

Comprehensive Peace?

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF
UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND INSTABILITY IN
EASTERN SUDAN



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The views presented are those of the author and not necessarily those of the agencies involved. Similarly, the analysis does not necessarily reflect the views of individual stakeholders or interviewees, or the Government of National Unity.

Credits

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All photos in this report are copyrighted to Thomas Goisque. For the past ten years, Thomas Goisque has been travelling around the world capturing international events and hidden worlds. His photos are featured in many French news magazines and he has also published six photography books, including his most recent on Iraq in 2004 ("Iraq, année zero"; Gallimard). He works with Sébastien Degalaup who is an independent journalist, writer, and editor of the web magazine Terra Australis Incognita (www.tai-expeditions.org). His next book is dedicated to "Rebel Peoples all over the World" (to be published in 2007 by Editions du Rocher).

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Sara Pantuliano

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Acronyms

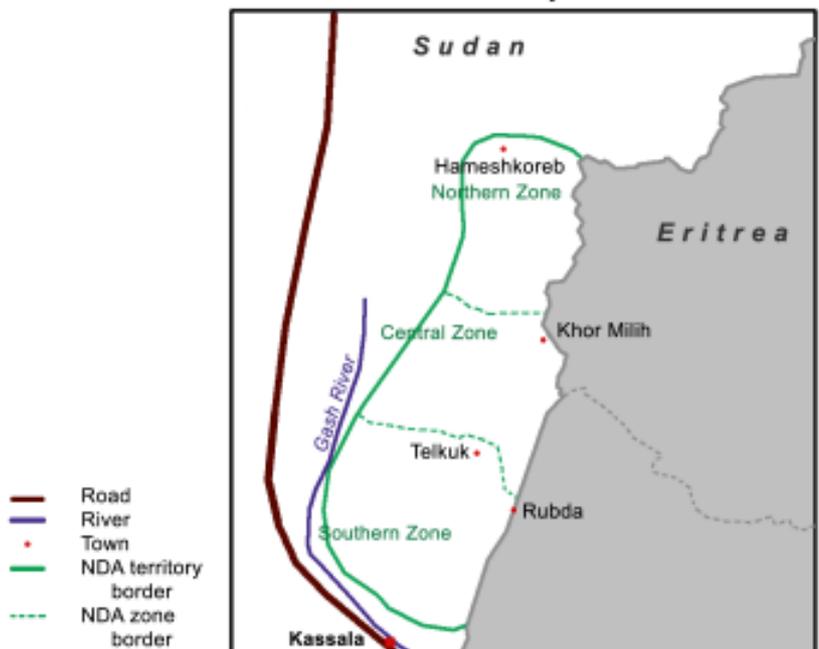
ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development	NRM	National Revolutionary Movement
CBO	Community Based Organisation	OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
CMR	Crude Mortality Rates	PDF	Popular Defence Force
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	RSS	Red Sea State
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SAF	Sudan Alliance Forces
DfID	Department for International Development, UK	SHALA	Secretariat for Humanitarian Affairs in the Liberated Areas
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party	SC-UK	Save the Children UK
EU	European Union	SECS	Sudanese Environmental Conservation Society
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation	SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition	SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
GNU	Government of National Unity	SRC	Sudanese Red Crescent
GOS	Government of the Sudan	TANGO	Technical Assistance to NGOs
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission	TB	Tuberculosis
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UN	United Nations
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation	UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
IRC	International Rescue Committee	UNMIS	United Nations Mission to Sudan
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement	UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
NC	National Congress	US	United States of America
NDA	National Democratic Alliance	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
NMPACT	Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation		

Map of Eastern Sudan

Eastern Sudan: main locations and physical features



NDA-controlled Territory



Executive Summary

This study was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the situation in eastern Sudan in order to inform the development of an appropriate action oriented programming strategy for a number of agencies with interests in the region. The findings of the research were generated through extensive fieldwork with large numbers of key informants, including senior government and opposition representatives, local leaders, diplomats, academics, international agencies staff and community members.

The document describes how the Beja and others in eastern Sudan have coped with the complexity of their local eco-system and been able to recover from recurrent drought and outbreak of famine. It argues that the resilience of their livelihoods system has been significantly weakened due to external factors, many of which date back to misguided policies in colonial times. Such policies continued after independence, resulting in systematic underdevelopment and marginalisation. This situation led to the emergence of a political opposition and latterly to tension and armed confrontation in part of the region. Whilst the conflict has been very low key over the last decade, it is apparent that the tension is rising in many parts of eastern Sudan, particularly in urban centres.

The research analyses in detail the main actors to the conflict and highlights how traditional political and tribal leadership in eastern Sudan appears to have progressively lost support within the communities. This is especially evident in urban centres where a new generation of young militant leaders has emerged, which draws its support from the disaffected youth, particularly in towns. The document discusses the involvement of and the interlinkages between established actors such as the Beja Congress, the Raishada Free Lions, the NDA, the SPLM/A and the government, as well as the implications of the presence of newer forces such as the JEM and SLM/A for the politics of the region. Finally, the role and impact of the regional and international players is also analysed.

The complex set of interrelated factors which drives the conflict is examined. These include underlying grievances such as historical feelings of exclusion and marginalisation, demands for fair sharing of power be-

tween different groups, inequitable distribution of economic resources, underdevelopment, the absence of a genuine democratic process and other governance issues, including the failure of national leaders to address grievances dating back to independence. In the last few years, though, environmental factors have contributed to aggravate the already dire socio-economic conditions of the population in eastern Sudan and led long-standing discontent and grievances to erupt into conflict. There are a number of flash points which have exacerbated feelings in the region, such as the loss of traditionally owned land to mechanised agricultural schemes and the mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan. Rampant poverty and shockingly high malnutrition and mortality rates have created widespread anger amongst the community, who feel that the region is excluded from the national context notwithstanding the fact that it is very rich in strategic and natural resources. Most recently, the fallout from the violence that occurred during the demonstrations in Port Sudan in January 2005 has itself become a factor of further resentment. Perspectives of key stakeholders in the East on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), as well as its impact on the escalation of the tension in the region are discussed in detail.

The study analyses the danger of a further escalation of the conflict. The youth in urban centres are becoming increasingly militant largely due to the lack of employment opportunities and livelihoods options. There is a general sense that resorting to armed confrontation is the only option left to attract attention to the plight of the marginalised in the East. The planned withdrawal of the SPLM/A from the NDA controlled areas in accordance with the CPA appears to be leading to a more confrontational and less conventional military strategy by the Eastern Front. The prospect of negotiations between the government and the armed opposition in eastern Sudan has so far acted as a restraining factor to those advocating more militant solutions. However, the widespread distrust of any initiative associated with the central government means that there is an urgent need for a series of confidence building measures around critical issues such as employment opportunities in town and services in the rural areas. Such initiatives need to be accompanied by

an immediate international effort to identify a negotiated solution to the underlying causes of conflict.

Contemporary socio-economic data illustrate the degree of chronic underdevelopment that characterises eastern Sudan. Neonatal, post-natal and infant mortality are the highest in the country. Annual income per household varies between US\$ 156 per capita in rural Kassala to US\$ 93 in rural Red Sea State. Illiteracy is highly pervasive, with rates of over 50% being the norm for the entire region and there being pockets as high as 89%. The limited health services are almost exclusively to be found in town, in a context where anaemia (a major killer of pregnant women and newborns) and TB are endemic. Whilst the lack of services and livelihood opportunities are the core issue in rural areas, in town, where services are available, the level of income earning is so low that people cannot afford to access food or services. This condition has worsened as a result of the considerable loss of jobs caused by the mechanisation of the port, a development which fuelled discontent by depriving many households of a critical safety net.

The last section of the study reviews the role of the international community in eastern Sudan which, despite more than a decade of conflict, has shown little to no interest in understanding its roots causes or attempting to mitigate the situation. International humanitarian and development funding has been extremely limited and interventions have been mostly confined to small scale, short-term emergency projects.

However, appropriate assistance could greatly help to mitigate the tension in the East, where the conflict is closely linked to socio-economic marginalisation and livelihoods issues. In conclusion, the paper argues with concrete examples that the international community could help stem the escalating crisis in eastern Sudan with relatively little investment at this stage, while the costs of a potential humanitarian crisis further down the line would be much higher.

Boy at a well under construction.



Recommendations

The two most urgent recommendations from this study are as follows:

- *Establish a mechanism for a strategic, co-ordinated action by international agencies:* International agencies should better co-ordinate interventions and focus on strategic responses to key livelihoods issues for the region, including joint advocacy to catalyse attention to the situation in the East and enlist donor support for a large scale, integrated, strategic and sustainable response to the development needs of the region, aimed at de-escalating tension.
- *Sustain the momentum for negotiations:* The international community should prioritise the identification of a suitable venue and mediation institution to initiate talks between the concerned actors and to support the implementation of a possible agreement with adequate resources. Rehabilitation and development assistance to the East should start immediately to strengthen people's confidence in the peace process.

A detailed set of recommendations is presented at the end of the document which advocates for immediate action to address triggers and fundamental causes of the conflict in eastern Sudan through a multi-pronged approach focused on humanitarian, development and peace-building issues. Main recommendations include the following:

Humanitarian issues

- *Establish an emergency early warning system linked to a Disaster Management Plan:* Prepare a detailed Disaster Management Plan to set up a system to track key indicators of vulnerability throughout the region in order to inform key actors in the East.
- *Build up the Strategic Grain Reserves in Port Sudan:* Build up the Reserves to stabilise sorghum prices in the market, in order to make it more affordable for the poor.
- *Establish assistance programmes aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, anaemia and other diseases:* International agencies specialising in the health sector should support local authorities to design effective systems to combat TB and anaemia.

Development issues

- *Support local government planning capacity:* International donors and agencies should support local government reform, decentralisation and civil society capacity building. Central government should send skilled financial cadres to Red Sea and Kassala States to design and help implement an inclusive, comprehensive development plan for the region.
- *Support income generating activities in urban areas:* Appropriate mechanisms should be identified to address income poverty of people living in urban slums, particularly those directly affected by the mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan.
- *Support key services in rural areas:* Basic services should be developed, particularly in areas with worst vulnerability and mortality indicators, but should be accompanied by support to local economic and productive capacity, including pastoralist livelihoods.
- *Introduce TuBedawye in schools:* Introduction of TuBedawye as primary or complementary means of instruction should be considered for the first years of primary school, in order to reduce the educational disadvantage for Beja children.
- *Exploring the possibility of a cross-line operation:* The possibility of devising an access mechanism to deliver assistance cross-line to the NDA controlled areas should be explored in order to reduce costs and maximise assistance for the local communities.

Conflict mitigation and peace building

- *Facilitate confidence building measures:* While plans for the negotiations progress, the government should promote confidence building measures to mitigate tension in the region, including 1) the prompt payment of the *diyya* to the families of those killed and in the 29/1 incidents in Port Sudan and to the injured; 2) carry out an independent investigation into the killings and disclose its findings; 3) engage with local community and youth leaders to initiate a dialogue about development priorities at the local level;.
- *Promote emergency employment projects:* Launch emergency employment projects aimed primarily at unskilled youth in urban areas to help de-escalate tension by providing immediate job opportunities through labour intensive initiatives. These

programmes should be accompanied by support to small business, micro-finance projects and employment skills training to create sustainable opportunities for the youth long term.

- *Support reduction of natural resources based conflict between pastoralists and farmers:* Urgent attention must be paid to land tenure issues. Legislative reforms should be promoted to acknowledge pastoralists'

rights to land where these have been alienated, possibly through the institution of transparent and representative State Land Commissions.

- *Promote awareness about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement* through the dissemination of simplified Arabic versions of the CPA and radio and TV programmes in *TuBedawye*.

Introduction and Methodology

This study was commissioned by IRC with the support of CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam International, Save the Children UK and Tearfund. The primary objective of the research was to gain a better understanding of the situation in eastern Sudan in order to inform the development of an appropriate action oriented programming strategy for the agencies concerned as well as other national and international actors. The study focused on analysing the underlying causes of underdevelopment and conflict in eastern Sudan by identifying and exploring the socio-economic, political, humanitarian and cultural issues that have given rise to underdevelopment, tension and/or conflict, in order to provide action oriented recommendations to develop appropriate agency responses.

The research was conducted between 26th July and 23rd September 2005 and included visits to Khartoum, Port Sudan, Sinkat, Tokar, Kassala, Asmara, Tessnay and the NDA controlled areas of Telkuk, Rubda and Hamashkoreb. In Khartoum, Asmara and the NDA controlled areas the research was conducted by the author with the support of an international agency staff, while in the government controlled areas of eastern Sudan the author was accompanied by a national consultant, a national agency staff, two senior HAC officials, a local community facilitator and two translators.

In order to provide an in-depth analysis of the current situation in eastern Sudan and appropriate recommendations for action, a combination of data collection procedures was used which included:

- A literary review of secondary sources, both published and grey, which included relevant academic material

on eastern Sudan, humanitarian assessment reports, policy briefings, conflict analysis reports and country-wide studies with regional data breakdown. The material reviewed was then used to formulate two separate questionnaires which were used during the assessment on the ground with key informants and community groups respectively.

- Primary data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews based on the questionnaires described above. The questionnaires aimed at gaining an understanding about underlying causes of underdevelopment and insecurity in the region through a number of different entry points. The questionnaire for the key informants was developed on the basis of a conflict assessment methodology with the purpose of examining structures, actors and dynamics of the conflict in eastern Sudan. The community questionnaire was structured along the lines of a livelihoods framework and focused on analysing local and meso-level political and economic structures and processes in eastern Sudanese society and understanding how patterns of power and vulnerability in the region have come about and are developing at present.
- A total of 376 people were interviewed, which included representatives from government institutions at different levels, local authorities, traditional leaders, members of the Native Administration, diplomats, academics, staff of international agencies, key informants and community members. In total, officials and key informants amounted to 147 while community members interviewed were 229.

1. Background

1.1 Historical trends

Eastern Sudan is made up of the states of Red Sea, Kassala and Al-Gedaref. The total population of the three states is estimated to be approximately 3,746,000. The two states which are the focus of the study, Kassala and Red Sea, have respective populations of 1,507,000 and 724,000 (World Bank, 2003b:2), occupying about 260,000 square kilometres (TANGO, 2005:6) and with very low population density in rural areas (about 3.3 per square kilometre in Red Sea State). Red Sea State's capital city, Port Sudan, is however home to about 55.2% of the State population and over 90% of the overall urban population in the region.

Environmental conditions are adverse in both states, though these are more extreme in Red Sea State, where rainfall is highly variable, with mean annual rainfall being between 33mm in Halaib and 307mm in Kassala, and the annual coefficient of variation being as high as 200% in Halaib Province, as compared to 27% in Kassala. Second, water is very scarce, with the annual moisture range in Red Sea State varying between -40mm and -60mm. Third, the natural biological productivity is low, the soils being predominantly saline, rocky and sandy, with decreasing vegetational cover. Finally, there are extreme temperatures with the mean annual temperature varying between 28° and 32°; cyclical droughts occur every three to six years (Pantuliano, 2000:66-72).

The area is primarily inhabited by Beja pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, although a wide variety of ethnic groups from across the Sudan can be found in the two state capitals, Port Sudan and Kassala. The Beja are a confederation of tribes united by a common language, *TuBedawye*, a Cushitic idiom, and a common segmentary structure, where each lineage is linked to a common ownership and use of land. The Beja have retained a distinct culture and their own language despite having mixed for centuries with Arab immigrants into their region. The three main groups making up the Beja are the Bishariyyin, the

Amar'ar/Atmaan and the Hadendowa. There is much discussion in the literature (Palmisano, 1991; Morton, 1989) and amongst Beja intellectuals over whether another group, the Beni Amer, can also be considered Beja, given that the large majority of them speak a different language, *Tigre'* (a Semitic language related to Tigrinya and Amharic) and have a different social structure based on a caste system rather than a segmentary structure. The region is also inhabited by another pastoral group, the Rashaida, who are mostly found in the Kassala area, although their mobility patterns see them move throughout the eastern region, up to the Egyptian border and beyond. The Rashaida are a Bedouin group who migrated from the northern Arabian peninsula in the 19th century; many of them maintain close social and economic connection with Gulf countries.

Over the centuries the Beja and other pastoral groups in the region have devised flexible and dynamic strategies to cope with the complexity and the variability of their eco-system and to recover from droughts and outbreaks of famine. Such strategies include mobility, herd diversification and redistribution¹, rules for environmental protection (e.g. the prohibition of cutting trees) and the development of a multi-resource economy where livestock keeping is complemented by a set of alternative livelihoods, including cultivation and labour migration to town. The life of the Beja groups has been regulated by a customary law called *silif*, a complex but flexible body of rules based on Beja traditional values. *Silif* regulates access to and redistribution of resources, reciprocal use of environmental resources (grazing land, water points, arable land or firewood), conflict resolution and reciprocity around major social events (birth, marriage and death). Clear land rights codes embodied in the *silif* (*asl* and *amara*)² have helped minimise conflict over land, supported by the mediation of the tribal authorities who were entrusted with the management of land rights. However, the resilience of this system has significantly weak-

¹ *Lahagen* and *yahamot*, respectively gift and loan of livestock to destitute households.

² *Asl* is the customary right over a piece of land and its resources inherited from the ancestors for the entire lineage; *amara* is the usufruct right given to non lineage members to use pasture, water and cultivable land on the *asl* of another lineage against the payment of a tribute called *gwadab*.



Beja fighters on patrol near the front line.

ened over the last three or four decades due to a number of external factors.

Under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the Beja suffered from colonial policies which contributed to undermine the basis of their economic and social well being. A number of agricultural schemes which had been introduced by the Turko-Egyptian administration in the southern part of the region (Gash and Tokar Delta) were considerably expanded by the British to increase cotton cultivation. The expansion of the schemes deprived the Beja of key pasture reserves which they had used in years of severe drought and laid the basis for the decline of their pastoral economy (Niblock, 1987:148). In the northern part of the region the Bishariyyn Beja were affected by the impact of the damming of the River Atbara for the irrigation of the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme, which reduced the amount of downstream water in the area they occupied, as well as by the seizure of land around the gold mines of Gebeit al Ma'adin and Ariab.

The effects of the British colonisation were also felt at the political level with the imposition of the Native Administration system in eastern Sudan. The model of Native Administration created for the Beja did not mirror existing indigenous leadership but imposed artificial hierarchical

units onto a flexible institutional setting. This resulted in undermining traditional leadership and creating ruling elites which were not truly representative of the local population. In addition, in the planning of Port Sudan (created in 1905), which was developed along strict ethnic and social lines, the Beja were confined by the British administrators to the worst of the four classes of residential areas created in the town, the 'native lodging areas', which accommodated casual labourers on the docks and the railway (Pantuliano, 2000:114; Gubti, 1993:3).

The discrimination felt during the British colonisation pushed the Beja to organise a regional political movement. This was precipitated by the publication by a Beja intellectual, M. Ismail, of a political pamphlet entitled *Kifah al-Bija* ('The Struggle of the Beja') in 1953, in which he denounced the social and economic conditions in which the Beja were living and pointed to the destructive effects that the agricultural schemes and the gold mines were having on Beja interests. The pamphlet called for the development of the Beja and the rural areas in which they lived socially, economic and politically. The pamphlet generated much discussion amongst Beja in-

tellecuals and notables and eventually led to the formation of the Beja Congress in October 1958 by a group of educated Beja who had come together to discuss how to attract the attention of Sudan's political leaders to the problems facing the Beja areas (Niblock, *ibid.*:149).

The Beja Congress's main aim was to draw attention to the underdevelopment and marginalisation of Beja areas and to advocate for more administrative and political autonomy. However, its leaders were soon arrested and imprisoned when the parliamentary government was overthrown by General Abboud later in 1958. The Congress was then allowed to engage in democratic elections in the 1960s, when it was able to win several parliamentary seats. With the advent of Numairi's regime, political parties were disbanded, including the Beja Congress, though Beja politicians loyal to Numairi were able to attain high political office at regional level. These leaders however badly let down their people when they failed to catalyse national attention to the famine which caused considerable loss of life amongst the Beja and killed 80% of their livestock in the mid-1980s.

The brief democratic interlude from 1985 to 1989 between Numairi and the Government of National Salvation saw the return of the Beja Congress. At that point the political focus, which had previously concentrated on the marginalisation of the Beja, started to shift towards the preservation of Beja culture and land, largely as a reaction to the demographic transformation that the region had begun to experience due to the influx of refugees from Eritrea, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains and economic migrants from the north and west of the Sudan. The Congress was however once again banned in 1989 along with other political parties. From this time the party was accused of fomenting political destabilisation in eastern Sudan. Repression against Beja dissidents, the execution of the former Governor of the Eastern Region, Major General Mohammad Karrar, following his participation in a coup attempt, the continued alienation of land and the reported conscription of Beja into the Popular Defence Force (PDF) combined to create a resurgence of Beja resistance (Johnson, 2003:138). The Government of the Sudan also denounced Eritrea for training Sudanese Beja in camps in their country (Verney, 1995:28) while the Eritrean government severed diplomatic relations with the Sudan in December 1994 on the grounds that Islamic

terrorists had been training in the Sudan and then infiltrated into groups of Eritrean returnees. The Beja Congress resurfaced again in Asmara under the umbrella of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a coalition of northern opposition parties as well as the SPLM/A (see 1.2.3 below), and for the first time in its history it became involved in military operations in collaboration with other NDA forces. Fighting between the Sudanese army and NDA groups started along the Sudano-Eritrean border in 1995, although military operations largely consisted of guerrilla strikes against government military installations as well as the Khartoum-Port Sudan highway and the oil pipeline. The border was mined and this had a terrible effect on traditional pastoral migration. In 1996 the Beja Congress was charged with having backed a failed coup attempt in Port Sudan in August of that year and fighting between the parties intensified in the southern area of Tokar and Kassala Provinces, with the opposition groups eventually occupying most of the area between the border and the areas surrounding Tokar town in spring 1997. The area around Tokar was retaken by government forces shortly afterwards, but the NDA continues to control much of the border region, including the towns of Telkuk and Hamashkoreb.

1.2 Main actors

1.2.1 The Beja Congress/Eastern Front

Like many regional movements in the Sudan, the Beja Congress was the creation of an educated political elite which rejected their families' affiliation to the two dominant sectarian political parties, the Umma and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The dissatisfaction with the DUP, which traditionally dominated the political life of the Beja, was a direct consequence of the perceived neglect by the party of the Beja quest for development, its failure to address the uneven distribution of development resources in the region and the appropriation of land by traders loyal to sectarian political parties (Salih, 1999:97). All these factors led to the creation of the Beja Congress and to the development of an agenda of regional autonomy to fight against the marginalisation and underdevelopment of the Beja areas and protect Beja identity and land.

The agenda of the Congress has not changed much from that of its early days, although there is now a much stronger emphasis by Congress leaders on equitable power and wealth sharing as well as political representation both at the regional and national levels. Although during the study some of the Congress leaders met called for the right of the Beja to self-determination, the central demand seems to focus on the establishment of a genuine federal system with true devolution of powers to the regions and fair representation of all political forces at the local and national levels within a united Sudan.

Today the Congress is represented by its political and military leadership based in the NDA controlled areas as well as by representatives based inside the Sudan. Over the last few years the Congress leaders have worked to expand their political platform to other groups living in eastern Sudan. This led to the formation of the Eastern Front in February 2005. The Front is a political alliance between the Beja Congress, the Rashaida Free Lions (see 1.2.2 below) and representatives from other small ethno-political groups belonging to the Shukriya and the Dabaina. The formation of the Front is an attempt by the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions to de-ethnicise their political agenda and appeal to other communities in eastern Sudan to unite in the fight against the marginalisation and the underdevelopment of the region. However, interviews with non Beja and non Rashaida groups, particularly in Kassala, revealed that the Front is still largely seen as closely affiliated to its two main ethnic groups and therefore not representative of other eastern Sudan communities, including immigrants from northern, western and southern Sudan.

The Beja Congress enjoys a widespread political following in rural areas and amongst the Beja in Port Sudan, where it is extremely popular amongst the youth and the intellectuals. Both groups see the Congress as the only genuine representative of Beja interests, unlike traditional parties like the DUP or traditional leaders, who have lost much of their clout amongst the younger generations (see 1.2.3 and 1.2.7 below). Despite its vast popularity, though, many external observers have commented that the Congress has so far failed to build an efficient organisation on the ground and that its transformation from a protest movement into a fully fledged political party is far from realised.

1.2.2 The Rashaida Free Lions

The Rashaida Free Lions were created in the late 1990s and have been carrying out military operations in the area south of Kassala over the last few years, although not in co-ordination with the NDA forces. The political agenda of the Free Lions is similar to that of the Beja Congress and is centred on the marginalisation and the underdevelopment of the region, the lack of fair representation and power sharing and the expansion of mechanised farming at the expense of nomadic migration routes which is affecting Rashaida livelihoods. Many of the Rashaida interviewed have mentioned the confiscation of a large number of four wheel drive vehicles by the government in the mid 1990s as an indicator of oppressive policies against the Rashaida and as a trigger for rebellion.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is now an alliance between the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, many external observers feel that the relations between the two groups are rather uneasy and that the alliance could be only transient given the animosity that has characterised Beja-Rashaida relations in the past and the fact that part of the Rashaida do not support the Free Lions. Over the last two decades Beja and Rashaida groups have been embroiled in local strife over land and water use. In addition, in the mid 1980s the Rashaida requested from the government the appointment of their own *Nazir*, the highest tribal authority, in order to disenfranchise Rashaida *omdas* from the overall authority of the Hadendowa *Nazir*. However, *Nazirates* are linked to the possession of tribal land and historically the Rashaida have no claim to land in eastern Sudan; their transhumance routes have always been negotiated with Beja tribal leaders and they have traditionally paid the symbolic tribute which sanctioned the recognition that they were guests on Beja land. In 1989, though, the government of Sadiq el Mahdi decided to grant the Rashaida a *Nazirate*, but this provoked heated reaction from the four Beja *Nazirs* and the government had to backtrack and downgrade the *Nazir* to the rank of *Rais al Idara* (Head of Administration), a *de facto Nazir* without land. The dispute is however far from settled and the Rashaida claim that they have a full *Nazirate* with land that has been granted to them by the current government. While the Eastern Front dismisses this dispute as an anachronistic battle over old tribal feuds, Rashaida and Beja communities met in and



Beja girls on donkey along the Eritrean-Sudanese border, near the Sawa river.

around Kassala still seem to attach much importance to the issue and tension over land and water resources between the two groups continue to exist and flare up from time to time. The Rashaida Free Lions feel that the Rashaida are Sudanese citizens and as such they have a right to land, regardless of historical claims by tribal groups over the whole region. The right of all eastern Sudan citizens to have equitable access to resources was further underscored by Beja Congress leaders.

Another element which is important to underline is that unlike the Beja Congress where support is unconditional with the exception of a few Beja politicians close to the ruling party, there seems to be much less unquestioning support for the Free Lions amongst the Rashaida. The Free Lions seem to enjoy following amongst the youth, but community and tribal leaders question the need for the rebellion, especially, as they emphasise, since the government has recently been very supportive of Rashaida communities, allotting them land and providing services. Many external observers have commented on the danger of a split amongst the Rashaida, with some potentially supporting the government against the Free Lions.

1.2.3 The National Democratic Alliance

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was created in October 1989 as a reaction to the policies of the new Government of National Salvation. The Alliance included key northern opposition parties such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Umma (which left the alliance in 2000), the Sudan Alliance Forces, the Communist Party, the Baathist Party as well as the SPLM/A. The Beja Congress became part of the Alliance in 1993 while the Dar Fur based Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) joined it in 2004. The NDA's main aim was to overthrow the dictatorship through a non-violent campaign to abolish Islamic laws and form a new transitional government. The rivalry of the Umma and DUP within the alliance and intense government repression, though, undermined its capacity to be very effective in northern Sudan.

Over the last few years the relations between some of the partners within the Alliance have been put under considerable strain. The signing of the Machakos Protocol in 2002 led to serious complaints to the SPLM/A by the NDA leadership and the DUP in particular, since it was felt that the deal on issues of religion and state and self-determination exclusively for the South undermined the NDA agenda of radical transformation of the Sudan as a whole and left the marginalised areas in the North out of the agreement. The evolution of the Naivasha process has forced the NDA to discuss a strategy about its future role in the country. An important turn of events for eastern Sudan took place at the NDA Leadership Summit of July 2004, when the DUP representatives asked for the expulsion of the Beja Congress after this had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), one of the main rebel movements in Dar Fur. The Beja Congress on the other hand accused the DUP of taking a conciliatory line with the government with the aim of getting to power at all costs and recovering its old constituencies in eastern Sudan (Polloni, 2004:19). The friction between the two parties worsened during one of the earlier rounds of the NDA-government talks in Cairo in December 2004, when the Beja Congress walked out of the talks, claiming that their interests were not represented and subsequently threatened to withdraw fully from the NDA (Justice Africa, 2005:6).

Although the Beja Congress never left the NDA, the split with the DUP has never been mended. The main reasons behind the friction lie in the different political demands of the two movements, with the Beja Congress advocating for strong regional autonomy and the DUP not being favourable to regional autonomy settlements for minorities in northern Sudan. The divide also reflects a fight over leadership in eastern Sudan, with the Beja Congress emerging as a strong and popular political force and the DUP suffering from a significant loss of credibility and support in many quarters.

Attempts to reconcile the two former allies have been made by other forces within the NDA, but with little success so far. The Eastern Front (the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions) resent the fact that the DUP has reached an agreement with the government and has done little to raise issues related to eastern Sudan during the Cairo negotiations. DUP representatives have argued that the Cairo talks had a national focus and that a separate

track is being prepared for the negotiations on eastern Sudan, although this is only a very recent development. Now that the negotiations on eastern Sudan seem likely to happen, the DUP and the Eastern Front are also fighting for representation around the table. The Front feels that the DUP has no role to play in what will be a forum to discuss issues specific to eastern Sudan and that the only groups with legitimacy to negotiate with the government are those directly involved in the armed struggle. Although many Beja still follow the *Khatmiyya tariqa*, the Sufi order of which the DUP is the political expression, the most senior Congress leaders think that the party has lost any political following and people resent the DUP's attempt to exploit their religious influence for political purposes. In addition, the Eastern Front feels that the DUP has no significant military forces on the ground and that it is now a government allied force.

The DUP obviously believes that they should be part of the negotiations since they have traditionally had a strong presence in eastern Sudan together with their military wing, the National Revolutionary Movement (NRM), which others though discount as almost non-existent. Although DUP leaders are aware of their diminishing support in the region, especially amongst the younger generations, they feel that the ethnicisation of politics in eastern Sudan is very dangerous in that it represents a step backward in the evolution of Sudan's politics and could create further divisions within the opposition movements as with the case of Dar Fur. DUP leaders also commented that most ethnic based parties are protest movements more than structured political parties, but felt that the return of ethno-regional politics in the Sudan is weakening the DUP and other national political parties.

1.2.4 The SPLM/A

The SPLM has been active in eastern Sudan since the early 1990s within the NDA umbrella, although its military involvement scaled up after 1997 with the creation of the New Sudan Brigade. The relation between the SPLM and its allied forces in the NDA has been evolving after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), particularly in light of the commitment of the SPLM/A to withdraw its troops from the NDA controlled areas by 9th January 2006. Whilst the planned SPLM withdrawal does not please the Eastern Front, they seem to understand the motivations behind the agreement to withdraw and do

not seem to hold hard feelings towards their ally. Less understanding was instead voiced by JEM leaders who felt that the SPLM has exploited the Beja and their land for its own political objectives.

Many of the actors interviewed during the assessment, including representatives from the Eastern Front, the SPLM and the government had high hopes that the movement could play a pivotal conciliatory role in the forthcoming negotiations between the Eastern Front and the government. The SPLM leaders emphasised that they are now part of the government and as such want to play a role in quelling the fighting all over the country. Some Beja actors expressed preoccupation that the SPLM may have a less inclusive agenda after the death of former Vice-President Garang, but hoped that the new leadership would uphold his vision.

1.2.5 The JEM and the SLM/A

A new element in the political and military dynamics of eastern Sudan is the presence of the two main forces engaged in the insurgency in Dar Fur. The JEM was the first of the two movements to become involved in eastern Sudan and to date has the largest military presence on the ground. JEM senior leaders met during the assessment emphasised the national nature of the movement, which seeks to fight for justice and equality all over the country. The JEM started operating in eastern Sudan through local activists of Dar Furi origin, but is increasingly recruiting militants amongst indigenous eastern Sudanese (especially Beja) as well, particularly amongst refugees along the Sudano-Eritrean border. The movement's leadership has stressed that they do not want to import fighters from Dar Fur into eastern Sudan, but are now working at setting up a separate eastern Sudan JEM cell to maintain overall control of the movement's operations in eastern Sudan. The JEM is also working to define its relations with the Eastern Front beyond the memorandum of understanding signed in July 2004 with the Beja Congress. The two movements have already carried out a number of joint operations in the region (most notably the kidnapping of three Sudanese MPs after the Kassala Conference in April 2005 and an attack on Dolobiay in June 2005) and both sides stated that their collaboration is cordial and fruitful. The JEM is not a member of the NDA and has no intention of joining the Alliance. JEM leaders emphasised several times that the nature of the problems in eastern

Sudan is similar to that of Dar Fur and other marginalised parts of the Sudan and that there are minimal differences between the JEM and the Eastern Front about the approach to take to tackle such problems. It is important to underline that many external observers commented that without the additional presence of the JEM the recent escalation of the conflict in eastern Sudan would have probably not taken place, particularly after the SPLA stopped all military operations in the region, leaving the Eastern Front in a much weaker military position.

The SLM/A became a member of the NDA in February 2004 and has also been involved in part of the Cairo negotiations. However, so far they have not been active militarily in eastern Sudan, although they have military personnel in the region, and do not have ambitions to take part to the negotiations for eastern Sudan. As with the JEM, the SLM/A leaders met during the study emphasised the national nature of the movement and their objective to promote fundamental change throughout the country. Although the movement is yet to engage in military action, it is considering the possibility of future military operations in eastern Sudan along with the Eastern Front.

Notwithstanding the emphasis placed by both movements on their national character and their efforts to bring about political change throughout the Sudan, some well-informed observers have commented that the involvement of the Dar Furi movements in eastern Sudan is probably due to reasons of military expediency and aims to overstretch government forces particularly because they fear that government troops being withdrawn from southern Sudan may be redeployed in Dar Fur.

1.2.6 The Government of the Sudan

The Government of the Sudan is seen by the opposition groups in the East as the primary cause of the tension because of its lack of attention to the region and its adverse policies. Senior government officials met during the assessment emphasised that the government is aware of the problems of eastern Sudan and of its chronic underdevelopment and marginalisation affecting in particular Beja communities and stressed the openness and readiness of the government to find a negotiated settlement to people's demands. The government has been negotiating separately with the various actors in the eastern

Sudan conflict but is now ready to consider opening a new negotiating table focused on eastern Sudan only.

Despite the stated good intentions of the government, concern was expressed in several quarters by both opposition leaders and local youth in Port Sudan and Kassala that some government elements may be trying to play the local tribal tensions to their advantage, particularly by offering support to pro-government Beni Amer militia to patrol the border as well as by promoting a new political group called Beja Congress for Reform and Development. Youth in Kassala in particular remarked that there was an attempt to politicise tribal conflict and ignite division between the Beni Amer (particularly of Eritrean origin, living now in the Sudan) and other Beja groups, and that this could have dangerous repercussions for the region.

1.2.7 The traditional and the emerging leadership

An important actor in the evolving dynamics of eastern Sudan is the traditional leadership, in particular the Native Administration and the religious leadership linked to the Khatmiyya and Betai *tariqas*. As said above, the Beja have four *Nazirates* who have traditionally exercised considerable power over the decisions of the tribal groups and have played an important role in mediating conflict at the local level both amongst the Beja and with other groups like the Rashaida. However, over the last two decades the power and influence of the Native Administration seems to have considerably weakened, particularly in urban areas. Many in eastern Sudan consider this institution as elitist, undemocratic, highly politicised and gender blind and feel that it should undergo profound restructuring to become truly representative of their communities. During the interviews many Beja community representatives throughout eastern Sudan voiced their dissatisfaction with a leadership that they saw more inclined to advance the interests of the central government than to advocate for the rights of the Beja to adequate resources and services. Such people felt that the Native Administration has lost its leadership capacity and is more focused on personal gain. These feelings were particularly widespread amongst educated urban dwellers and youth in town, though to a considerably lesser extent in the rural areas. In urban areas the Native Administration seems to have lost its leadership to a new and younger genera-

tion whose authority is not based on tribal loyalties. The new leaders are educated or semi-educated youth who appear to have authority over the whole community, particularly in Port Sudan *deims* (suburbs). The youth have organised themselves and are widely represented, especially in the bigger towns. The politics of the new leadership are such that they promote solidarity across the Beja and speak of all the Beja groups as one, including the Beni Amer; their support for the Beja Congress and the Eastern Front appears to be unreserved.

1.2.8 The regional players

The geographical location of eastern Sudan puts it in the political sphere of influence of its neighbours, particularly Eritrea. Almost all the actors interviewed spoke of the role the Government of Eritrea has been playing in influencing eastern Sudan politics over the last decade. Many track down its involvement to the support allegedly provided by the Government of the Sudan to Islamic elements amongst Eritrean youth (the 'Eritrean Islamic Jihad') in camps set up in eastern Sudan in the early 1990s, which eventually led Eritrea to sever relations with the Sudan in 1994, given the threat that fundamentalists pose to the country's religious and ethnic stability. Other actors felt that the support provided by Eritrea to eastern Sudan groups can be ascribed to the fact that the Government of Eritrea sees the growing relation between Sudan and Ethiopia as a threat and the Sudanese border as a danger in a new, potential Eritrea-Ethiopia war, so the Eritreans want to create a buffer zone.

There are vastly different perceptions about the role of the Eritrean support to the Eastern Front and its allied forces. The Government of the Sudan has publicly denounced Eritrea for providing military support to these groups and attempting to undermine the implementation of the CPA in the Sudan. Such a position underplays the role of national actors in leading the conflict. The Government of Eritrea claims that their role is limited to logistical and moral support to the NDA forces. Field observation during the assessment suggests that Eritrean support is not overt on the ground; Eritrean military personnel do not appear to be present in the NDA controlled areas. However, it is clear that Eritrea is actively involved with Sudan opposition movements hosted on its territory.

Another regional player which cannot be ignored is Egypt, which has co-opted a sizable piece of land known as the 'Halaib triangle' in the northern part of Red Sea State and has kept it under its control since 1994, injecting considerable resources to build infrastructure and services and develop work opportunities. The development that has demonstrably taken place in the triangle has, in the view of some Beja interviewees, served to heighten a sense amongst the Beja youth of the wholesale neglect of the region by the Sudanese government.

1.2.9 The international community

Very little attention has been paid so far to the dynamics of the conflict in eastern Sudan by the international community. Although the conflict has been active in the region for more than a decade, international actors have shown little to no interest in understanding its root causes or attempting to mitigate the situation. Government representatives met during the assessment have stated that they have requested the support of the international community both in terms of development assistance to mitigate some of the causes of unrest in the region and to foster a dialogue between the government and armed opposition troops. All the senior government officials met emphasised that it is important to tackle the roots of the conflict in eastern Sudan before further escalation and

that the support of the international community is needed at this stage in order to identify preventive measures to de-escalate the crisis in eastern Sudan and prevent its degeneration into a Dar Fur-like situation. Many interviewees concurred that the window of opportunity to mitigate conflict in eastern Sudan is still open, but that it is shrinking and commented that the international community could help stem the crisis with relatively little investment at this stage, while the costs of potential humanitarian crisis further down the line would be much higher.

However, although there has been a marginal increase in the attention of the international community towards eastern Sudan recently, this is yet to translate into material assistance to the population of the region, which could greatly help to mitigate the tension in the East where the conflict is closely linked to socio-economic marginalisation and livelihoods issues (see 3.1 below). Although a number of international organisations, primarily small and medium sized INGOs, have been operating in eastern Sudan for a number of years, the amount of humanitarian and development assistance extended to the region by the international community has been extremely limited and mostly confined to small scale, short term emergency projects. The limited space awarded to eastern Sudan in the UN Country Workplan for 2006 confirms this trend.

2. Peace and Development in Eastern Sudan: Current Perceptions and Perspectives

2.1 The perceived causes of unrest

As with many other conflicts taking place in the Sudan, there is no single root cause for the fighting in the East. A complex set of interrelated factors is driving the war which, as described above, has been at its height since 1997 and includes the military occupation of the NDA-controlled territory. Historical grievances, feelings of exclusion and marginalisation, demands for fair sharing of power between different groups, inequitable distribution of economic resources and benefits, underdevelopment, the absence of a genuine democratic process and other governance issues are all interlocking factors to the conflict, but none of them is a sole or primary cause. Unequal access to resources and services and disparities in resource distribution has been exacerbated by the long standing failure of national leaders to address the grievances stemming from the region since independence. In the last few years, though, environmental factors have contributed to aggravate the already dire socio-economic conditions of the population in eastern Sudan and led

long-standing discontent and grievances to erupt into conflict.

As discussed in section 1.1 above, grievances in eastern Sudan, particularly amongst the Beja, date back to the colonial time and are primarily linked to the seizure of prime land and the ensuing dwindling of pasture which badly affected people's livelihoods and generated local conflict around resources. Dissatisfaction about the lack of political representation for the Beja, socio-economic marginalisation, underdevelopment and lack of services were also amongst the reasons which led to the formation of the Beja Congress in 1958. Today the causes of the conflict cited by the different actors met during the study are not much different from the grievances voiced by the Beja Congress 60 years ago. One of the most recurrent complaints that communities, local and political leaders, and external observers alike quoted as a cause of conflict was the socio-economic marginalisation of the people in eastern Sudan, particularly the Beja, and the feeling of social exclusion which is so pervasive within their com-

Eastern Front troops.



munities. One international observer commented that she was stunned by the extent of the exclusion from the national context felt by many communities in Port Sudan. Eastern Sudan is one of the poorest regions in the country and most of the people resent the state of neglect in which its communities have been left, both in the rural areas and in the urban slums. People have complained consistently and incessantly about the lack of services (education, health and water), lack of job opportunities, barriers to access to natural resources (e.g. agricultural land and water), general state of underdevelopment, extremely high rates of maternal and infant mortality, poverty, food insecurity, vulnerability and morbidity. Some of these issues are discussed in detail in section 3.1 with the help of available data and indicators.

Several of the actors interviewed, particularly the Beja youth in the towns and the communities in the NDA controlled areas, have linked the general state of neglect and marginalisation of eastern Sudan to the lack of eastern Sudan representatives, particularly Beja, in the central and to a lesser extent in the state government. Many local and external observers have emphasised that eastern Sudan is a very rich region, considering that it has prime agricultural land, gas, gold and other minerals, livestock, fisheries, oil potential and the only port in the country, as well as being crossed by the highways to Egypt and to Khartoum, the railway and the oil pipeline. Some Beja leaders commented that the Beja occupy the most strategic piece of land in the country and one of the richest, but do not share any of the wealth which is produced by the region. Similar comments were made by Rashaida leaders who remarked that the Rashaida do not receive any services in return for the levies they pay on their livestock, remittances and trade. There was a widespread feeling amongst local communities that many private companies and well connected individuals are doing profitable business in the area, especially with the gold, oil, gas and fishery sectors, without any benefit trickling down to the community. Interviewees felt strongly that in general revenues earned from eastern Sudanese resources are not redistributed locally; on the contrary, people complained that they were being directly deprived of their land, as in the case of the community in Hosheiry (rural Port Sudan), whose land has been confiscated to develop a new port for oil exports. The resentment against the central and local government for the unfair redistribution of resources and lack of development affecting the region

was very strongly articulated by almost all actors met in eastern Sudan, including pro-government actors. At the community level resentment gave way to anger and a feeling that people had to fight to attract attention to the situation in the East.

Many complained about the fact that the almost total absence of services and development initiatives in the rural areas has pushed much of the population to move to the towns, particularly Port Sudan. In town, where services are available, the complaint was that rampant poverty does not allow people to be able to afford school fees or pay for drugs. A very high number of people are vulnerable to diseases such as tuberculosis, which is directly linked to malnutrition. In Port Sudan anger was very palpable amongst many communities about the mechanisation of the port, which has had a direct impact on individual and household income for thousands of families (the number of people laid off was reported by local government officials to be in excess of 28,000) and which people felt should have been compensated by parallel employment creation. The mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan has undoubtedly contributed to radicalise anti-government feelings amongst the Beja. Beja men, particularly Amar'ar/Atmaan, have been working on the docks as porters and casual labours since the early 1930s and stevedoring work was a crucial safety net for the Beja. Seasonal male youth casual labour on the port was a key source of complementary income for rural households, but the port also provided an alternative source of livelihoods to those who have lost all their livestock, particularly after the mid-1980s famine. Much frustration was voiced by young university graduates in Port Sudan and Kassala about the general lack of job opportunities for educated people as well and about the perception that ethnic Beja were being discriminated against when applying for jobs. Similar grievances were voiced by the youth in Kassala, where the lack of job and labour opportunities were lamented by almost all people met. In Kassala much resentment was also voiced about the lack of government investment in preventing and controlling the flash floods which recur almost every year along the river Gash.

In Kassala there was mention of the alienation of land to non indigenous landowners who have progressively come to own much of the agricultural schemes, while local people no longer have access to farming land. While it was

not possible to verify the extent of these allegations, it is nonetheless important to mention that many Beja in Kassala have a perception that their land has now been seized by other people and they can only work as agricultural labourers on other people's farms. Furthermore, a limited number of Beja actors claimed that their culture and their language have been discriminated against by a series of governments and that it is important for the Beja to preserve the use of *TuBedawye*. The desire to retain *TuBedawye* as a language and a form of cultural expression was widely expressed. However, the communities interviewed indicated an almost univocal preference for Arabic as a means of instruction, since they believe that this would allow them to overcome some of the traditional isolation of Beja communities and would increase access to economic opportunities. Many felt that the lack of use of *TuBedawye* during the first years of primary school puts Beja children at disadvantage vis-à-vis children of Arab origin and is one of the main reasons for the high drop out rates amongst the Beja.

Traditional tribal leaders, many of whom are affiliated to the ruling party, felt that most of the grievances raised by the Beja youth and by the communities were legitimate and that the Native Administration has been alerting the central government to the tension in the region and warning that immediate action is required to avoid eastern Sudan becoming another Dar Fur. However, the general view amongst much of the Beja youth was that lack of job opportunities and development were a direct consequence of the political marginalisation of the Beja and their lack of power. Much of the justification behind the fighting was attributed to the need for the Beja and other local groups to take charge of the decision making affecting their communities in order to reverse the prevailing trend of marginalisation and underdevelopment and redistribute economic resources more fairly. Many felt that although some Beja are already part of the local government they are more focused on their own personal gain than on the well being of the community and that in any case there is no systematic, institutionalised attempt to address community problems. Some commented that more people are dying because of the neglect of the authorities than because of the conflict.

It is apparent that the Beja youth, particularly in Port Sudan, are seething with anger and resentment and that many feel that armed confrontation is the only means to reverse the situation in the region. Some of the actors observed that such feelings can be easily manipulated for political purposes. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, the perception was, though, that the feeling of desperation ran so deep amongst the communities at all levels in Port Sudan slums that the youth were prepared to do whatever they could to attract national and international attention to the situation in eastern Sudan. It is clear that the call for action has been prompted by the Naivasha process as well as the fighting in Dar Fur, with more Beja youth coming to the conclusion that armed confrontation is the only route to change. Such feelings have been aggravated by the killing of an estimated 25 Beja men and the wounding of 196 others¹ by the police during the demonstrations by a large numbers of Beja in late January 2005 in Port Sudan to protest against the exclusion of eastern Sudan from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The events of 29th January 2005 have become a symbolic turning point for many Beja in Port Sudan and have directly contributed to escalate tension in the region, since many reportedly have started to feel that the police action was the proof that dialogue with the government is not possible. The delay in the payment of the *diyya* (blood money) and in releasing the results of the investigation into the killings promised by the government is also contributing to further exacerbate tension.

Eastern Front leaders emphasised that the demands of the people of eastern Sudan are not any different from those of the groups fighting in Dar Fur or from the SPLM in the South. Lack of development, basic services and employment in eastern Sudan are in their opinion the direct result of the concentration of power in the hands of a restricted elite, which has resulted in political marginalisation and lack of attention to the peripheries throughout the country. Similar comments were made by the leaders of the Rashaida Free Lions as well as the JEM.

¹ Source: Associated Press, 1st February 2005 (quoting Amna Derar, Eastern Front spokesperson).

2.2 The significance of the CPA in eastern Sudan

There is no doubt that the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has prompted the Beja and other groups in eastern Sudan to seek redress similar to that gained by the SPLM in the South. The CPA was seen by most actors in the region as a bilateral agreement between the National Congress Party and the SPLM/A, which has failed to take into account the instances of the many different groups living in the Sudan. Many people emphasised that the title 'comprehensive' is highly inappropriate for an agreement that has been so exclusive. Most of the people interviewed in eastern Sudan felt that the signing of the Machakos Agreement and the process leading to the signing of the other Protocols has led other groups to resort to armed confrontation (e.g. in Dar Fur) or to escalate fighting (e.g. in eastern Sudan). However, many actors, including representatives from the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, believed that the CPA also represents an opportunity for stakeholders in eastern Sudan and elsewhere to address and resolve some of the grievances which lie behind the tension in the region, including issues of power and wealth sharing. One commentator observed that the attention should be placed

on the CPA as a process, rather than on its text, as the process deriving from the CPA could inform change in eastern Sudan, unlike the letter of the agreement which focuses exclusively on the North/South conflict. Some of the issues addressed in the CPA (e.g. fairer political representation, effective decentralisation) are all relevant to eastern Sudan and many interviewees felt that if the CPA were effectively implemented, it would definitely carry benefits for the region. In order to do so, though, the agreement would have to be 'Easternised', with power and wealth sharing made relevant to the different parts and groups in the region and through in-depth restructuring of local institutions.

Some of the Eastern Front leaders commented that they consider the CPA to be a good framework for change, but that it has to be amended to accommodate the interests of the other groups in the country which have been ignored by the CPA in the redistribution of power and wealth. Many of the demands raised by the Front and the other groups fighting in eastern Sudan are framed along the lines of the CPA and focus on allocation of power for eastern Sudanese actors at both the national and the re-

A camp of the Beja Congress Movement, near Balasit.



gional levels and fairer redistribution of wealth in the region. Several opposition leaders stated that the distribution of power at the federal level should reflect the population size in the different regions while many external observers saw the Two Area Protocol as a possible framework for negotiation between the government and the Eastern Front.

The Beja youth, in Port Sudan in particular, felt that there is no guarantee that the agreement will bring real redistribution of power and wealth in the country. They emphasised that the CPA process has heightened the feeling of exclusion amongst the Beja and that people have gathered together to ask for the agreement to be extended to include provisions for eastern Sudan (this is what they were demanding during the January 2005 demonstration). They remarked that the CPA could provide an entry point for the solution of other conflicts in the Sudan if the international community strongly supported an extension of the CPA process to Dar Fur and eastern Sudan that would make the agreement truly comprehensive.

Some international observers commented that the CPA could provide a platform to address most of the main causes of tension in eastern Sudan and offer a framework to reach a separate agreement between the Eastern Front and the government. However, they felt that while waiting for the positive effects of the agreement to be realised, action is required to deal with the immediate impact the agreement has had on exacerbating the already existing tension in the region.

One obvious gap in the CPA highlighted by many of the people interviewed is that the provision envisaging the withdrawal of the SPLA from the NDA controlled areas and the handover of the region to government forces has not taken into account the presence of other armed groups in the area such as the Eastern Front. Eastern Front leaders emphasised that they are not bound by any agreement to withdraw their forces and that they do not have a cease-fire agreement with the government, therefore they will continue military operations in the area after the withdrawal of the SPLA unless an agreement is reached with the government. JEM representatives in particular stressed that UN monitors should wait to move in until an agreement is reached between the government and armed groups operating in eastern Sudan because the region will be the theatre of military operations until a negotiated solution is reached by all the parties involved.

An important element which emerged throughout the assessment is that most people, particularly rural communities as well as of much of the people living in urban slums know very little about the CPA, its provisions and the implications that it will have for eastern Sudan and the country as a whole. An important issue for the region, for instance, is the establishment of the Land Commission envisaged in the Wealth Sharing Protocol. However, it is not clear how people in remote rural areas will be made aware of the Commission in order to claim back their land where entitled to. Importantly, the mechanisms of implementation of the agreement are not even clear to some of the leadership in the region.

2.3 The agenda for peace and development: emerging perspectives

2.3.1 Possible escalation

Several factors need to be considered when weighing the possibility of further escalation of the conflict in eastern Sudan. While the planned withdrawal of SPLA forces may point to an inevitable reduction of the military capacity of NDA forces in the region, other factors have surfaced in recent months that seem to suggest that the possibility of an escalation of the tension should not be discounted. The events of Port Sudan in late January 2005 have exacerbated feelings among the Beja in Port Sudan, particularly the youth. Many of them were reported to have joined the fighters in the NDA controlled areas in the months following the killings in Port Sudan and several others of those met during the study spoke openly about their willingness to join the fight since they felt that they had nothing to lose and, as they put it, *'they are dying of a slow death anyway'* (Deim al Arab - Port Sudan, 31st July 2005). It was astounding to hear young Beja women, who are traditionally confined to a very secluded life away from public and political life in Beja society, speaking vehemently about their desire to 'sacrifice' themselves for their tribe. In addition, the presence of new actors such as the JEM has bolstered the military capacity of the armed rebellion in the East. At present the JEM is reported to be actively recruiting amongst the youth in IDPs and refugee camps along the Sudano-Eritrean border.

Despite the recent strengthening of their military capacity and the support of new allies, the Eastern Front seems to be aware that the withdrawal of the SPLA will inevitably weaken its capacity to expand the territory under its control. However, discussions with several well informed actors seem to point to a change of military strategy and an escalation that would focus on 'hit and run' operations and targeting of the many strategic economic installations located inside government controlled areas of the East. Beja leaders commented that the port, the highway and the pipeline could all become targets of a military escalation which would find many supporters amongst the Beja and other communities in eastern Sudan. Beja youth representatives in Port Sudan argued that so far economic infrastructure in the East have not been attacked in sign of respect for the tribal leaders (the *Nazirs*) who asked Beja communities to protect key installations such as the pipeline. However, they felt that now there is no alternative but to resort to new military tactics. There was awareness amongst Eastern Front leaders that resorting to unconventional military tactics and guerrilla warfare may alienate the sympathy of the international community towards the plea of the Beja people. However, some of them commented that the international community has never offered any meaningful support to the Beja, so they would not stand to lose.

Notwithstanding the stated intentions to escalate the fighting, all Eastern Front political and military leaders stressed vigorously that the recourse to further violence would be the last option and that they are keen to find a negotiated settlement with the government. Several of them emphasised that the offer of the government to negotiate has deferred the immediate danger of an expansion of the conflict, but that an escalation would be inevitable if the promise to negotiate is not upheld. The youth in Port Sudan made similar comments and remarked that they want peace and are prepared to find a solution through negotiations, but that negotiations will have to be genuine and constructive and address people's grievances.

Should an escalation ever take place, some actors have pointed out that it will be important to try and prevent clashes between Beja groups, particularly between Beni

Amer and Hadendowa in the Kassala area. Other observers also saw the possibility of a split within the Rashaida, with some taking arms in support of the government along with existing Beni Amer militia. Generally, though, it was felt by most interviewees that the homogeneity of much of the ethnic groups in eastern Sudan makes the risk of an escalation of internal tribal conflict a low level possibility and degeneration into a Dar Fur-like situation unlikely.

2.3.2 Efforts to mitigate tension

There are attempts underway by many actors to try and mitigate the tension in eastern Sudan. Government representatives mentioned several initiatives the government has undertaken recently to try and meet some of the demands coming from the region. These include the launch of a recruitment drive of Beja graduates from Port Sudan, the recent launch of a two year project financed by the Chinese government to divert water from the river Atbara towards dry areas of eastern Sudan, including Port Sudan and Suakin, and the expansion of the electricity grid in Red Sea and Kassala States. The government has also set up a Higher Committee for Eastern Sudan, chaired by the Minister of Finance and National Economy and attended by the Ministers of Agriculture, Irrigation and Humanitarian Affairs as well as line ministries and state authorities. The Committee is overseeing some of the projects mentioned above as well as others, including an intervention to eradicate the mesquite trees from Delta Tokar in order to clear land for people to cultivate², the building of small dams in various parts of Red Sea State and the initiation of studies to explore the potential for treatment of salty water. Government officials have also mentioned a series of emergency interventions they have undertaken in the area, including government provision of food aid to poorer households and school feeding programmes. The government is also planning to re-open boarding schools in the region to facilitate education for children of nomadic families; this is in response to a widespread local demand for the reopening of such schools³. Local government officials also mentioned the compensation for those who lost their jobs on the port through a national insurance payment.

² The need for the eradication of mesquite trees in the region was underscored by all communities met as well as by local leaders, including members of the Beja Congress. Mesquite infestation has rendered large amounts of land unusable for either pasture or cultivation and has affected the quality of underground water in much of the two states.

³ Whilst the interest of the government in re-establishing boarding schools following local requests is laudable, it is important to bear in mind that



A patrol of Eastern Front fighters near the front line.

These government efforts are not being met with much enthusiasm by many community leaders and youth representatives, though. Importantly, both Beja youth leaders and some representatives of the Beja Congress have acknowledged that after the events of January 2005 there have been efforts by the government to take initial steps to address some of the main grievances in the area. However, the Beja youth leaders commented that projects have been planned by the government unilaterally, without community involvement, and that some of the initiatives mentioned (e.g. the extension of the electricity grid) will not benefit the communities at the grassroots level, but only middle class urban dwellers. Much of the blame was apportioned to traditional leaders working closely with the government for not raising the issues which local people consider as key. In addition, several actors in the region commented that the much of the food which was supposed to be distributed freely in the region went astray and held traditional leaders responsible for its disappearance. Several local actors observed that the projects being promoted by the government are piecemeal initiatives which do not fall within an overall strate-

gic plan to address the long standing problems of the region.

Several Beja leaders, particularly in Port Sudan, remarked that because of the chronic neglect and marginalisation, people have completely lost their trust in the government, so even initiatives aimed at improving the situation locally are looked at with suspicion. Local leaders and external observers stressed the importance for the government to promote confidence building measures aimed at rebuilding the social contract between the government and the communities in eastern Sudan. People emphasised the need for the government to open a dialogue with the communities throughout the region, not just in Port Sudan. Mention was made of the fact that Halaib *mahallia* (administrative unit equivalent to a province) has never received an official visit by the central government (or at least this was the local perception). People felt that the central government is hardly aware of the actual living conditions of many communities in

the re-opening of these schools should be placed in a wider strategy for support to nomadic education drawing on experience from other locations.

the rural areas and in the urban slums and suggested that a good first step to start rebuilding a relation would be to visit the areas and discuss priorities with the communities, to be followed up by prompt action. An immediate priority area highlighted by the majority of the interviewees is that of employment for the youth, followed by provision of services in the rural areas and the initiation or rehabilitation of large scale development schemes aimed at rebuilding people's livelihoods. The implementation of real decentralisation as well as fairer redistribution of power and wealth were also mentioned by several interviewees. In Port Sudan people saw the payment of the *diyya* and the completion of a full and transparent investigation as an essential step to de-escalate tension locally. Some community leaders observed that the elders are trying to mitigate the resentment which is so pervasive amongst the youth, but the youth are sceptical that a peaceful solution can be found to the problems of eastern Sudan.

Negotiations with the Eastern Front were seen by most actors as the key element to reduce tension in the region and the declared readiness of the government to negotiate was seen as having undoubtedly contributed to prevent the escalation of the conflict in the immediate term.

2.3.3 The plans for negotiations

The need for a negotiated solution to the conflict in eastern Sudan was without exception highlighted by all actors during the study. Senior government officials emphasised that the government is aware of the problems in the East and is ready to sit with the armed opposition to find a solution to the problems. Eastern Front leaders also stressed their readiness to negotiate with the government.

The government pointed out that it has already tried to facilitate dialogue by organising the Kassala Conference in April this year, which was attended by several prominent Beja leaders, who in the view of the government articulated clear demands centred on services and development to which the government has already started to respond through the initiatives mentioned in the previous section. The Conference was however dismissed by Beja youth and Eastern Front leaders as unrepresentative since in their view it was attended only by pro-government officials and did not include members of the Beja

Congress or the Rashaida Free Lions. However, youth leaders in Port Sudan recognised that it is essential that the negotiations be preceded by an attempt to build a conducive environment for dialogue and suggested that a step in this direction would be to stop adverse media campaigns on both sides prior to the talks.

It is still not clear when and how the talks will be held. Preliminary attempts to create a dialogue between the parties had been made by the British NGO Concordis International, which organised a first consultation between the government and the Eastern Front in February 2005. However, in June this year the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Pronk, offered his offices to identify a venue and a mediator for the talks. Representatives from both parties were under the impression that negotiations were ready to start in August 2005, but there appeared to be delays that neither of the two parties could explain, given the readiness and willingness of both to negotiate. The delay started spreading suspicions amongst Eastern Front leaders that the government was not genuinely interested to negotiate and was buying time. However, well informed observers attributed the delays to internal technicalities which had slowed the action of the UN in identifying a suitable venue and mediator. In addition, several actors commented that there is a lack of clarity as to the extent to which this initiative has been fully institutionalised within the United Nations Mission to Sudan (UNMIS), given that the mission's mandate does not extend to eastern Sudan beyond the monitoring of the SPLA redeployment. If this is the real reason, it is essential that the international community supports the identification of a suitable negotiating forum without further delay since this could undermine the current willingness of the parties to negotiate. The Eastern Front also mentioned that they had asked the UN for capacity building support for their representatives ahead of the negotiation but that such support has failed to materialise as yet. Frustration appeared to be rising amongst some of the Eastern Front leaders who stated that they were considering approaching other bodies in the international community should the UN be unable to overcome the impasse speedily.

Once an agreement about the venue and the mediating body is reached, one of the problems to address will be to reach a decision about who is to sit at the negotiating table. Whilst the government and the Eastern Front are

the two obvious actors, a number of other stakeholders are discussing their participation. The first is the SPLM/A, which many expect to be part of the negotiations in its new capacity as a member of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Many youth and community leaders as well as representatives of opposition parties and some government officials felt that the SPLM/A could play an important role in solving the conflict in eastern Sudan, given its relations with the armed opposition, although several interviewees feared that the death of former Vice-President Garang made this mediation role less likely. Eastern Front leaders remarked that the Front wanted to negotiate with the Government of the Sudan, not with the National Congress Party. SPLM/A representatives saw the movement taking part in the negotiations as part of the GNU and stressed that they would work to help the parties reach a win-win compromise. The tribal leaders felt that their presence at the negotiations was also crucial to facilitate reaching an agreement quickly, although the Eastern Front did not share the same opinion. The squabbling between the Eastern Front and the DUP over the participation of the latter in the negotiations has already been described above in section 1.2.3. As for the Dar Fur related movement, while the SLM/A is not asking to be involved in the talks, it is clear that the JEM has ambitions to sit around the table, although it is not yet clear whether or not such ambition will be fulfilled. Senior JEM representatives stressed that they had asked for a unified approach to solve the problems in Dar Fur and in eastern Sudan in order to avoid reaching piecemeal solutions and to make the agreement really comprehensive, but that their proposal had not been taken on board.

The agenda for the negotiations is still being discussed at the time of writing. However, some of the questions that may be put on the table by the Eastern Front and other armed groups in the East came up clearly and repeatedly during the assessment. The focus is on greater

access to power and wealth in order to be able to reverse the socio-economic marginalisation of eastern Sudan and to invest more resources to develop the region and provide more services to its people. Claims to increased power and wealth are being articulated within the context of the CPA, with percentages being discussed for both the federal and local levels. The Eastern Front and the JEM stated very clearly that the division of power and wealth sanctioned by the Naivasha agreement was unacceptable and that allocations had to be amended, possibly on the basis of regional population sizes, if a solution to the conflict was to be identified for eastern Sudan (as well as for Dar Fur). They strongly welcomed the proposal made by Vice-President Kiir to the National Congress Party in late August 2005 to amend the national power sharing percentages of the SPLM/A and the National Congress in order to redistribute some to opposition parties, including armed movements in Dar Fur and the East. JEM representatives also mentioned the request for a rotating vice-presidency for both Dar Fur and eastern Sudan. Some of the external actors suggested that the Two Areas Protocol could provide a useful framework for negotiation at the local level, but the issue was not broached with Eastern Front leaders.

All actors involved underscored the importance of the support of the international community in making the negotiations successful. The Eastern Front commented several times that the attitude of some international brokers who consider the CPA as sacred is unhelpful and that unless the international community realises that the agreement has to become truly comprehensive there will not be peace in the country and even the CPA process in the South could be derailed. They however hoped that the international community would support the parties to reach a negotiated solution which will put an end to the fighting in eastern Sudan.

3. Peace, Stability and Development in Eastern Sudan: An Attainable Dream?

3.1 Unemployment and key livelihoods issues

It is clear from the description of people’s perceptions and perspectives presented in the previous section that issues related to marginalisation and underdevelopment are key in explaining the conflict and the current state of tension in much of the region. It is therefore crucial to understand some of these issues more in detail in order to identify a possible response, from both national and international actors, that could help mitigate the tension in eastern Sudan.

Whilst the region suffers from a chronic lack of reliable data (as does much of the country), some indicators are available to illustrate the situation on the ground. UNICEF data presented in the World Bank Country Economic Memorandum (World Bank, 2003b:3) indicate that neonatal, post-neonatal and infant mortality in Red Sea State are the highest in the country; Kassala State is the second worst for post-natal and infant mortality and third worst for under-five mortality¹. With 56 deaths for 1,000 live births Red Sea State is also the third worst state for child mortality (after the two war affected states of Blue

Nile and Southern Kordofan) and with 165 deaths for 1,000 live births is second only to Blue Nile for under-five mortality. In the NDA controlled areas crude mortality rates (CMR) are estimated to be at 1.01 per 10,000 per day and under-five mortality rates are reported to be as high as 2.01 per 10,000 per day (IRC, 2005:19).

The TANGO report recently undertaken in rural Kassala and rural Red Sea States uncovered shocking levels of malnutrition in the two states as shown in Table 1.

The same study showed that the annual income per household in rural Kassala State is approximately 250,000 SD (US\$ 156 per capita) while in rural Red Sea State is 125,000 SD (US\$ 93 per capita); both indicators are well beneath the international extreme poverty line of US\$ 1 per capita (TANGO, *ibid.*:28).

In the NDA controlled areas a recent survey using a sample size of 625 children indicated that the percentage of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) is at a level of around 21.5% while the prevalence of wasting is 7.8% with a 2.1% prevalence of severe wasting (IRC, 2005:35). Reliable data on income levels in NDA controlled areas are not available,

Table 1. Malnutrition rates in eastern Sudan (TANGO, 2005:44)

Levels of malnutrition	Red Sea State	Kassala State
Acute Malnutrition		
Severe wasting (<-3.0 z-score ²)	3.7%	5.8%
Global Acute Malnutrition (<-2.0 z-score)	19.4%	17.7%
Chronic Malnutrition		
Severe stunting (<-3.0 z-score)	15.0%	19.1%
Global Chronic Malnutrition (<-2.0 z-score)	38.5%	43.8%
Underweight		
Severe underweight	17.0	17.5
Moderate + severe underweight (<-2.0 z-score)	45.4	42.3

¹ In the Red Sea State neonatal, post-neonatal, infant and child mortality rates are estimated to be at 50, 66, 116 and 56 respectively per 1,000 live births; in Kassala State post-natal, infant and under-five mortality rates are respectively 63, 101 and 148 per 1,000 live births.

² Wasting, stunting and underweight are all expressed using z-scores with internationally defined cut-off points for normal, moderate and severe levels of under-nutrition, as follows (TANGO, *ibid.*:43):
 · Normal: > -2 z-scores;
 · Moderate malnutrition: < -2 z-scores and > -3 z-scores;
 · Severe malnutrition: < -3 z-scores.



Beja boys at school.

but the vast majority of the population is believed to be living below the extreme poverty line (IRC staff, Rubda, 24th August 2005).

The TANGO study also showed that there is a significant correlation between the literacy of household heads and the chronic malnutrition in Kassala State and acute malnutrition in Red Sea State: in rural Kassala State 43% of the household heads are illiterate, compared with 54% in rural Red Sea State; amongst the population over 15 years of age, 56% are illiterate in rural Kassala State, against the 62% in rural Red Sea State (TANGO, *ibid.*:17). Official Ministry of Education data relative to the entire region (including urban areas) show that the illiteracy rate for the over 15 is 48% in Red Sea State, 56.7% in Al-Gedaref State and 62% in Kassala State (World Bank, *ibid.*:19). A survey conducted in 1999 in Halaib *mahallia* though revealed that the illiteracy rate is as high as 89% in Halaib *mahallia*, where children currently in school represent 86.7% of those educated; only 0.75% have secondary education in the *mahallia*, of which only 11.5% are women (Abdel Ati:1999). During the assessment people complained frequently about the lack of school feeding and of qualified teachers and whilst they acknowledged that some nomadic communities would be reluctant to send their children to school, they also pointed out that the abolition

of boarding schools has had a very negative impact on the capacity of mobile children to have access to education.

Health services are mostly concentrated in Port Sudan and other large centres like Sinkat or Kassala; only 20% of rural Red Sea State villages has a health centre or a clinic, while in Kassala State half of the villages have some form of health facility, although these often lack doctors, laboratories and medications (TANGO, *ibid.*:17). In the late 1990s in the whole of the then Halaib Province (80,000 km²) there were only five basic primary health care centres (Pantuliano, 1998: direct observation). Anaemia and tuberculosis were mentioned in almost every community as endemic, with anaemia being a major killer for pregnant women and newborns and tuberculosis affecting a very high percentage of the adult male population. In Kassala bilharzia and malaria were also quoted as significant hazards.

Access to water is grossly inadequate throughout the region, especially in the rural areas. During the assessment the communities complained incessantly about the shortage of water both for human and animal consumption.

Drought and mesquite infestation have significantly contributed to the decrease in water levels, but generally there is a scarcity of boreholes and micro-catchments throughout the region and where boreholes exist they invariably suffer from lack of maintenance. People quoted the shortage of water as one of the key factors in contributing to push people out of the rural areas towards urban centres. In Red Sea State the urban population has grown from 38% of the total state population in 1993 to a dramatic 61.2% in 2003. This trend points to ever deteriorating living conditions in the rural areas.

The development gap and the disparity between urban and rural centres are significant. However, although in town there is a greater availability of services, people complain about the fact that very few of them can afford to pay for school fees, water or drugs. Official unemployment rates in Red Sea State are very high, standing at 21.1% against the national average of 11.8% (quoted in Oxfam, 1998:6), although actual data could be worse than these. Unemployment rates have risen sharply as a result of the mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan and the laying off of many of the port workers, particularly Beja labourers who were left with very little alternatives on the market. Some observers have noted that outside the stevedoring jobs, unskilled labour opportunities in Port Sudan are available mainly in the construction sector, but the Beja have to compete with migrant labourers from southern and western Sudan who are more experienced in this field. Many people survive by resorting to charcoal making, especially out of mesquite which is said to make very good charcoal. In Kassala labour opportunities are available on the agricultural schemes, but people also complained about the lack of work on the schemes, especially since the mesquite infestation has made much land uncultivable. Very few people from the region (Beja and Rashaida) are employed in the formal sector, most likely because of the very low level of education. Constraints to marketing of livestock in rural areas, due mainly to long distances, and restricted availability of credit for the poor make living in much of the region a survival challenge.

It is clear that the modernisation and mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan have created unacceptable levels of unemployment amongst the Beja and that the discontent following the disappearance of this important safety

net has greatly contributed to fuel the tension in the region. This warrants the need for interventions which can compensate for the loss of employment on the port. People felt that the government should identify ways to use the revenues from local resources, including port, gold, customs and minerals, to fund labour intensive programmes. People in Port Sudan expressed outrage at the thought that the government was spending millions of Sudanese Dinars to build a modern, large meeting hall in Port Sudan when so many people in the town and in its surroundings were dying because of poverty and malnutrition. People also observed that much money has been spent to improve the appearance of the city through increased street lights and tarring of roads, while no allocations had been made to meet community priorities.

In the areas around Tokar and Hamashkoreb local communities spoke at length about the negative impact of landmines and Unexploded Ordinance (UXOs) on their lives and livelihoods, particularly in terms of restricting access to water and pasture. Very little attempt has been made so far to explore the possibility of undertaking mine clearance programmes to enable people to regain access to key livelihood sources.

In Kassala several communities complained about the loss of land and pastoral community representatives remarked that there is no arrangement to register land for transhumance routes in the current government plan for redistribution of land in the Gash. They stressed that there is a need to engage with pastoralist communities to identify solutions for them as well, since conflict between pastoralists and farmers (both within Hadendowa communities and between Hadendowa and Rashaida) breaks out frequently in and around the Gash scheme, especially at harvesting times. The loss of key land resources for many Beja because of drought, ecological degradation and land alienation, the consequent forced abandonment of the pastoral sector without alternative opportunities and inadequate service provision have played a clear role in creating resentment and tension in the region. Youth representatives in Kassala complained that assistance by the international community is mainly concentrated on IDPs and refugees from Eritrea, while no attention is paid to destitute Beja pastoralist communities whose living conditions is far worse than those of the refugees.

3.2 The impact of international assistance in eastern Sudan

Communities, government officials and armed opposition alike lamented that the involvement of the international community in eastern Sudan has been very limited. While the primary responsibility to address socio-economic issues in eastern Sudan rests with the national authorities, the international community also has a role to play in supporting these efforts. UN interventions have traditionally been very restricted and have largely focused on food distribution and assistance to the refugee and IDP populations; the UN has no presence in the NDA controlled areas. A number of INGOs also operate in the two states, some of which have been on the ground for nearly two decades. As this study was not a humanitarian assessment, it does not provide a detailed analysis of humanitarian or development activities in the East. Rather, it provides a synthesis of general perceptions of communities and key stakeholders on the work of the international community. There was strong dissatisfaction amongst communities, government and leaders about the performance of most international actors in the region. People complained that their action was mostly focused on emergency assistance and that projects were short term, small scale and often inadequate to address people's real needs. Though there are some islands of success, it is also clear that some agencies have spent considerable time and resources on problems without having brought about any significant change. Some well informed observers pointed out that many interventions were often designed without the real involvement of the community and that they often followed 'funding fashions'.

People from all areas interviewed, but particularly in government controlled areas, spoke of their concern that a high proportion of the little assistance that is coming their way appears to be spent on administrative and running costs. People also cited examples of resources going astray, particularly around relief distribution. There was dissatisfaction with the biases towards a few target groups, with IDPs and refugees being particular favourites. Rural areas were perceived to receive more assistance than the urban slums where many of the worst socio-economic problems are found and which are also the hotbeds of discontent. In Kassala people commented that some of the most destitute Hadendowa would pretend to be IDPs in order to access desperately needed support

by moving into displaced camps. When projects are undertaken, communities observed that there tends to be something of a predictable package that is offered and that many of the responses frequently do not address critical needs in a strategic fashion. Whilst recognising the contributions of INGOs particularly in the service sectors, often addressing immediate needs, people commented that there has been a dearth of interventions which have created employment or sustainable increased income. The perceived lack of appropriate programming comes despite the high number of assessments of which people are tired of being the subject and which informed observers point out have invariably been of very low quality. Government officials also complained that the findings of the studies conducted by international agencies are rarely shared with the government or with community leaders.

Community leaders have noted the fact that INGO responses have tended to be scattered and isolated and that there has been a lack of co-ordination between actors. This has also led to a degree of duplication of projects and assistance to some communities and what people and government officials have defined as a 'piecemeal approach'. Community leaders and youth in Kassala also complained about the lack of a facilitative and co-ordinating role of the Humanitarian Aid Commission in the state, which was seen as confined to office work and 'permits screening' rather than facilitating co-ordination between national and international actors and supporting the harmonisation of plans to avoid duplication and share lessons. The lack of a government master plan for the two states which could provide a framework for international response is also said to be notably lacking. HAC officials as well as international aid workers operating in the region indicated the lack of capacity within HAC as a major constraint in playing a more productive co-ordination role. The youth in Kassala also lamented the lack of focus on capacity building of local community structures and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), a criticism which was though not echoed in Red Sea State.

Concerns about the creation of a dependency syndrome because of the free distribution of aid and other relief inputs was voiced repeatedly both in Kassala and in the NDA controlled areas. In NDA controlled areas there were similar complaints about lack of support to local NGOs and CSOs, lack of community participation in the preparation



Beja boy on a camel.

of proposals and plans and a focus on handouts rather than long term rehabilitation and development programmes. The Secretariat for Humanitarian Affairs in the Liberated Areas (SHALA) has apparently tried to push the agencies operating in the areas under NDA control to sign up to a Protocol regulating their engagement in the region, but the NGOs have so far not signed. According to SHALA officials, the protocol is meant to set a clear strategy for humanitarian operations in the NDA controlled areas³.

The shortcomings of the international response need however to be contextualised. Whilst international agencies may be responsible for a number of the weaknesses described above, there is no doubt that they have been constrained by certain key factors, chief amongst which is the long standing lack of availability of donor funding for rehabilitation and development programmes in the Sudan. Furthermore, eastern Sudan has never been able to attract major donor interest notwithstanding the fact that its development indicators are amongst the worst in the country. The little funding that has been made available has often reflected donor rather than community

priorities. Some international aid workers pointed out that there is a lack of awareness and understanding about the situation in the East within the international community, which is most likely linked to the overall marginalisation of the region in the national context. Well informed observers feel that expectations on international agencies are much greater than might otherwise be the case because of the almost total lack of government assistance to the poor. In addition, some international donors observed that in NDA controlled areas the lack of an agreement for a cross-line operation from the Sudan means that a lot of resources are used on logistics to reach very remote areas which could be easily accessed from within the Sudan.

While the overall picture is not very positive, there are a number of exceptions to this. People in Red Sea State remarked that INGOs working in their region have contributed to organise communities, build their capacities and raise their awareness about their entitlements. A notable

³ The agencies have pointed out that their reasons for not so far signing the Protocol include concerns about humanitarian space and independence as well as a lack of clarity on the protocol.

success has been the catalytic role in bringing about changes in gender relations in Halaib *mahallia*. Beja women who until ten years ago could not even meet with other women from outside their immediate communities are now involved in joint project management and community initiatives with the men. There are a number of islands of success in Red Sea State in particular, including a successful micro-finance programme in Port Sudan and an agricultural rehabilitation programme in Khor Arba'at, but these are very much the exception and their impact

is negligible in the wider picture. Positive comments have been made concerning the life-saving impact of some of the emergency assistance, both in government and NDA controlled areas. SHALA officials pointed out that mortality rates in the area had declined thanks to the support INGOs were providing in the health sector. However, throughout the region the overall feeling is that international agencies are failing to tackle the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty sustainably.

4. Recommendations for Action

4.1 Humanitarian issues

1. Improve co-ordination between humanitarian agencies

Improved co-ordination should be fostered between agencies providing humanitarian assistance (both national and international) in order to avoid overlap and duplication and standardise targeting criteria, registration and operational procedures for assistance.

2. Establish an emergency early warning system linked to a Disaster Management Plan

Local authorities should be supported by the central government to prepare a detailed Disaster Management Plan and to set up a system to track key indicators of vulnerability throughout the region in order to inform the action of government, UN and NGO actors operating in the two states.

3. Build up the Strategic Grain Reserves in Port Sudan

The local government should prioritise the building up of the Reserves with the support of the federal government and international agencies and use them to stabilise sorghum prices in the market, in order to make it more affordable for the poor.

4. Ensure better targeting of humanitarian assistance for vulnerable communities

Humanitarian assistance programmes should be targeted at the most vulnerable communities in the East. This would mean extending the current concentration on IDPs and refugees to include communities in rural areas and in urban slums where indicators of vulnerability point to the need for humanitarian aid.

5. Establish and reinforce assistance programmes aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, anaemia and other diseases

Establish and reinforce assistance programmes aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, anaemia and other diseases: Whilst several diseases are widespread in eastern Sudan, tuberculosis and anaemia are reported to be the most significant killers. International agencies specialising in the public health sector should support local authorities to design effective systems for TB prevention and treatment and devise initiatives of support to pregnant women to prevent anaemia.

4.2 Development issues

1. Establish a mechanism for strategic, coordinated action by international agencies and donors

International agencies and donors should better coordinate interventions and focus on strategic responses to key livelihoods issues for the region including joint advocacy to catalyse attention to the situation on the East and enlist donor support for a large scale, integrated, strategic and sustainable response to the development needs of the region aimed at de-escalating tension.

2. Support local government planning capacity

The inclusive development of a master plan for eastern Sudan is seen by many actors as crucial to ensure coherence in development interventions. Local government officials suggested that the central government send skilled financial cadres to Red Sea and Kassala State to design and help implement and comprehensive development plan for the region.

3. Support income generating activities in urban areas

It is imperative for the Government of National Unity of the Sudan and international agencies to identify appropriate mechanisms to address income poverty of people living in urban slums, especially those directly affected by the mechanisation of the port in Port Sudan. This should help mitigate urban poverty and de-escalate the tension, particularly amongst the recently unemployed and youth. Lessons should be learnt from the very few positive initiatives of support to small scale enterprises and micro-credit in eastern Sudan to see how these could be scaled up.

4. Support key services in rural areas

The Government of National Unity and local authorities, with the support of the international community, should review the current availability of basic services (health, water and education) in rural part of Kassala and Red Sea States and endeavour to extend adequate provision, starting with areas where vulnerability indicators and mortality rates are highest. Service provision should however be accompanied by support to the strengthening of local economic and productive capacity (see below).

5. Harness existing resources for economic development

Eastern Sudan has many untapped resources which can be utilised to improve the income capacity of the population living in the rural areas. Government departments and local authorities, with the support of international agencies, should explore the potential of utilising water around the *khors* for agricultural development through spray irrigation and micro-catchments and support the expansion of the fishery sector. Preliminary positive results reached by INGOs operating in Halaib *mahallia* should be built upon and replicated where possible. Interventions to increase the productivity of existing agricultural schemes and improving the processing and conservation of agricultural produce for marketing should also be considered.

6. Strengthen pastoral livelihoods system

Ecological degradation coupled with the loss of key land resources has forced an increasing number of households to abandon the pastoral sector with no alternative economic opportunities. Strategic support should be extended to pastoral communities in order to prevent a further haemorrhage of households out of the pastoral sector, with the risk that they will end up in the already swarming urban slums. Local and central authorities, with the support of the international community, should identify suitable support strategies, which could include tailoring of services to mobile households (mobile services, key service concentration points, boarding schools, etc. according to community priorities), livestock vaccination campaigns, eradication of mesquite trees from pasture land, reopening and rehabilitation of transhumance routes and support to marketing of livestock (see below) and animal products.

7. Support livestock marketing

There are a number of major constraints to pastoralists marketing livestock that include: long distances to town based markets, lack of physical infrastructure, weak veterinary services and the need for slaughter houses on site. Government and international agencies should develop a comprehensive understanding of the constraints and identify appropriate strategies to support this key productive resource which lies at the core of the rural economy in the East.

8. Build local capacity

International agencies should build on their current area of success and expand ongoing support to local actors, particularly by continuing to build the capacity of local CBOs and CSOs for advocacy, social mobilisation, responsible citizenship, project implementation and conflict resolution. This is particularly important in NDA controlled areas.

9. Support women's strategic needs

The type of assistance offered to women in the region lacks strategic vision and implements an anachronistic model of support which reinforces existing stereotypes about women's role. Beja and Rashaida women are notoriously amongst the most (if not the most) secluded and socially marginalised groups in the country. In most communities women are not allowed access to public places and in Hamashkoreb not even eye contact is allowed between men and women! Lessons should be learned from the very successful experience of ACORD's programme in the Red Sea Hills in order to replicate similar approaches (with the necessary adjustments) throughout the region.

10. Facilitate good governance programmes

International agencies and donors should explore the possibility of developing programmes focused on support to local government reform, decentralisation and civil society capacity building.

11. Introduce TuBedawye in schools

It would be important for the government to consider the introduction of *TuBedawye* as primary or complementary means of instruction for the first two to three years of primary school, in order to reduce the inevitable educational disadvantage Beja children face when presented with tuition in Arabic from the very beginning. The pilot use of *TuBedawye* in early primary school in NDA controlled areas points to a preliminary reduction in the rate of school drop outs.

12. Support initiatives in TuBedawye

Radio programmes in *TuBedawye* should be considered to spread health education and civic education messages as well as information about the CPA, particularly in the urban slums where radios are often available. Theatre shows in local language or simple Arabic should also be thought about, building on the very successful experience of the Band Aid supported Taqaddum Centre Theatre in Port Sudan in the mid 1980s.

13. Explore the possibility of a cross-line operation

Some of the international actors operating in the NDA controlled areas pointed out the excessive costs of logistics for their operation. UN-OCHA and other mandated UN bodies should endeavour to explore with Government of National Unity and Eastern Front officials the possibility of devising an access mechanism to deliver assistance cross-line to the NDA controlled areas, in order to maximise the amount of assistance for the local communities. The necessary safeguards for the protection of humanitarian personnel should also be discussed and agreed upon. In this regard, lessons could be learned from the successful cross-line experience of the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT).

14. Ensure in-depth understanding of the local context and lessons learning

Several key actors stressed the importance for external interventions to be appropriately contextualised and aware of the socio-political context in the region and the need for new agencies to learn lessons from past experience and work in partnership with long standing actors in the East to develop common strategies to promote peace and development in the region.

15. Increase advocacy action to raise awareness about the situation in eastern Sudan

The findings of this study should be shared with a wide variety of stakeholders in the region and in other parts of the country, including Khartoum and Juba, through focused workshops to increase the knowledge of government and non-government actors about the situation in the East and discuss priorities for action.

16. Co-ordinate advocacy action to the donors

Despite the appalling vulnerability indicators, eastern Sudan receives very little international assistance compared to other areas of the country. International agencies should develop a co-ordinated advocacy action to disseminate the content of this study, as asked by many local actors during the fieldwork, and enlist donor support for a large scale, integrated, strategic and sustainable response to the development needs of the region aimed at de-escalating the tension amongst the most deprived communities.

4.3 Conflict mitigation and peace building

1. Sustain the momentum for negotiations

It is imperative that the international community continues to explore the options for a suitable venue and mediation institution in order to initiate talks between the Government and the Eastern Front at the earliest opportunity. The UN should be immediately supported by member governments in its search for an acceptable body. The plans for negotiation are playing an important deterring role amongst the youth, particularly in Port Sudan, and such precious opportunity to help differing or dissipating a possible escalation of the conflict in the region should not be wasted.

2. Support a genuine and constructive dialogue between the parties

Once negotiations get underway, the international community should nurture the dialogue between the parties and accompany the negotiation process in order to facilitate the reaching of a final settlement without too much delay.

3. Uphold any peace process and possible agreement with financial support

If and when a peace agreement is signed, it is essential that the international donors support its implementation with the allocation of adequate resources. However, it is important to start extending rehabilitation and development assistance to eastern Sudan immediately, in order to strengthen people's confidence in the peace process and offer adequate peace dividends to the communities involved. If lessons are to be learned from the Dar Fur experience, a speedy response before too much damage is done could save a lot of suffering, lives and resources further down the line.

4. Facilitate confidence building measures

While the plans to hold negotiations progress, the Government of the Sudan should promote a series of confidence building measures in order to mitigate the level of tension in the region. These initiatives should include (but not be limited to) the following:

- proceed to a prompt payment of the *diyya* to the families of those killed in the 29/1 incidents in Port Sudan and to the injured;
- carry out an independent investigation into the killings and disclose its findings;

- engage with local community and youth leaders to initiate a dialogue about development priorities at the local level;
- explore the potential for affirmative action for eastern Sudanese in allocating public sector jobs;
- share accurate information on the value of resources exploited in the region (gold, iron, gas, port revenues, etc.) and the value retained in the region and spent on local development and take steps to engage key actors from the region in the decision making concerning some of these resources;
- promote labour intensive projects (see below).

5. Promote emergency employment projects

The international community should explore ways of supporting the Government of National Unity to launch emergency employment projects aimed primarily at unskilled youth in urban areas. Such projects could help de-escalate tension amongst the youth by providing immediate job opportunities through a set of labour intensive interventions that can generate work for both skilled and unskilled people. UNDP has tested these programmes in the Gaza Strip and Afghanistan and could import lessons from those experiences. Possible initiatives could include development of agricultural or water infrastructure, waste collection and road building (in particular the highway to Egypt currently being improved). The feasibility of supporting the manual eradication of mesquite trees should be assessed, as this would benefit people twice since they could also make charcoal out of the hollowed out trees. Labour intensive programmes should though be accompanied by support to small business, micro-finance initiatives and employment skills training to create sustainable opportunities for the youth in the long term.

Beja fighter standing before an Eastern Front compound.



6. Support reduction of natural resource based conflict

Conflict over land and water between pastoralists and farmers (both within Hadendowa communities and between Hadendowa and Rashaida) is common in the region and local conflict resolution mechanisms are not always capable of solving the disputes. In order to minimise the risk of such conflict and the possible manipulation of existing animosities in political terms, urgent attention must be paid to the issue of land tenure in the region, with special attention to pastoralists' rights. The Government of National Unity should promote legislative reforms to acknowledge pastoralists' rights to land where this has been alienated, possibly through the institutions of transparent and representative State Land Commissions. Such Commissions should endeavour to incorporate customary arrangements into statutory laws, clarify and endorse transhumance routes and increase complementary use of land by various types of land users, particularly in and around the agricultural schemes in Kassala State, where grazing rights for pastoralists must be recognised.

7. Encourage grassroots reconciliation and peace building in the areas directly affected by the conflict

Where people have experienced loss of lives and assets, efforts should be made by the international community to support local actors in promoting grassroots reconciliation initiatives as appropriate.

8. Eradicate landmines

The international community should engage with the warring parties to explore the possibility of undertaking mine clearance programmes as the negotiations progress. Whilst an agreement to proceed with mine clearance is reached, the government and the Eastern Front should allow UNMAS, in collaboration with local bodies, to proceed to clearly demarcate minefields in order to prevent further loss of life.

9. Promote awareness about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

Local and central authorities, supported by the international communities, should endeavour to raise awareness about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in eastern Sudan. Simplified versions of the CPA, approved by the Government of National Unity, could be reproduced in Arabic for dissemination and radio and TV programmes in *TuBedawye* could be aired to enhance knowledge of the agreement amongst the Beja population, especially women and communities in the rural areas whose knowledge of Arabic is extremely limited.

10. Increase advocacy about eastern Sudan

International agencies involved in eastern Sudan must use the findings of this and other studies to inform the Sudanese public as well as the international community about the situation in eastern Sudan and ensure that enough attention and resources are devoted to the East in order to help prevent any further deterioration of the conflict in the region.

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Annex I - List of People Met

Khartoum

Dr. Asha Al Karib, ACORD
 Hashim Abu Zaid, Beja key informant
 Mark Bryson-Richardson, British Embassy
 Sara Musa, Christian Aid
 Rocco Blume, Christian Aid
 Alistair McArthur, DfID
 Dr. Amna Dirar, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Ali Mohammad Bagadim, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Mahmoud Al Khidir Mohammad, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Dr. Hassan Abdel Ati, EDGE
 Hassabou Abdel Rahman, HAC (Commissioner)
 Nadia Ali El Tom, IRC
 Taha Sid Ahmad, IRC
 H.E. Lorenzo Angeloni, Italian Embassy
 Dr. Mutrif Siddiq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 H.E. Taj el-Sir Mahgoub, Ministry of Labour
 Barbara Manzi, OCHA
 Kate Farnsworth, OFDA
 George Were, Oxfam
 H. E. Yahia Babiker, Presidency
 Abdel Hamid Rahmatallah, SC-UK
 Cdr. Abdel Aziz Al Hilu, SPLM/A
 Ed Walker, Tearfund
 Dr. Khalid El Amin, UNDP
 Dr. Omar Egemi, UNDP
 Dr. Samia El Nagar, UNDP
 Prof. Mohammad Yusuf Sulaiman, University of Khartoum
 Primrose Oteng, UNMIS
 Domenico Polloni, UNMIS
 Janice Elmore, US Embassy

Port Sudan

Eisa Yacoub, ACORD
 Elmutalib Ibrahim, ACORD
 Saida Mohammad Badri, ACORD
 Dr. Ahmad Adam Tamim, ACORD
 Omar Adam Ali, Beja Club
 Mohammad Ahmad Dirar, Beja Club
 Hamid Abu Fatima, Beja Club
 Gaffar Baamkar, Beja leader
 Mohammad Abyerb, Beja Youth
 Osman Al Bagir, Beja Youth

Hashim Ali, Beja Youth
 Abdelrahim Hamad, Beja Youth
 Amna Ibrahim, Beja Youth
 Hamad Kasha, Beja Youth
 Ghada Khidir, Beja Youth
 Mohammad Musa, Beja Youth
 Sheiaba Sidi, Beja Youth
 Women's group, Deim al Arab (16 representatives)
 Men's group, Deim al Arab (20 representatives)
 Adam Omar, Head of Salvation Committee, Gadisia
 Mohammad Mahmud Salih, *omda* Beni Amer, Gadisia
 Mahmud Idriss Musa, *Idara Sha'abia* Gadisia
 Community meeting, Gadisia (15 representatives)
 Community meeting, Hosheiry (8 representatives)
 Mohammad Tom Abu Shana, IRC
 Mohammad Idriss Biriq, HAC (Commissioner)
 Baqash Abdulgadir, journalist
 H.E. Mohammed Bedawi, Minister of Agriculture and Animal Wealth, RSS
 Sayed Dabloub, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Wealth, RSS
 Mohammad Hassan Abu Zeinab Shegeira, Ministry of Social Affairs, RSS
 Josephn Atonia, Oxfam
 Ahmed Hassan, Oxfam
 Jaqueline Jacob, Oxfam
 Hassan Sir Elkhatim, Oxfam
 Dr. Taha Bedawi, SECS
 Mohammad Karrar, Umma Party
 Abu Ali Sharif Al Milek, UNDP

Sinkat

Women's groups, Abu Hadia Centre (24 representatives)
 Mohammad Hamad Elnieel, Commissioner Sinkat
 Sharif Taha, HAC
 Abdalla Haenab, SRC
 Mohammad Salih, SRC
 Ahmed Shash, traditional leader (Hadendowa)
 Hashim Baamkar, traditional leader (Hadendowa)

Tokar

Ummad Kisha Hamid, Acting Head of *mahallia*
 Sulaiman Al Kanzei, Commissioner, Tokar
 Abdel Gadir Farag, Oxfam
 Halima Musa, Oxfam

El Haj Hassan El Fawal, Tokar Delta Scheme Manager
 Tahir Onur Tahir, Secretary, Umm Hill CBO, Dolobiay (met in Tokar)
 Obshak Oshar Okesh Tahir, Chair, Ummhill CBO, Dolobiay (met in Tokar)
 Umm Hill CBO Committee (25 representatives)

Kassala

Ali Ibrahim Digna, *Nazir* Beni Amer
 Idriss Shallal, *omda* Beni Amer
 Khalil Ash-Shifa, *omda* Beni Amer
 Onour Mohammad Osman, *Wakil* Hadendowa
 Eisa Hamad Sheikh, FAO
 Omar Onour, HAC (Commissioner)
 Community meeting, IDPs Fato (20 representatives)
 Community meeting, Haj Es Salaam (32 representatives)
 Women's group meeting, Haj El Shahiid (11 representatives)
 Ali Mohammad Din, Head of Development Committee, IDPs Hamadab
 Development Committee, IDPs Dabalawet/Hamadab (5 representatives)
 Asha Adam Sidid, IFAD
 Ahmad Mohammad Karrar, IFAD
 Community meeting, Kadugli locality (30 representatives)
 Mohtasir Babiker Ahmed Jaffar, Kassala Mayor
 H.E. Mohamed Idris Aukid, Minister of Social Planning, Kassala State
 Ahmed Abbas Mohammad Ar-Razam, Ministry of Justice
 Family members (8) of Ahmad Hamid Birqi, Rashaida 'Nazir' (Abu Tala)
 Ahmed Ante, UNMIS
 Joseph Mwaanga, UNMIS
 Group meeting, Youth Initiative for Peace Building (15 representatives)
 H.E. Farouk Hassan Mohammad Nur, *Wali* Kassala State

Asmara

Sheikh Ahmad Ali Betai, Betai *tariqa*
 Aklilu Lijam, Dutch Interchurch Aid
 Joke Oranji, Dutch Interchurch Aid
 Bakri Ahmad, DUP
 Cdr Abdalla Mahmoud, DUP
 Dr Gaafar Ahmed Abdalla, DUP
 Mutaz Osman Elfahal, DUP
 Abdalla Kunna, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Ali Es-Safi, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Salah Barakwin, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Mabruk Mubarak Salim, Eastern Front (Rashaida Free Lions)

Geert Heikens, EU Delegation
 Abdalla Jabir, Government of Eritrea
 Amb. Mohammad Ali Omaro, Government of Eritrea
 Robert Warwick, IRC
 Mahmoud Tahir El Hagg, JEM
 Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Mohammad, JEM
 Abdel Aziz Osher, JEM
 Arild Skara, Norwegian Embassy
 Dr. Taiesir Ali, SAF
 Wilson Gitchinga, Samaritan's Purse
 Asmat Ali, SHALA
 Fakki Osman Hagg, SHALA
 Tariq Abulgasim, SLM/A
 Abdel Wahid Mohamed Ahmed al-Nur, SLM/A
 Mohammad Zakaria, SLM/A
 Mohammad Mur Salih, SLM/A
 Joey Hood, US Embassy

Tessnay

Mohammad Bushara, JEM
 Abdel Hadi Siddiq, JEM
 Abu Fatna Abdelmagid Mustafa, JEM
 Salim Ali, Eastern Front (Rashaida Free Lions)
 Sulaiman Salim, Eastern Front (Rashaida Free Lions)
 Mohammad Salih Abid, Eastern Front (Rashaida Free Lions)
 Awad Mubarak, Eastern Front (Rashaida Free Lions)

NDA controlled areas

Sheikh Ali Betai, Betai *tariqa*
 Musa Ali Betai, Betai *tariqa*
 Sheikh Mustafa Ali Karrar, Betai *tariqa*
 Musa Salih Osman, Civil Administration
 Ibrahim Mohammad Din Osham, Civil Administration
 Digna Abu Eisa, Civil Administration
 Amin Osheikh Idriss, Civil Administration
 Ali El Amin Yusuf, Civil Administration
 Ali Ahmad, Commissioner Hamashkoreb
 Mohammad Odis, Commissioner Liberated Areas
 Hassan Gaffar, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Musa Mohammad Ahmad, Eastern Front (Beja Congress)
 Community meeting, Hamashkoreb (15 representatives)
 Charlie Kwetch, SPLM/A
 John Mallis, SPLM/A
 Badid Sheikh, SPLM/A

NB. The names of some Eastern Front members met during the assessment have been withheld upon request of the interviewees.