentration of returnees and IDPs areas perceived safer are causing human induced environmental degradation (overgrazing, overexploitation of environmental resources for shelter construction and fuel wood harvesting/charcoal production). The sour relationships between the different livelihoods groups (Farmers and pastoralists groupings) created by the conflict has disrupted the old age traditions of peaceful negotiation and dialogue over access to natural resources (DCPSF 2011).

Central Darfur State is located in the central parts of the greater Darfur region and consisted of eight localities namely (Zalingei, Azum, Nertiti, Rokerro, WadiSalih, Bendsi, Mukjar and Um Dukhun). The area is characterized by very fertile land along WadiAzum which flows from Jebel Marra Mountain through Abata, Dankoj and Tululo to Chad. The area is rich in terms of agriculture production with relatively

good rainfall, fertile alluvial soils, well endowed with good pasture, forages and palatable browse shrubs for animals and attracts both pastoralist and camel herding groups from the northern Arab decent groups (DCPSF2011).

Zalingei is heartland of the Fur ethnic group and the area was divided into three main dars/homesteads DarTilenge (Southern), Dar Tobola (West) and Dar Kernne (Northern) of the present Zalingei. Each dar had its own native administration or the customary leadership in charge of maintaining peace and order including collecting taxes. There are other non-Arab decent groups such as the Burgo, Tama, Zagawa who practiced farming and Arab decent ethnic groups who practiced nomadism as a way of life, Bani-Hussien, Nawiaba, Misseriya, Khozam, Abala, Tarjam, Jalul, Mahriya, Bani-Halba. The different ethnic groups have symbiotic relations, shared and negotiated over access to resource peacefully (DCPSF 2011).

After the onset of the wider Darfur conflict on 2003-2004 Central Darfur was emptied and completely devastated by counter-insurgency, the predominantly Fur farming population were driven out of their villages and became internally displaced persons in camps. The farmers and agro-pastoralists displaced had their livelihoods strategies disrupted. Long distance to farms and insecurity has hindered access to farming activities and claims of land occupation by other Arab decent ethnic groups. Incidences of constant threats of attacks, damage of crops by livestock or loss of harvest are some of the factors that have reduced agriculture and livestock production.

Increased competitions over limited livelihoods resources have seen the different ethnic groups adopt unsustainable coping mechanisms (cutting down trees for charcoal, food fuel and shelters) that have contributed towards deterioration of the environment and further vulnerability. The conflict assessment highlighted environmental degradation as a critical factor that has exacerbated these tensions and increased the severity of these conflicts. As resource scarcity increased and livelihoods shocks become more pronounced conflicts have become even more frequent because animal owners concentrate in areas with pastures and water while avoiding the over degraded areas. Herders migrate to places that are less degraded leading into conflicts between the farmers and pastoralists/ nomads over resource rights (access and user rights) and also crop destruction by migrating animals (DCPSF 2011).

2.2. Methods

The methods applied for data collection in this study were descriptive participatory approaches (Participatory Rural Appraisal PRA & Rapid Rural Appraisal RRA) through

which questionnaires were developed, consisting of eighty four questions covering animal health, animal husbandry, animal protection, animal production and the dynamics of livelihood trends within the different livelihood groups in West and Central Darfur for household level and community level, so two check lists were developed for data collection at household level, group discussion and/or key informants levels. Data collected from the pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, sedentary herders and the IDPs within the 15 localities of West and Central Darfur States.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

The data collected was analysed using SPSS 14 (2009) program and frequencies obtained for the whole data, and through cross tabulation the numerical data and figures were estimated.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Social Status of the Pastoralist

The data in figure (1) showed that 95% of the pastoralists' communities were married, 3% of them were widows, and 2% were in divorced situations. While the result in figure (2) showed that 77% of the pastoralists have family members ranged between 3 to 10 individuals, 20% of them have family members ranged between 11 to 17 individuals, while 3% have family members ranged between 18 to 27 family members.

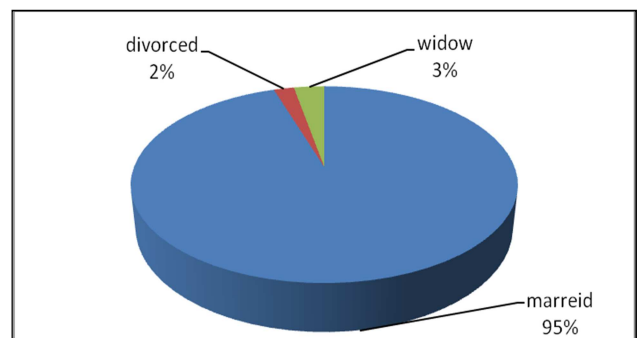


Figure (1). Pastoralists social status (according to the respondents).

The results in figure (3) revealed that 75% of the pastoralists were working for themselves or for their families, 16% of them working for others as labors and 9% of the community working for both themselves and other families, this meant that the labors are not available in the pastoral communities as before the conflict and this result agreed with those of Young (2009) who stated that before the conflict many Arabs living in the Damra would employ herders to look after their livestock, for payments of approximately thirteen sheep annually and one to two young camels, depending on the quality of the labor. In addition, herders are given all their

food supplies. Since the war started, most of the labor joined the military groups, thus creating a shortage of herders for hire.

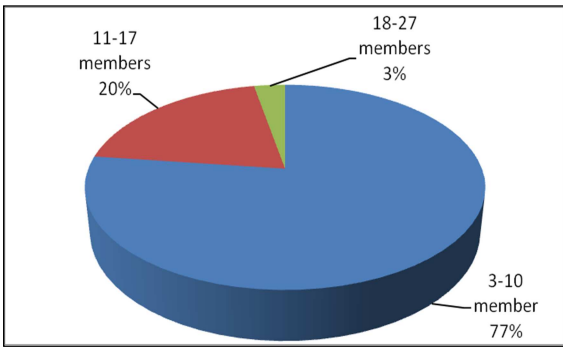


Figure (2). Pastoralists family members (according to the respondents).

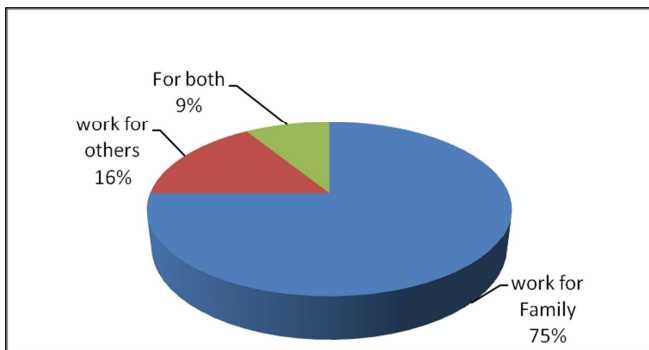


Figure (3). Pastoralists work for others (according to the respondents).

3.2. Pastoralists Livelihood

Livestock is one of Darfur’s main economic assets and a central component of most rural livelihoods, so the main livelihood option of pastoralist is animals raring. Other livelihood options carried out by pastoralist were cultivation, fire wood collection, charcoal production, dry grass sale, building woods sale, agricultural products transportation, wild food collection, leather handcrafting, militarization, securing roads and some other activities. When looking at the main livelihood activities by community type in Darfur there are some differences. Obviously most households in the nomadic community are involved in sales of livestock and their products while households in IDP and resident communities are equally reliant on agricultural wage labour. Households in resident communities are more reliant on sales of cereals and other crops for income compared to the other two groups, while households in the IDP communities are more reliant on sales of firewood and grass and handicrafts than the other groups (WFP, 2011).

3.3. Livelihood Groups

The result in figure (4) showed that 26% of pastoral livelihood groups in the two states were pastoralist, 52% of the groups were agro-pastoralists, 19% of them were farmers

and 3% of them were IDPs. The high percentage of agro-pastoralists group clearly indicates that nature of pure nomads was changed to semi nomads or the pastoralists were settled and became agro-pastoralists.

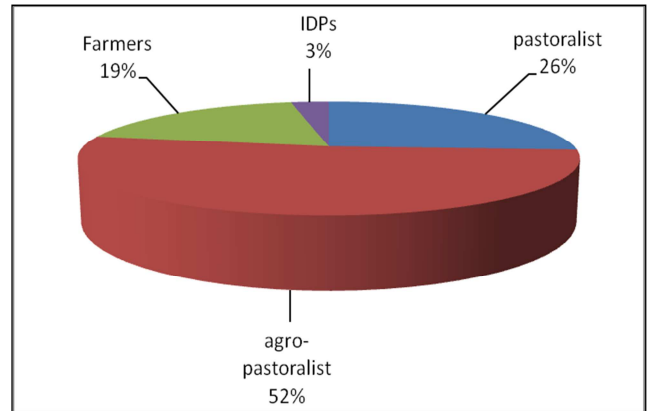


Figure (4). Pastoralists livelihood groups.

3.4. Livelihoods Options Before the Conflict and Currently

The data in figure (5) revealed that 98% of the pastoral communities carrying out animal raring as main livelihood activities before the conflict, while 94.7% of them experience animal raring activity currently, 82.6 % of pastoral communities used to cultivate before the conflict, this was turn to 86% currently. The portion of pastoralists working on fire wood collection before the conflict was 22.1% of the community and currently increased to 37.3%. The charcoal production was conducted by 10.1% of the pastoral community which was increased to 25.3% currently. The portion of the community that worked on grass sale before the conflict was 12.1%, which was turn to 23.5% currently. Building woods sale is also a component of pastoralist livelihood activities carried by 18.8% of them before the conflict and currently increased to 28.7%. Before the conflict, pastoralist used to transport the agricultural products for the farmer as an activity done by 23.5% of the community which is now carried by 26% of them. Wild food collection and leather handcrafting carried by 11.4% and 20.1% respectively, while now increased to 16.7% and 26% of the community respectively. Militarization, securing roads and other activities before the conflict carried by small portion of pastoral community only 5%, 6% and 4% of the community respectively, while now these activities increased dramatically to 30%, 32% and 15% of the community respectively. From the above stated results of livelihood options it was very clear there was a change occurred in pastoralist livelihood as the result in figure (6) shown 84% of the respondents said the livelihoods changed, and that was positive impact of conflict on the pastoralist livelihood options as the results in figure (7) show that 65% of the

respondents said the livelihood options changed to the good. These findings were in line with those of Young (2009) who reported that the livelihoods of the Northern Rizeygat are going through rapid transition. Traditional livelihood strategies linked to camel-based pastoralism have declined with the loss of access to seasonal pastures and the massive increase in salaried military service as a livelihood strategy. This has been accompanied by sweeping changes in pastoralist lifestyles as their seasonal movements are restricted to safe zones. This restriction denies them access to their favored pastures, particularly in the north. The control of this northern area of Darfur by the Zaghawa has blocked former Arab livestock trade with Libya and Egypt, an important source of livelihood for a large number of people.

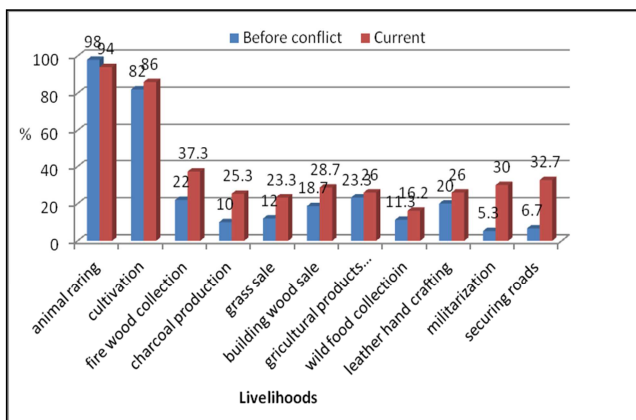


Figure (5). %Pastoralists Livelihoods before the conflict and currently.

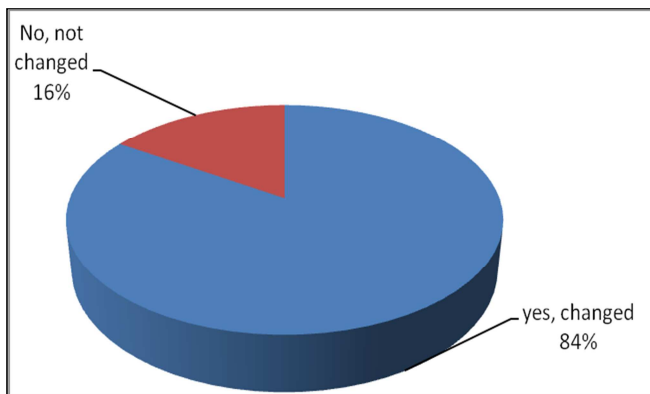


Figure (6). Pastoralists Livelihoods option situation.

4. Conclusion

The result concluded that from social status point of view the labors are not available in the pastoral communities like before the conflict. 26% of pastoral livelihood groups in the two states were pastoralist, 52% of the groups were agro-pastoralists, 19% of them were farmers and 3% of them were IDPs. The high percentage of agro-pastoralists group clearly indicates that the nature of pure nomads was changed to semi nomads or the pastoralists were settled and became agro-

pastoralists. There is a change which occurred in pastoralist livelihood as 84% of the respondents said the livelihoods changed, and that was positive impact of conflict. 65% of the respondents said the livelihood options changed for their good.

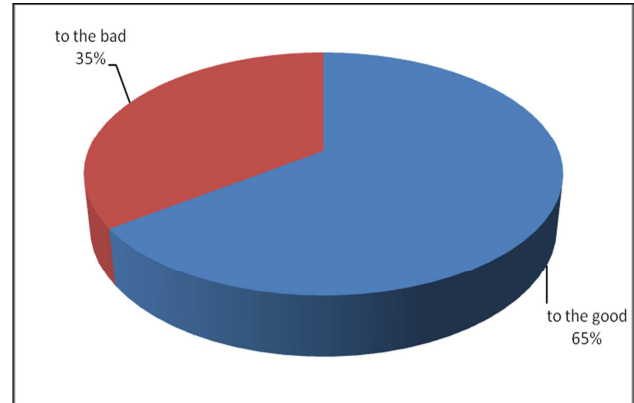


Figure (7). Pastoralists Livelihoods option status.

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