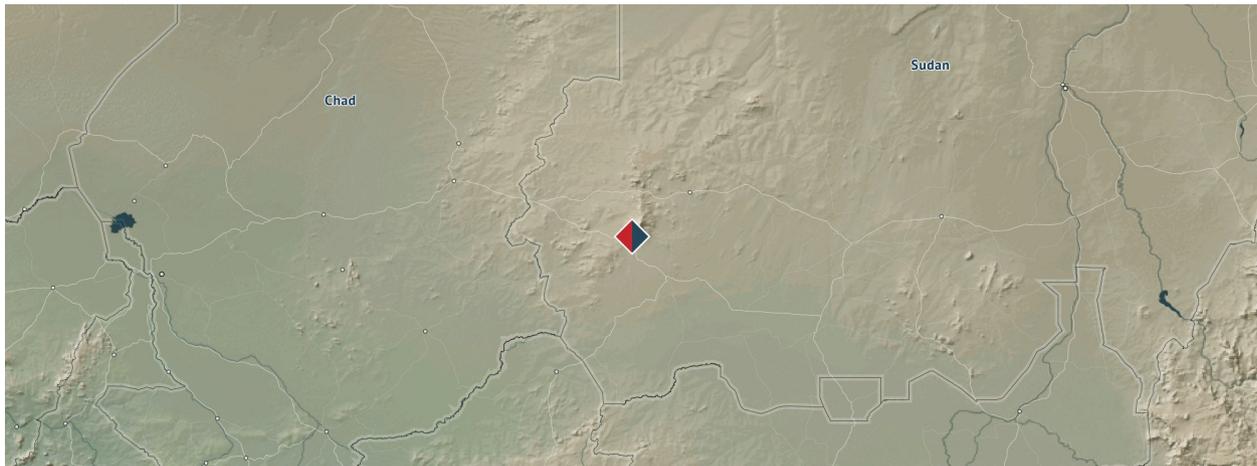




Conflict Factsheet

Droughts, Migration and Communal Conflicts in Darfur

Type of conflict Main	Intensity 4
Conflict Locality Northern Africa	Time 1980 –ongoing
Countries Sudan	Resources Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



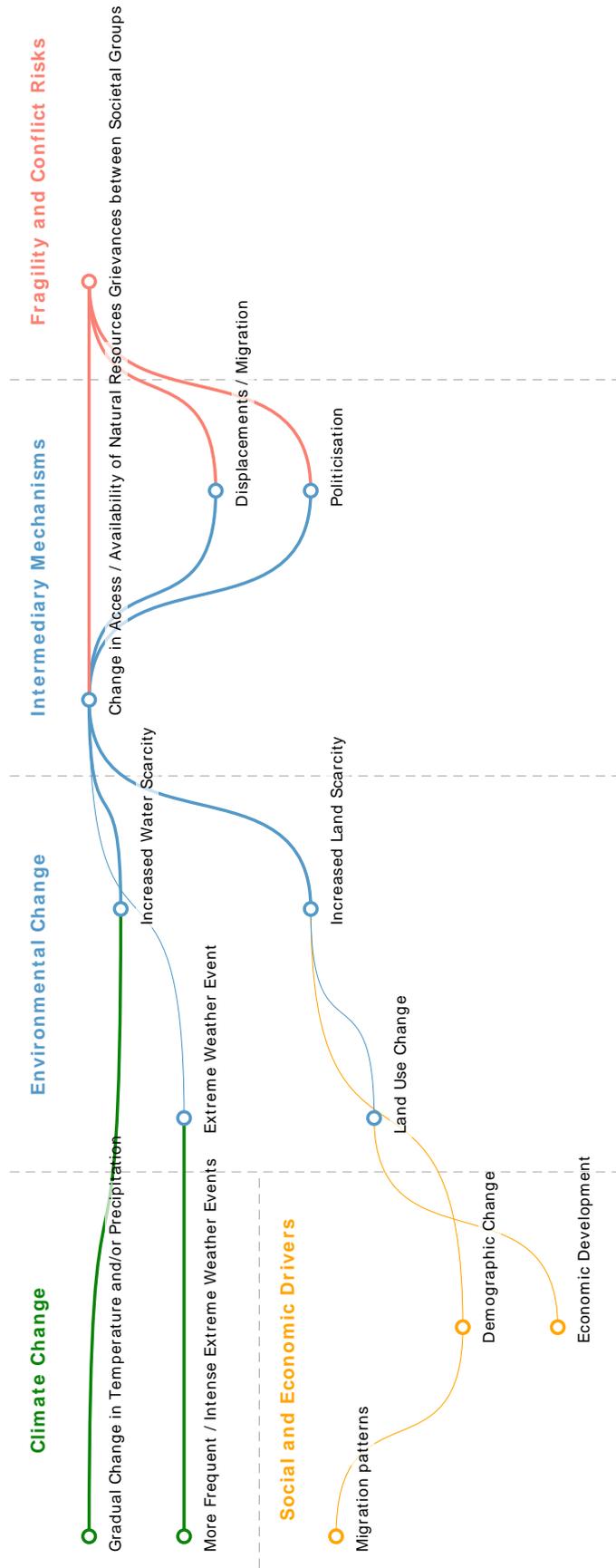
Local resource
competition

Conflict Summary

Livestock raiding and low intensity communal clashes over access to land and water have a long tradition among pastoralist and farming communities in Sudan's western Darfur region. However, recurring droughts, famine and the outbreak of civil war in Darfur have propelled these conflicts to unprecedented levels of violence.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Food Insecurity
Water-stressed Area

- History of Conflict
- Lack of Alternative Livelihoods
- Low Level of Economic Development
- Political Marginalization
- Unresponsive Government
- Weak Institutions



Conflict History

Prior to the outbreak of civil war in 2003, Darfur had already witnessed several armed clashes between different local groups, often divided after an Arab-African and/or farmer-herder dichotomy and mostly revolving around issues of stolen livestock and competing land use. As discontent with the Sudanese government rapidly grew by the end of the 1990s they were increasingly exploited both, by local insurgent movements as well as by the Khartoum government, and played an important part in the onset of the Darfur war in 2003 (Brosché & Rothbart, 2013). According to the UCDP conflict data, communal clashes in Darfur left more than 3700 people dead between 1993 and 2013 (UCDP, 2014).

Deteriorating environmental conditions in the 1980' exacerbated communal conflicts in Darfur

Communal conflicts in Darfur were driven to an important part by deteriorating environmental conditions in the Sahel. Rainfall in Darfur had constantly been declining in the 1960', 1970' and the first half of the 1980', culminating with the drought and famine of 1984/85. Reduced availability of water and land in conjunction with the expansion of agriculture and increased migration from northern Sudan and neighbouring Chad led to a vicious cycle of overexploited soils, deforestation, wind erosion, and further depleted resources, thus exacerbating local resource conflicts (Milani, 2006; Leroy, 2009; Auswärtiges Amt, 2014). Loss of livelihoods and widespread destitution in the wake of serious droughts provided young herders with economic incentives to engage into illicit and violent activities, while distress migration and the ensuing reconfiguration of local power structures led to the weakening of traditional resource sharing and conflict mitigation mechanisms. More importantly the migration of camel pastoralists following the southward expansion of the Sahara "[...] placed ethnically distinct populations in close proximity and in circumstances that were likely to give rise to competing claims over land and indigeneity" (De Waal, 2007).

Communal conflicts in Darfur were also encouraged by the regions' political marginalisation

The processes described above were mediated by several political and economic factors: structural neglect of the region by central authorities in Khartoum had left Darfur without the necessary infrastructures to lower its dependency on local markets and facilitate the introduction of fertilizers and new irrigation techniques, which would have helped local communities to adapt to deteriorating environmental conditions. The central government also failed to mitigate immediate drought impacts and avert famine (De Waal, 2007). Moreover, the removal and replacement of the Native Administration system in 1971 had crippled much of the functionality of customary land tenure and conflict mitigation institutions, without providing viable alternatives (Unruh & Abdul-Jalil, 2012; see also [Conflict between Masalit and Reizegat Abbala](#)). Finally, the immigration of many Chadian Arabs and other nomadic Arab groups from further west in conjunction with a supremacist ideology propagated by Lybia's Muammar al-Qaddafi contributed to tensions between 'Arab' and 'African' groups in Darfur. This divide was subsequently exploited by the government in Khartoum to encourage attacks against African groups suspected to support local rebel movements (De Waal, 2007; Rothbart, Brosché & Yousif, 2012).

Despite the deployment of the UNAMID peacekeeping force in Sudan and various local level agreements, communal conflicts remain an important source of insecurity in Darfur. Their resolution will not only



depend on the sustainable and equitable management of local resources but also on the containment of the higher level political conflicts plaguing Sudan and its neighbours.

Resolution Efforts

National and international attempts to resolve the Darfur crisis have struggled to find lasting solutions that tackle all dimensions of the conflict (see [Civil war in Darfur](#)).

Resolution efforts led by UNAMID and the Government of Sudan

At the local level, the joint African Union and United Nations UNAMID mission has supported various mediation and reconciliation initiatives, with a mixed record of success ([PANA, 2012](#)). The Government of Sudan has played a central role in many local agreements. However, these have centred on immediate security issues and compensation, rather than on sustainable solutions to local resource conflicts.

Resolution efforts led by insurgent groups and peace agreements between local communities

Other inter-group agreements have been brokered by local insurgent groups, notably the Abdul Wahid faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLM-AW). In some cases, these have allowed amnesty for past crimes and fostered economic relations between formerly enemy groups. In other cases they have only been short-lived due to shifting alliances between local communities, rebels and government troops. In addition, communal agreements have been reached without external mediation. These focus strongly on resource access and collective resource use in line with customary conflict mitigation institutions. Yet, they are mostly implemented at a very localized level and thus susceptible to be disrupted by wider political and conflict dynamics ([Buchanan-Smith, 2014](#)).

Local level peace agreements have allowed containing some of the communal violence ravaging Darfur. However, they remain highly vulnerable to wider political and conflict dynamics and their effectiveness is seriously undermined by the present weakness of traditional conflict mitigation institutions. Ultimately, a lasting solution to these conflicts will require the Sudanese government to effectively address the issue of land rights in Darfur ([De Waal, 2007](#); [Buchanan-Smith, 2014](#)).



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

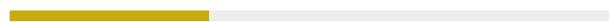


Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

More than 100.000 or more than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

Best estimate that more than 100.000 or more than 10% of country population are displaced across borders.



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

There was no reduction in violence.

-

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

-

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

-

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

-

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been mostly ignored.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity

-



Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Mediation & arbitration

2

The joint African Union and United Nations UNAMID mission has supported various mediation and reconciliation initiatives in Darfur.

Treaty/agreement

3

Local level peace agreements have been brokered by local insurgent groups and in some cases by the government of Sudan with mixed success in containing communal violence.

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Conflict between Masalit and Reizegat Abbala in Sudan](#)

[Civil War in Darfur, Sudan](#)

References with URL

[Auswärtiges Amt \(2014\). Der Darfur-Konflikt. Accessed December 12, 2014](#)

[Brosché, J., & Rothbart, D. \(2013\). Violent conflict and peacebuilding: The continuing crisis in Darfur. London: Routledge](#)

[Buchanan-Smith, M. \(2014\). Local-level agreements in Darfur: A review with reference to access and management of natural resources. Khartoum: United Nations Environment Programme](#)

[Milani, K. \(2006\). Darfur: Drought and conflict \(ICE Case Study Number 196\). Washington, DC: American University](#)

[PANA \(2012, December 18\). UNAMID mitigates frictions between farmers, herders in North Darfur. Panapress](#)

[Rothbart, D., Brosché, J., & Yousif, A. \(2012\). Darfur: The crisis continues. Paper prepared as part of the S-CAR / Beyond Intractability Collaborative](#)

[UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Retrieved Nov. 17, 2014 from UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: Uppsala University](#)

[Unruh, J., Abdul-Jalil, A.A \(2012\). Land rights in Darfur: Institutional flexibility, policy and adaptation to environmental change. Natural Resources Forum, 36\(4\), 274-284](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/communal-conflicts-darfur-sudan>