

**THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN FUND
(UNICEF)**

ANALYSIS OF NINE CONFLICTS IN SUDAN¹

KHARTOUM

May 2003

¹ A team of researchers, which included eight academics from the Universities of Khartoum, Juba and Zalinge, prepared this report, at the invitation and support of UNICEF, the UNDP and the Ministry of Higher Education. The team members included Dr. Abdel Hamid Balla, Dr. Muna Mohamed Taha Ayoub, Dr. Abbas Shasha Musa, Mr. El Tayeb Ibrahim Ahmed Wadi, Mr. Osman Mohamed Osman, Mr. Musa Adam Dr. Paul Wani Gore (the overall Leader of the Sub-Teams) and Dr. Abraham Matoch Dhal. The views expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the Team Members.

Contents

	Page
1. Background and Rationale	4
2. An Overview of the Conflicts in Sudan	4
3. Analysis of the 9 Conflict Areas	7
3.1 Conflict in Equatoria: Mundari/Bari/Dinka Conflict	7
- Introduction	7
- Location and Pasture Areas	7
- Historical background to the Conflicts	9
- Causes of the Conflict	11
- The Stakeholders	12
- The Impact of the Conflict	13
3.2 Conflict in Upper Nile Region	13
3.2.1 The Bahr el Jebel – Sobat Confluence and the Zeraf Island	13
- Introduction	13
- The People and the Resource Base of the Area	14
- The Economy of the Area	15
- Background to the Conflict	16
- The Causes of the Conflict	18
- The key Stakeholders	18
- The Impact of the Conflict	19
3.2.2 The Dinka and Nuer in Bentiu Region	19
- Introduction	19
- The People and their Economy	20
- Background to the Conflict	21
- Major Causes of the Conflict	22
- The Key Stakeholders	23
- The Impact of the Conflict	23
3.2.3 The Upper Nile/South Kordofan Borders	23
- Introduction	23
- Location and the People	23
- Background to the Conflict	24
- Causes of the Conflict	24
- Key stakeholders	25
- Impact of the Conflict	26
3.3 Nuba-Baggara Relations	26
- Introduction	26
- Location and the People	27
3.3.1 The Nuba – Hawazma Conflict	29
- Background to the Conflict	29
- Causes of the Conflict	30
- Stakeholders	32
- Impact of the Conflict	32
3.3.2 The Shanabla and Nuba	32:
- Introduction	32
- The Economy and Land Use Patterns	33
- Causes of the Conflict	33
- The Stakeholders	36
- Impact of the Conflict	36
3.3.3 Conflict in Lagawa	36
- Introduction	36
- Population Groups and the Local Economy	36
- Background to the Conflict	38

- The Causes of the Conflict	38
- The Stakeholders	40
- Impact of the Conflict	40
3.4. The Dinka – Baggara Relations in the Kiir (Bahr el Arab)	41
- Introduction	41
- The People and the Economy	43
- Background to the Conflict	45
- The Causes of the Conflict	47
- The Stakeholders	49
- The Impact of the Conflict	49
3.5 Conflicts in the Jebel Marra Region	50
- Introduction	50
- The People and the Economy	50
- Historical Background to the Conflict	51
- Causes of the Conflict	53
- The Stakeholders	54
- Impact of the Conflict	54
4. Epilogue	54

1. Background and Rationale

In 2002, UNICEF and UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), commissioned a conflict survey and analysis, to the objective of mapping out the various grassroots conflicts in 12 States of Sudan. The states covered by this analysis have over 32% of Sudan's 32 million population² lying mostly in the central part of the country, with the exception of Equatoria. The two UN agencies had a common interest in their attempt to address grassroots conflicts in Sudan in accordance with their mandates. They also faced a common problem: inadequacy of data on conflict and peace, especially in areas of/at risk of violent conflicts. The study identified a number of grassroots conflicts in the nine focus states in northern Sudan targeted by the MICS survey and in accessible areas in South Sudan. Several indicators suggest that a number of areas, in particular those termed as "transactional areas", in Sudan will continue to experience conflicts in future, with varying impacts on the post-conflict situation of the country. Such areas include Darfur and Kordofan, the Upper Nile Region (in particular, Jonglei and Unity States), and Eastern Equatoria.

The present study looks into further details on some of the specific conflicts, focusing on regions of important significance for peace building and mainstreaming into service delivery. The objective of the study is to provide an in-depth analysis of the conflicts in selected areas for program planning and project design purposes, especially in post-conflict process. The study attempts to identify the political economy of the areas, the dynamics of the conflicts, including a brief historical account, the factors and principal key stakeholders in the conflicts. Selected conflicts, with a geographical focus on the Sobat valley, the Nuba Mountains, South Darfur, West Kordofan, Bahr El Ghazal and Equatoria, areas which are targeted by the grassroots peace building supported by UNICEF within the context of its Country Program in Sudan for 2002-2006.

Some of the areas in this report fall within what are generally referred to as the "transitional zones" in reference to the current area of the "civil war" in Sudan. The description and analysis of the communities in these areas will be from the point of view of grass-roots conflicts whose impact on service delivery and future stability of the areas appear to be significant. The report will attempt to present brief synopsis of each conflict area with regards to the historical background of the conflicts, their root causes, the main stakeholders and impact on the communities. The principal physical characteristics of the areas will also be summarized in so far as they are relevant to the understanding of the conflicts among the communities, in particular the points which affect the livelihoods and relations of the communities, especially their influence on the present agricultural and pastoral economies of the inhabitants. The information given should be sufficient to assist in the discussion of the potentialities of the areas for development options for alternative livelihood interventions in order to reduce or eliminate conflicts or threats to future conflicts.

The data used in these cases is derived from the reports of the 2002 Conflict Mapping Survey and Analysis. Visits were made to two areas, Ed Daein in South Darfur and Sobat/Canal Area in Upper Nile in order to fill the gaps in the information collected during the previous survey. Additional information was obtained from historical and other secondary sources.

² Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)/United Nations Population Fund(UNFPA), Population Data Sheet for Sudan by States, 2001, Khartoum-Sudan

2. An Overview of the Conflicts in Sudan

There are several types and forms of conflicts in Sudan; and their causes are different and often complex. Some of the major grassroots conflicts in Sudan are between the pastoral communities, and the agricultural settled communities. The majority of the pastoral communities occupy arid and semi-arid lands, characterized by frequent and prolonged droughts. Many factors have increased the development of seemingly insignificant disagreements or disputes into potential violent social and political upheavals triggering devastation on a massive scale. Communities have been shredded apart by these conflicts, entire societies are ripped apart; women and children are the main victims. It is observed that conflicts in Sudan have been a significant cause of increased poverty and displacement, violations of human rights and environmental degradation/depletion of natural resources. Poverty, unequal distribution of land, and the degradation of ecosystems are among the most real and pressing issues undermining people's security.

The root causes of conflicts in the regions of Sudan are of course complex and varied, typically involving historical grievances, economic deprivation, and access to use of natural resources, and in some cases, an absence of democratic process. On the surface of many conflicts do seem to revolve around ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic divisions, and it has been assumed that these divisions are likely to continue to dominate the perceptions of the protagonists. However, it is also recognized that disputes are often sharpened or even triggered by glaring social and economic inequalities, explosive conditions that are exacerbated by the growing pressures of population growth, resource depletion, and environmental degradation. Disparities in wealth and power are growing both within countries and among them; the rich are gaining at the direct expense of the poor. When these are accompanied by weak, non representative administrative systems that are increasingly seen as non traditional and incapable of attending to people's needs, these pressures can lead to the wholesale fragmentation of societies. As people turn to ethnic, religious or other groups-based organizations for assistance, protection and identity, relations with other groups deteriorate.

In many parts of Sudan, human and animal life depends on the delicate balance of ecosystem. During the last four decades this equilibrium was upset, particularly in the vast arid and semi-arid areas of the northern half of the country. In addition to the persistent drought, unsustainable methods of land use and overgrazing in marginal lands are destroying the eco-zone of many parts of Sudan, forcing many communities to abandon their areas and move to new ones in search of survival. Desertification, and overexploitation of natural resources undermines the support systems that human life depends on, reduce carrying capacity, and increase the competition for nominally renewable yet scarce resources. In some areas, rapidly expanding human populations are outstripping the carrying capacity of the local resource base. Together these conditions can form a powerful blend of insecurity.

On the same token, depletion of and inequitable access to natural resources are also seen as a main cause contributing to previous, ongoing and potential future conflicts in the country. The management and resolution of conflicts raises a number of issues and access to natural resources and services, and was also widely seen as the cause of actual and potential future conflicts in many parts of Sudan, in particular, conflicts between pastoralists and settled agriculturalists, and/or government and/or other interest groups. Thus, it was also recognized that resolving and mitigating or preventing small-scale or local levels conflicts, which were related to access to natural resources and services, was an important aspect of development and service delivery.

The degradation and depletion, in some areas the monopoly or claim of control, of natural resources was a critical issue in parts of the country, both in terms of environmental perspective and in terms of impact on economic livelihoods and poverty in which natural resources (mainly agriculture, including livestock) form the backbone of the economy. Organizing around conflict management and resolution, access to and quality of natural resources and social services, and reducing poverty can form the basis of prospects to ending them through civil society building, which can enhance the ability of communities to work jointly around other aspects of their development and well being. It was also recognized that the international community, and local NGOs were better placed to play a role in resolving and mitigating or preventing small-scale or local levels conflicts, which were related to access to natural resources and social services.

In recent years the resurgence of racial and ethnic intolerance in some parts of Sudan suggest more potent and alarming threats to political stability in some regions. Ethnic intolerance is resulting in extensive and protracted violations of the rights of people. Ethnic intolerance puts into jeopardy all the values than communities in these regions have cultivated and nourished over centuries to enable women and men to live together in dignity and peace. It is destroying civil society as well as the capacity of government to govern in some areas of these regions.

The conflict in Central Darfur represents the impact of a fragile ecology/environment on economic, political and social relations. This conflict is reflected in the Fur-Arab Conflict in the Jebel Marra Region. One important point to mention here is that, while the Fur group was the majority demographically in Central Darfur when it occupied one state, the division of Darfur into South, West and North Darfur has reduced the Fur into a minority group in the three states. The present conflict has become socio-economic-political reflecting regional development inequalities and demand for equal share of power, national and regional.

The Conflict in the transition zone of South Darfur and North Bahr El Ghazal can be re-classified into two sub-zones, the Kiir (Bahr El Arab) zone and the Babanusa-Aweil-Wau Railway Corridor. The conflict in this zone is a product of politico-ethnic divides, which the current civil war has had an impact. One important interesting development is the new types of alliances emerging between the non-Arab groups (the Zagawa/Maaliya and Dinka on the one hand and the Arab groups on the other). Historically the Dinka came to south Darfur and west Kordofan to work in agriculture as laborers or sharecroppers. They worked in the past mainly with the Baggara Rezeigat; but today an increasing number is working with the Zaghawa as sharecroppers. They find better protection working with the Zaghawa that with the Rezeigat. However, the Rezeigat group is aware that their future survival in the area will be dependent on the need to re-introduce their historic relations with the Dinka. The series of conferences and agreements emerging from meetings between the Rezeigat and the Dinka during the past years appear to be a reflection of the new reality. This is also the case with the Rezeigat and the Zaghawa. The Babanusa-Aweil-Wau Railway corridor is another dimension in the Baggara Messeiriya and Dinka relations.

The Conflict in the Nuba Mountains-Lagawa zone can be divided into two main types of conflicts are involved here: (a) the Lagawa area conflict and (b) the Nuba Mountains Conflict. The Lagawa zone links Western Kordofan to the Nuba Mountains. The competition over the use of natural resources is clear, although the political dimension in the areas and outside it are becoming the driving forces behind the conflict in the area. The Conflict in the Nuba Mountains, particularly in the AlPatrol and the AlBuram Localities is between the Baggara and Shanabla nomads on the one hand and the Nuba on the other. Although is its also basically a natural resource based conflict, the ethnic divide and the current civil in Sudan has amplified the divide between the two groups

The Southern Sudan, the major conflicts are in the Sobat Corridor between the Nuer sections, and in Bahr el Jebel State, between the Bari and Mundari and Dinka and Mundari. On the surface of it, competition over natural resources is the main cause. But the current civil war is the main driving force in most of the current conflicts in most areas of South Sudan. In general, however, although small arms and light weapons are not themselves a cause of conflict, their accessibility and low cost tend to prolong conflicts, encourage a violent rather than a peaceful resolution of differences, and spiraling demand for, and use of, such weapons. Direct exposure to military activities with a clear intent to disrupted the normal lives of other groups often result in the acquisition of arms. Groups awash in such weapons often find themselves caught in a culture of violence, which is likely to continue even after the formal conflict ends. For young men, many of whom have known little else besides war, and have little or no education; their weapons become a status symbol and a means of making a living.

The rest of this report presents an analysis of each of the individual nine conflict areas. It will be divided into five major sections. The first section will outline the Bari/Mundari/Dinka Conflict in Bahr el Jebel region. The second section will outline three of the conflicts in Upper Nile Region, concentrating on the area north of Bor and including the confluence of the Bahr el Jebel and Sobat area, the Bentiu area; and the Fashoda/South Kordofan Boarder area. The third section will be devoted to the Conflicts in the Nuba Mountain areas, which will cover, the Nuba/Hawazma, and Nuba Shanabla and Lagawa. The fourth section will present the Dinka/Baggara Conflict on the Kiir/ Bahr el Arab Zone. The fifth section will discuss the conflict in the Jebel Marra region.

3. Analysis of Conflicts in the 9 Areas

3.1 Conflict in Equatoria: Mundari/Bari/Dinka Conflict

a. Introduction

The analysis of the relation between the Bari, Mundari and Dinka is important for several reasons. First, the area occupied by the three groups falls along an important water supply route, the River Nile, which has been and is vital for all Equatoria, Upper Nile, Jonglei and Lakes States. Second, the return of the Dinka Bor from their present areas of refuge (as IDPs and Refugees), and their ability to adopt to their previous way of life, (pastoralism), will depend on the post-conflict peaceful co-existence with the Mundari and the Bari who used to share grazing land with them. Third, the political stability of the post-conflict government of South Sudan could be threatened by conflict among the three communities, in particular that between the Mundari and the Dinka. Current re-arming of tribal militias in the area might indicate plans for future destabilization of a future government in South Sudan following a peace settlement.

In all these conflicts, i.e. the Dinka/Mundari, the Dinka/Bari and the Mundari/Bari, there was both a direct and indirect involvement by authorities³. These conflicts have used as instruments of political control and domination by one group over the other.

b. Location and Pasture Areas⁴

³ Part of the information on the Dinka/Bari Conflict and the Mundari/Dinka Conflict is based on the records of one of the Team Member who was a members of the 1972/73 Conference of the Bari-Mundari-Dinka chiefs. He was a translation of that conference and had access to some files in the Local Council responsible for organizing the conference. Observers who include the Shilluk Reth and the Chief of the Lokoya attended the conference.

The Bari and Mundari belong to Bahr El Jebel State, although they belong to two different Localities (Provinces), Mongalla Locality (Bari, with Juba as its Headquarters) and Terekeka/Tali Locality (Mundari, with Terekeka as its main administrative town). Villages of the Bari north of Juba are located on both bank of the Bahr El Jebel River; others are located on the numerous islands of the River.

There are two Dinka groups north of Mundari territory, the Gok/Twic/Nyareweg/Ghol in Jonglei State with Bor as the main administrative town, and the Chiech/Aliab Dinka of Lakes State with Yirol as the main administrative town. The Bari do not share borders with any of the Dinka groups, the Mundari been a buffer between them. All these groups, with the exception of the Bari, rely on the flood plain of the Bahr El Jebel for grazing in the dry season. The area is particularly susceptible to rain and river floods.

The Bari and the majority of the Mundari areas lie mainly outside the Flood Region, and Bari being exclusively limited to the Ironstone Region. The Mundari do, however, inhabit the fringe of the flood region and the majority utilizes the flood plain of the Bahr El Jebel. The Dinka groups west of the Bahr el Jebel penetrate as far as Equatoria region for grazing. High land occurs both north and south of Bor as a narrow ridge just inland from the river. Most of the riverain swamp pasture is in the Aliab valley on the west side of the Bahr el Jebel, an area shared by the Bor Gok with the Aliab Dinka. Rainfall in this area range between 1200 mm and 900 mm per year, with extreme variability from month to month and year to year, with the result that drought and flooding can follow each other in quick succession. Crops planted in the early rain often suffer from drought in the middle months owing to the equatorial distribution of rain; and in September the soil is as often saturated, so that moisture conditions are normally unfavorable to the majority of crops.

The Mundari from both sides of Bahr el Jebel uses the Mundari-Gemmeiza *toich* east of the Bahr el Jebel. On the east bank the Mundari extend from north of Mongalla to about 20 kilometer north of Gemmeiza, and the permanent villages are grouped along the ridge near the Mongalla-Gemmeiza road. On the Eastern Bank of the River, crop husbandry plays a more important part in the economy than among the Dinka, and it is possible to use the toich for this purpose as it is less frequently inundated than that in the Aliab Valley. Besides millet and groundnuts, maize and some tobacco are grown on the banks of the Bahr el Jebel wherever these are easily accessible⁵. (See Maps 1-3 for the Location of the Area).

The eastern riverain Mundari have permanent villages on higher grounds north of Mongalla and the areas has sufficient annual grazing to support the local livestock during the rains. The sandy ridge, which runs northwards from the borders of the Mundari with the Dinka as far a Malek, was populated, except for the uninhabited gap between the Mundari and the Agok Dinka. There are several permanent villages and cultivation plots, but pasture of any real value is extremely limited. At the latitude of Bor land free from flooding is more scattered and extends inland to the border of the Eastern Plain

On the western banks, the riverain flood plain in the area in the Aliab Valley is used exclusively for dry season grazing. As the flood plain on the right bank of Bahr el Jebel is extremely limited in extent between the latitude of Tombe and Bor, the Bor Gok Dinka as well as the Aliab Dinka are dependent on the Aliab valley pasture. Although the Bahr El Jebel forms the boundary between Upper Nile (now Jonglei) and Bahr El Ghazal (Lakes

⁴ The Jonglei Investigation Team (1954); The Equatorial Nile project and its Effects in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, vol. 11, Khartoum.

⁵ For detail information on the Mundari read Buster, J. (1968); The Mandari of Southern Sudan, in Middleton, J. and Tait D. (eds); Tribes without Rulers: Studies in African Elementary System.

State), the Bor Dinka cross the river to dry season cattle camps in the Aliab Valley; the River Aliab forms a rough boundary between Dinka Bor and Aliab Dinka camps, the former being to the east of its channel and the latter to the west, with a few camps on the east bank. The period of utilization varies from year to year depending on the rains and the fall and rise of the river. But the movement to toich is usually between November and January, while from it is at the end of April or beginning of May.

The villages of the Bor Dinka are found along the east bank of the Bahr El Jebel River, which in this area was high and well define. East of this ridge is the eastern plain, which provides intermediate grazing in the early part of the dry season. In most years re-growth of pasture on the eastern plains does not continue throughout the dry months, and in any case water supplies run dry. In very few years exceptionally heavy rain-flooding and late rainfall are sufficient to prolong the period of re-growth and ensure more lasting water supplies so as to accommodate the Bor Dinka throughout January, February and March. On the west bank of Bahr El Jebel River, the Aliab Dinka has little or no permanent grazing land. Thus both tribes are compelled to utilize the *toich* of the Aliab valley, which lies between them. In this reach levels in the river during the dry season are often high enough to reduce the normally accessible pasture by continued spill and inundation. The Dinka are predominantly pastoralists, and Bor area, in particular, was rich in cattle but poor for crop production. The Mundari are also pastoralists, but unlike the Dinka, there is a balance between agricultural production and animal husbandry.

c. Historical background to the Conflict

i. Mundari/Dinka Conflict

The Bor and the Aliab Dinka of Upper Nile and Lakes States, on the one hand, and the Mundari and Bari of Bahr El Jebel on the other hand, have always lived in relations alternating between war and peace. Mundari/Dinka relations, in particular, have a long history of peaceful co-existence punctuated by periods of conflict over grazing land and cattle rustling. Records dating to 1900 showed that violent conflicts between the Mundari and the Dinka, and between the Dinka Bor and Aliab Dinka were related to changes in the hydrology of the Bahr el Jebel.

However, the period following the settlement of the first civil war in 1972 witnessed deterioration in Dinka-Mundari relations partly due to the increasing number of Dinka cattle in the area, but also resulting from the competition over the cattle and meat market in Juba town and towns in Western Equatoria. The Dinka controlled the majority of the executive and security posts in the Regional Government, and the Bor and Aliab Dinka used this advantage to undermine the traditional agreements with the Mundari regarding dry season grazing areas. Moreover, the Dinka controlled the main cattle and meat market in Juba and the majority of licenses were granted to them.

Following the call to re-divide the Southern Region into three sub-regions in 1980 the Mundari expressed their desire to replace the Dinka in the meat and cattle market in Juba. The Mundari started to form militia groups during this period, assisted by authorities that belonged to the area; the leadership of the militia groups was placed under a retired police officer. They also started to acquire firearms from Zaire (now The Democratic Republic of Congo) and Uganda. The division of the Southern Region into three regions in 1983 resulted in a violent reaction against the Dinka, and the Mundari killed many of those who remained in Juba town (in places such as Tong Ping).

The current conflict reached Mundari area in 1986 with disastrous effect on Dinka-Mundari relations. The SPLA/M forces that attacked Gemmeiza, Mongalla and Terekeka were composed predominantly of Dinka, some of who were identified to be from the groups who

share the same toiches with the Mundari. There were reports of violation of human rights, girls were raped in front of their relatives and wives were also raped in front of their husbands. Graphic descriptions by eyewitnesses of events during the first entry of SPLA/M into the area still persist today. Other actions included the planting of mines in water points, fruit trees and farms. The behavior of the SPLA/M forces in the area was interpreted as a revenge on the Equatorians for the division of Southern Sudan Autonomous Region into three sub-regions, but in particular against the Mundari for what they did during the period dealing to and following the division of the Southern Region into three sub-regions. Reports of similar actions were not made in the Bari area; the general feeling of antagonism was expressed against the SPLA, which was regarded as a Dinka movement by both the Mundari and the Bari. The emergence of Mundari militias and their continued resistance against the Dinka appeared to have been a result of the initial entry of the SPLA into the area.

ii. The Bari/Dinka Conflict

Between 1965 and 1968, the Bari north of Juba town was engaged in series of bloody battles with the Dinka from Bor in Upper Nile and Yirol Bahr El Ghazal. This war brought a temporary alliance between the Bari, the Nyangwara and the Mundari who all share the same language, against the Dinka. The war ended when the Dinka realized that they could not face the combined forces of these three Bari-Speaking group.

The Bari and the Dinka did not, and still do not, share a common boundary. The Mundari separated the two groups. But dating back to the 1920s, the Dinka of Bor and Yirol were forced by frequent floods in the Sudd area to move with their cattle southwards into Mundari area where grazing was available throughout the year. The movement of the Dinka into Mundari territory resulted in increased conflict over the use of grazing land. The Mundari, like the Dinka, are cattle owners; their relations had usually been that of competition over grazing land but also over possession of cattle. Cattle rustling were common in the area.

During the colonial period the Mundari and the Dinka were able to co-exist in the same territory, through agreements among their chiefs. The Mundari would agree to allocate area to the Dinka for own use. New areas could be added to those agreed upon through other agreements. But as both the Dinka and Mundari human and animal population increased, grazing land became limited and scares, and there was no possibility for the Mundari to allocate new areas to the Dinka. Thus, the Dinka were often pushed south of Mundari area until they reached Bari territory. Over the years prior to interdependence of Sudan, the Dinka were allowed to move into areas south of Mundari land into the Bari areas for grazing, through the same types of agreements among the three tribes, the Bari, the Mundari and the Dinka. The frequent and long periods of flooding of Dinka land made grazing impossible for most of the year, thus most of the areas that were designated for Dinka cattle became permanent grazing areas, and there was little movement of Dinka to their areas of origin. The colonial authorities at that time organized annual meetings to allocate specific grazing areas to the Dinka during the most critical parts of the year when grazing was difficult for the Dinka in their areas.

The 17-year civil war in South Sudan increased the conflict between the Bari and the Dinka, as they were forced to move into few secure areas where the two practices, agriculture and grazing, were bound to compete and conflict over the different uses of same land. The conflict that emerged during this period produced who, though they lived in proximity to each other, did not have mutual social interaction. The local government authorities in Juba organized the 1973 Bari-Mundari-Dinka Conference. The purpose was to agree on new re-location procedures and areas for Dinka cattle. However, it was clear that the long period of conflict, had left bitter feelings among the groups, and this was one

of the reasons for the division of South Sudan Region in 1983 into three sub-regions of Bahr El Ghazal, Upper Nile and Equatoria.

These annual meetings became less frequent following the independence of Sudan in 1956, although the three groups honored the previous agreements until they broke down following the intensification of the first civil war in South Sudan in the early 1960s. The last meeting of the chief of the three communities was held in 1957 in Terekeka. No other meetings were organized by the post colonial authorities to allocate grazing land and resolve disputes until 1973 when the Southern Regional Government organized a meeting of the chiefs of the three groups in the presence of chiefs from the major tribes of South Sudan. The Mundari kept to their own land and did not need to use Bari land for grazing, except during periods of extreme droughts when grazing along the River Nile was the only option, and the land available to Mundari cattle was not enough for their survival.

iii. The Bari/Mundari Conflict

Although the Bari share a common boundary with the Mundari, they did not share the same pastures in the past. Relations between the Bari and the Mundari have poor since the intensification of the current conflict in Equatoria. Part of the reason is the movement of large number of Mundari with their cattle from Tali area into Bari land. Tali area where a large population of Mundari is found became a zone of contention between the SPLA and GoS. This resulted in the movement of the Mundari towards the Bahr el Jebel River in search of security and pasture. They occupied the areas where once the Dinka used to graze their cattle north of Juba between Juba and Terekeka. However, the poor relations between the Mundari of Tali and those of Terekeka have made the former group to concentrate on Bari land. The area they currently occupy is used by the Bari for agriculture, and Mundari cattle often destroy the crops of this people, resulting into violent confrontations. Although there are no violent conflicts between the groups now, they do not share the same services, e.g. water, health and education.

The Bari and the Mundari are not currently engaged in a violent confrontation partly due to interventions by NGOs, particularly OXFAM which has been able to organized meetings with the leaders of the two communities. The Mundari have formed militias and they are better armed than the Bari who until recently were resentful of been recruited as militias. However, the Bari north of Juba now has its own militia groups, and the balance of power is partly contributing the temporary peace in the area.

d. Causes of the Conflict

The root causes of conflicts in this zone are varied, although they appear to revolve around access to the use of natural resources, historical grievances, and recently to alleged economic deprivation by some groups, and lack of participation in the State Government. On the surface of it the conflicts do seem to revolve around ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divisions. These divisions are likely to continue to dominate the perceptions of the protagonists during the post-conflict period. However, it is also recognized that disputes are exacerbated by the growing pressures of population growth and resource depletion as a result of the cycle of long periods of floods punctuated by periods of droughts. Perceived disparities in power is growing both within Bahr el Jebel State and between the Dinka and other groups in the area. The weak traditional administrative system that is seen as incapable of resolving conflicts among groups who share the same eco-system is another factor contributing to the persistence of poor communal relations in the area. Groups are turning to ethnic based organizations for assistance, protection and identity, thus, leading to the deterioration of relations with other groups.

i. Natural Resource Use

The movement of the people and animals in the area is governed by the hydrology of Bahr el Jebel River. In some years of the very high minima the area is not accessible at all, to the Bor Dinka at any rate. This inevitably leads to hardship and often losses to stock, since the Bor Agok have little toich grazing on their own bank and cannot graze their cattle on the edges of the toich in the Aliab; the main channel of the river intervenes. In such circumstances the area accessible to the Aliab Dinka is reduced and, though a proportion is usually still available at the western extremities, they too sometimes suffer from shortages. The result is that the Bor Agok (and to a much lesser extent the Aliab) have to seek alternative pastures elsewhere, either in the Eastern Plain, which can carry the cattle population only in some years, or southwards in the toiches belonging to the Mundari.

Political relations between the Bor Agok and the Mundari usually deteriorate in such circumstances; political relations between the Bor Agok and the Aliab are not affected, for these tribes are separated by kilometers of permanent swamps. In the years of low level, which follow, however, both tribes enter the valley and, since grazing may be much reduced by the swampy conditions, which prevail, or from other causes, disputes often arise⁶.

Past record of the events in relation to changes in river levels revealed a definite influence of the hydrology of the river on political events in the area. However, hydrological conditions resulting in grazing shortages are not the only cause of inter-tribal disputes and breaches of security. Both good grazing conditions in a particular year and peaceful relations between tribes do not necessarily mean that no trouble was to be expected. Administrative interventions and control were also important factors. Fights arose between smaller sections and spread to larger ones and across tribal boundaries from a great variety of causes, fear of contagion from infected herds, unsettled legal claims, a sudden and sometimes inexplicable outburst of hostile feelings derived from former feuds. Shortages of pasture and unsatisfactory economic conditions, however, were often contributory even to these causes, and the correlation between high water levels in the *toiches* and deterioration in political relations seemed to be facts in the past.

The Bari community is predominantly agriculturalists, although they keep a few cattle and other small ruminants. Their cattle did not compete with agriculture for land. The Dinka and the Mundari are agro-pastoralists, although pastoralism is more important than agriculture. There was limited competition over the use of land for agriculture and pasture. However, when the Dinka came into contact with the Bari cattle and agriculture started to compete with each other. The Bari would accuse the Dinka of letting their cattle graze in their fields and destroying their crop. During that time the absence of an effective administration in the south partly contributed to the inability of the two groups to settle their disputes over the use of land for agriculture and grazing, as it was the case in the past.

ii. Political Power

One of the important sources of current conflict in the area is the extent to which the Bari community is alleged to dominate the politics of Bahr el Jebel State, and the control over the allocation of rewards. Some groups, like the Mundari, feel deprived of leadership opportunities now as well as in the past, because they were less exposed to the sources of power in Juba. The Bari had easier access to education and hence political participation because of Christian mission education. Moreover, services, like health and education

⁶ The Jonglei Investigation Team; (1954); The Equatorial Nile project and its Effects in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, vol. 11, Khartoum.

continue to be poor in the Mundari area compared to those in Juba and Bari area. These feeling of exclusion might ferment future conflicts in the area.

e. The Stakeholders

It is clear that the major stakeholders in the present conflicts in the area include:

- The Bari, Mundari and the Dinka communities;
- The Militias of the Bari and Mundari;
- The elites of these communities; and
- The major parties to the current civil war in Sudan.

f. The Impact of the Conflicts

Contact between the Dinka and the Mundari has reduced to a minimum as a result of the current civil war in South Sudan. Moreover, the majority of Dinka-Bor has been displaced to many areas in Equatoria, in particular Eastern Equatoria State. The probable return of these IDPs into Bor area could be source of future conflict.

The Mundari and the Bari share the same state of Bahr el Jebel, and the majority of the Mundari from Tali currently live in Bari area. A number of social services, i.e. health centers, schools and water, are located in Bari villages. The Mundari do not want to use these facilities; instead, they have tried, through their elites, to establish similar services in areas they occupy with limited success. For example, they have built their own schools; but lack of water and teachers in these schools has resulted in very low enrolment and high drop-out among children.

OXFAM has been providing support to both the Mundari and the Bari in areas of animal production, and has been able to establish two separate organizations for the two groups, "ACOMPLISH" for the Mundari and "NILE MILK" for the Bari. The poor relations between the two communities have made sharing of expertise and market opportunities among the staff of the organizations difficult. While the NILE MILK is proving a success, "ACOMPLISH" is not performing well.

3.2 The Upper Nile Region

Greater Upper Nile, which includes the states of Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity, is one of the hotspot of grassroots conflicts in South Sudan. Although largely the "Nilotics" groups, namely the Dinka, Nuer and the Shilluk, dominate it, other important groups include the Murle and the Anuak. The majority of these groups are involved in conflict against each other and with each other. The Dinka-Nuer, and Nuer-Murle and the Dinka-Murle are probably the major inter-groups conflicts in the area. But the Nuer-Nuer and Dinka-Dinka conflicts are also important and sometimes more devastating than the inter-group conflicts.

Other emerging conflicts are between the nomads (including the Umbaroro) from North Sudan and the groups in South Sudan, i.e. the Shilluk, the Dinka and the Nuer. In addition, the border between Upper Nile State (particularly in Fashoda and Renk) and South Kordofan (Talodi Area) is posing to be a threat to stability in the region as a result of the exploitation of the *acacia seyal*, which is the main source of Gum Arabic in Sudan. Three conflict areas are described in this part of the report, and they have been selected partly because of their present impact of the populations in the areas, and also because they are likely to be threats to the future stability of the region and South Sudan.

3.2.1 The Bahr el Jebel – Sobat Confluence and the Zeraf Island

a. Introduction

This area is part of the Sobat Corridor where conflict between the two sections of the Nuer, the Lou and Jikany, is raging. The Lou are also involved in a conflict with the Gaweir Nuer and the other Nuer groups who live along the Bahr el Jebel and Zeraf River. This area falls within the confluence of the Bahr el Jebel and Sobat Rivers, and it is an important junction in the river transport to Nasir on the Sobat River, to Juba on the Bahr el Jebel, and to Wau on the Bahr el Ghazal/Jur River. With the exception of Wau, which can be served by railway throughout the year in normal times, the River Nile provides the cheapest commercial route for the people of Upper Nile and Equatoria during times of peace. Past events suggest that conflicts in the area can disrupt the normal flow of traffic along these routes, the Sobat and the Bahr el Jebel. It is also important to note, the expanding oil exploration in Unity State into areas along the Bahr el Jebel is likely to result in the displacement of people into areas in the Zeraf Zone. (See Maps 4-5 for location of the areas)

Since 1983, a number of changes have already taken place on settlements north of Bor towards the confluence of Sobat and Bahr el Jebel. The Nuer now occupies a number of Dinka villages along this zone. Moreover, a large number of the Nuer currently live in areas once occupied by the Shilluk and the Dinka west of the Sobat River and South of the confluence between the Bahr el Jebel- Sobat Rivers. In addition, a large number of Nuer (mainly Lou) lived as IDPs in the Obelat area that originally belonged to the Shilluk. Whether this situation will pose a potential source of future conflicts in the area will depend on the post-conflict population resettlement processes.

The people-to-people dialogue conferences supported by religious groups and NGOs during 1990s and 2003, have attempted to bring together the various Nuer groups and the Dinka involved in conflict. The Nuer-Nuer conferences have been less successful than the Dinka-Nuer reconciliation conferences, the most significant been the Wunlit 1 in 1999 and Wunlit 2 in April 2003, which brought together the Western Nuer and their neighbor and the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal. A large number of Nuer from Unity State have sought sanctuary in Dinka land necessitating the establishment of cordial relations between traditional enemies.

b. The People and the Resource Base of the Area

The "sudd region", which begins at Mongalla and ends at the mouth of the Sobat River, is an important ecological zone. The White Nile enters this region in one channel, and leaves it in one channel. In between it spreads out like a delta, forming vast swamps of papyrus and other vegetation. The Zeraf Island is a separate hydrological unit, and it is the triangle enclosed by the Bahr El Jebel, the Bahr El Zeraf and the White Nile. The southern part of the triangle is extremely swampy and there are very few permanent habitations there. Mainly the Nilotics, i.e. the Shilluk, Dinka and Nuer, who have adopted their way of life to most rigorous conditions of the area, inhabit the area. However, two Nilotics groups are dominant in the area, (a) the Dinka composed of the Bor Athoich, Twi, Nyareweng and Ghol Dinka; (b) the Nuer, mainly the Gaweir, the Lak and Thiang Nuer⁷

This zone falls within the grassland-savannah climate. In the areas the temperature range is small. On the other hand rainfall is characterized by an irregular and seasonal

⁷ Evans-Pritchard, (1948); *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*; Fraser Lecture, Cambridge University Press.
- (1937); *The Economy of the Nuer: Cattle*; in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum, Sudan.

distribution, and also varies according to latitude, that in the northern part of the area being often critical in quantity. Rainfall is therefore the principal limiting climatic factor. Large areas of the region are annually inundated and exposed owing to fluctuations in water levels of the many watercourses. The principal areas affected lie along the main channels of the White Nile, Bahr El Zeraf, Bahr El Jebel and the River Sobat, but in addition to many small watercourses overflow their banks on to the adjoining plains when the water-level is high.

High land is limited and is found along the main ridges, the first along the road from Baidit through Jalle and Paiau to Kongor, and the second along the Ariethbek-Duk Faiwil line. Both areas are occupied by the Dinka. The area is the Zeraf Island, which is occupied by the Lak, Thiang and Gaweir. It is bounded in the west and north by the Bahr el Jebel and White Nile and in the East by the Bahr el Zeraf, which together form a wedge-shaped area, thus it is referred to as the Zeraf Island. The high ridge which forms the backbone of the island, and which runs from Berboi westwards to Wath Kech and then southwards to Malith in the Gaweir area, is where the settlements are concentrated. The Gaweir live partly east of the Zeraf River and are spread over a very wide area, mainly in the heavily afforested region round Falugh, on the Duk Ridge, and around Awoi, with scattered settlements nearer the river which are often almost completely isolated during the rains by many miles of heavy flooding⁸.

Apart from the series of rises which form the Duk Ridge, high land exists as small islands only slightly raised above the level of the surrounding plains, and these are widely dispersed. These small islands produce virtually no high land pastures, and even the Duk ridge produces mainly intermediate type pasture. But the area of upper Khor Atar, the plain immediately northwest of Duk Fadiak and the plain east of Duk Faiwil-Kongor provide grazing land during the dry season. Wherever water is available livestock remain on this pastures in the dry season and thrive on it. However within the Gaweir area the Upper Atar system produces practically no swaps grass, except in and around the large pools. The Sobat and the White Nile provide in all year large areas of natural dry season grazing by the regular inundation and drainage of the swamps flanking their main channels. The Sobat floods above average height also probably inundates considerable larger areas of the plain outside these swamps, mostly on the south side, and it may also spill a small amount through khors which cut through its higher northern bank and communicate with the southern part of the Machar Marshes.

The Thiang are located north of the Gaweir in the central part of the Zeraf Island, with few settlements across the river. Apart from utilizing the toich grazing in the beds of this water system, the large majority of the Thiang migrate to the edge of the Bahr el Jebel and the Sudd during the dry season, with a few camps along both banks of the middle reaches of the Zeraf. The Lak Nuer occupies the end of the Zeraf Island with few settlements on the right bank of the river around old Fangak. Their permanent settlements are mostly on the ridge of higher, sandier ground, which runs parallel to the Zeraf river. The area occupied by the Lak was considered poor for cattle grazing; the quality of grazing was poor and it also had flies, which transmit diseases such as trypanosomiasis.

This area is partly inhabited by four small Dinka groups, Rut, Thoi, Ruweng and Luaich, and central Nuer, namely Lak, Gaweir, Thiang and Lou, with their headquarters at Fangak on the Bahr El Zeraf. The area provides pasture for a large number of animals during the dry season in the northern and middle parts of the Island. The southern and central sections of the Lou Nuer also utilize the area during the dry season. The present area around Khor Fullus, River Sobat, White Nile and the Lower Zeraf used to be occupied by

⁸ The Jonglei Investigation Team (1954); The Equatorial Nile project and its Effects in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, vol. 11, Khartoum.

small, somewhat scattered groups of Dinka. The Shilluk who once occupied parts of these areas, have been forced north of the confluence of the two major rivers, and are now concentrated north of this confluence and west of the White Nile from Malakal to Wadokona to the north.

c. The Economy of the area

The communities north of Bor up to the meeting point of the Bahr el Jebel and Sobat River, including the Zeraf Valley, are predominantly pastoralists, although other products of their environment play a more important part in their livelihood than is sometimes supposed; their pre-occupation with cattle is the most important feature of their lives, and most conflicts revolve around it. In addition to the use of the products of cattle and to a limited extent sheep and goats (milk, butter, meat, hides and leather), the people in this area practice some limited crop production, producing local millet, and small quantities of maize.

The distribution of population is determined by the physical conditions; most the settlements are located on the high ridges in the area. Surrounding the higher ground are the vast areas of open plain, intersected by a network of grass-choked watercourses and the main rivers whose flood-plain produce different ecological conditions and different associations of grass types. Each of these regions has its function in the seasonal activities, which largely concern animal husbandry, but in which crop production, collection of natural vegetation, and fishing play an important part of Nuer and Dinka economy, which is essentially subsistence with no organized trade⁹.

As already stated earlier, the permanent settlements of the Nuer are not concentrated like those of the Shilluk, Anuak and some of the Dinka. A Nuer village generally consists of a number of domestic units, each having one or more cattle-byres and a few dwelling-huts, separated by distances varying from a few hundred yards to over a mile. This diffusion in dwelling-sites is partially caused by the nature of the ground, for land that is above the level of the floods is limited in most areas of Nuer land. It is, however, an inherent characteristic of the Nuer to set up his abode sufficiently far from his neighbor to emphasize and retain his individualism, yet sufficiently near to enjoy the privileges and economic advantages which neighborhood brings. Cultivation is usually done near the homestead. During the dry season the settlements are partially or completely abandoned according to whether permanent water is available or not and whether there is sufficient grain to keep the older and less active members of the community. The bulk of the population always moves with the cattle, and by February there are few people left in the villages except where grazing ground are close enough for daily contact.

Prior to the present civil conflict in Sudan, climatic conditions were the most important factors having adverse effect on the cultivation of food crops, coupled with widespread cattle disease (rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, trypanosomiasis, etc.), making life extremely precarious in Nuer Land. Small quantity of maize was planted in the early rains and the crop matures about the end of July, providing temporary relief until the first crop of millet is available. If rains are favorable, the Nuer people were well supplied with millet and maize. In most years, however, one or other crop failed and the worst years the early crop was late in starting owing to lack of rains only to be ruined by torrential downpours when it was reaching maturity, while the second crop was often destroyed by flood. In such circumstances the Nuer were short of food.

⁹ Tombe, L.G (1992); "The Jonglei Causal Scheme as a Socio-Economic Factor in the Civil War in the Sudan, in African River Basins and Drylands Crises" in Darkoh, M.B.K (ed) (1992); Africa River Basins and Dryland Crises, Addis Ababa, OSSER and Uppsala, Uppsala University.

Fishing is an important activity and a source of livelihood for the communities in the region. In the toich, pools, lagoons, and channels, which flank the main river, are the principal fishing grounds. In the dry season many of these waters drop, and are used by large fishing parties who wade through, spearing and trapping as they go, having blocked the exists beforehand. Fish are also caught by damming up the inland watercourses, which the fish migrate as the water rises.

d. Background to the Conflict

The conflicts in the area are partly engraved in history, especially that between the Nuer and the Dinka. The Nuer and the Dinka regard each other traditional enemies. The history of conflict can be traced back to the first movement of the Nuer into the Zeraf Valley, the period of territorial expansion eastwards across the Bahr el Jebel and later across the Bahr el Zeraf. The period of numerical expansion from natural process led to the absorption of large numbers of Dinka whose original identity was lost within a generation or two. This period coincided with the slave trade from the north. This was a period of disharmony, internal strife, and political fission within the Nuer community, and internal cohesion only returned when external threats increased. The period following the re-conquest of Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces was accompanied by the emergence of prophets among the Nuer, which resulted in increased raids on Dinka cattle and attempts to expand their territory. The colonial administration exerted a lot of effort to bring the Nuer under control with some success, and the cooperation between the administrators in Dinka and Nuer land reduced the conflicts between the two groups¹⁰.

However, the Nuer groups in the area are also involved in conflict among themselves, in particular the Gaweir/Thiang/Lak groups against the Lou Nuer of Waat area, although the present poor relation between the Nuer of Zeraf Valley and Lou is a reflection of changing circumstances that emerged following the current civil war. Leaders control the groups whose allegiance to the parties in the major conflict tends to be constantly changing. Both groups, in particular the Lou and Gaweir, abduct children from each other. The poor relations between the groups is reflected in the different locations of the IDP camps in the Sobat/Bahr el Jebel area. The Lou villages are concentrated north of the Sobat River in the Obelat, while the Zeraf Nuer and Dinka are located south of the confluence of the Sobat and Bahr el Jebel in a very small and crowded area.

Several historical events are important in the conflict in this area, the first civil war in South Sudan and the present conflict in Sudan. The first civil war in South Sudan (1955-1972) did not have a major impact on the area, although the Lou Nuer played an important role in that war. Following the end of this war in 1972, the Nuer started to express their disappointment in the formation of the Regional Government and also with the Central Government, particularly over the support given to the Murle in the form of arms, which escalated cattle raiding and abduction of children by the Murle. The Nuer of Waat and Nasir started acquiring arms as early as 1976 with the intention of defending themselves against the Dinka and the Murle. Nuer discontent with the national politics during that period escalated into a full rebellion in 1981 with the emergence of Anyanya II, which was led by Eastern Nuer, mainly the Jikany and the Lou. The Regional Government that created in South Sudan lacked economic resources and political power to develop the region. This was reflected in the economic stagnation, deterioration of the general conditions of living, and increasing social and political instability in the region¹¹.

The resurgence of the current civil war in 1983 changed the political relations between the Nuer and Dinka on the Zeraf valley on the one hand and the Lou, created alliances, which

¹⁰ Evans-Pritchard (1971 9th Edition); *The Nuer*, Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Malwal, B. (1981); *People and Power in Sudan: The Struggle for National Stability*, Ithaca Press.

may be described as alliances of convenience and may therefore be temporary. The Nuer and Dinka of the Zeraf valley have been engaged in conflict with the Lou Nuer who used to share the same grazing areas during the dry season. The emergence of the SPLA/M in 1983 reinforced the enmity between the Nuer and the Dinka, and to some extent between the Nuer themselves. At the initial stage of this conflict, recruitment to the SPLA/M was along ethnic lines, with a dominance of Dinka Bor and Kongor, thus most ethnic groups initially saw the SPLA/M as a Dinka movement. Arms were acquired by these groups with the intension of self-defense, but were used to settle disputes with the Nuer and Murle and to revenge the cattle rustling practiced by them.

The split with Anyanya II during the early part of the present conflict sowed the seeds of some of the current conflicts in the region, and subsequent splits in the SPLA/M appeared to have contributed to the current alliances in the area, even though the Nuer and Dinka regarded themselves as enemies of each other. In 1984/85 the Nuer in Fangak area killed many Dinka from north Bahr el Ghazal who were trying to cross to join the SPLA in the East. The retaliation by the SPLA was severe and resulted in the killing the Nuer and burning their villages. Thus the hatred towards the Dinka increased.

On the other hand the Lou and Gaweir/Lak/Thiang were involved in cattle rustling in the past, especially during the dry season. Political relations between the Dinka of this area and the Gaweir and Lou Nuer were characterized by fierce conflicts in the past prior to the imposition of colonial rule. These relations improved during the colonial period, through the annual meetings of the chiefs organized by the District authorities controlling the areas. The advent of independence reduced such meetings, and none took place during the escalation of the first civil war in during subsequent years. The abduction of children by both sides became common during the present civil war, and several attempts to retrieve some of these children has been successful in the recent past.

e. The Causes of the Conflict

i. Natural Resource Use

The physical features of much of Nuer Land determine the pattern and human and animal movements, and in part influence inter-ethnic and inter-tribal conflicts in the area. There are a number of different ways in which the population in the area manage to obtain water in the dry season, the first and most obvious being from the main rivers themselves, and second from the larger inland water-systems. Some of these watercourses contain running water throughout the year, or water can be found in pools or in shallow wells dug in their beds. Generally speaking the inhabitants place most reliance on the natural forms of dry season water supplies.

All Nuer and the Dinka are compelled to migrate during the dry season and set up their cattle camps near permanent water supplies and where the receding waters of the rivers leave green and succulent grass for their animals. At first their cattle are widely distributed over the 'intermediate' plains, but concentration increases as the season advances until, just before the break of the rains, all cattle are on the *toich*, the land along the riverbanks. The distance covered in these seasonal migration vary considerably. Many of the Lak and Thiang Nuer, for example, move only a few miles from their permanent settlements, while many of the Gaweir and Lou move long distances to find water and grazing.

A glance at past rainfall statistics revealed that in the areas of the Nuer, the period when direct rain was inadequate to provide drinking water for men and animals lasting for 5 months, conflicts tend to increase on the Zeraf zone as large number of people and animals concentrate, particularly during the peak of the dry season. Competition increases

over grazing land, water and fishing increases together with cattle rustling abduction of women and children.

ii. The Current Civil

The present civil war split the Nuer into different camps, although in the Zeraf Valley appeared to have regained their unity relatively early. The reasons why the Lou and Nuer in the Zeraf took each to task following the split of the SPLA/M are not clear. They may be related to the accusation by the Lou Nuer that the Zeraf Nuer were traitors since they kept close relations with the Dinka in this area. The present settlements patterns of the population displaced by the major conflict reveals the current tensions between the Lou and Gaweir Nuer.

f. The Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in the area include:

- The Lou Nuer, the Nuer groups in the Zeraf Valley, and the Dinka
- The various “friendly forces and militias” belonging to the Nuer groups in the area;
- The Parties to the current civil war; and
- The elites of the these communities, including those in Khartoum

g. Impact of the Conflict

The major conflict has resulted in a shift of population settlements on the Bahr el Jebel and Sobat confluences, which may influence future relations among the Shilluk, the Dinka and the Nuer. The Shilluk have been pushed out of areas south of the confluence of two rivers and the Nuer or the Dinka often kills them whenever they attempted to cross to their traditional areas of fishing and hunting.

The use of the river for transport on the Sobat and Bahr el Jebel by donor and development agencies is irregular and risky. Looting of WFP barges by militias has been common in the past, which resulted in the suspension of this route for the transport of relief food under OLS.

The delivery of social services is not possible in the area, and only one basic school is located in the Obelat for the Lou Nuer. The Gaweir/Lak/Thiang Nuer and the Dinka who are located in the “canal area” do not have any schools and health units.

3.2.2 The Dinka and Nuer in Bentiu Region

a. Introduction

Western Nuer has probably one of the unstable regions of South Sudan compared, in terms of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations. The discovery of oil of commercial value has exacerbated further the already poor political relations among the various groups inhabiting the area. The demography of the area has changed radically and it will probably remain so even after the current civil war has ended even compared to the amount of violence going in Eastern Nuer. The various Nuer groups have traditionally been conducting inter-Nuer warfare, competing over grazing land. However, the natural enemy of the Nuer have been

the Dinka, and although in recent years the “people-to-people” dialogue¹² brought some respite to the bitter conflict between the two major ethnic groups of South Sudan, indications suggest that the Nuer and the Dinka are likely to go to war against each other. Large number of nomadic groups have been infiltrated into the northern parts of Western Upper Nile, and together with the tribal militias of the Baggara (the Murahleen of Western Sudan) and some Nuer groups, are used as proxy fighting forces against the Dinka in Bahr el Ghazal.

The way that the inter-Nuer and Dinka-Nuer conflict have been conducted has gone beyond and is contrary to both traditional Nuer and Dinka practices of war, i.e. burning, homes, villages, community structures, and grain and killing and abducting women and children. The intra-Nuer and Nuer-Dinka fighting is no longer the traditional tribal conflict because other actors with their own agenda have inserted themselves into the conflict. Parties to the major conflict backed and organized players who often opposed one another; armed Nuer proxies fight against anti-government Nuer and the Dinka¹³.

b. The People and their Economy

Western Nuer¹⁴ includes the Nuong, Dok, Jagey and Western Jikany. These Nuer groups occupy the part of the land which is bounded in the north by the Bahr el Ghazal, in the east by the Bahr el Jebel, and in the west by the swamps of the Binyang systems which separate them from the Dinka of the Bahr el Ghazal. The Leik Nuer and Ruweng (Kwil) Dinka occupy the area north of the Bahr el Ghazal between a point west of Lake No and a point between Bentiu and the Bahr el Arab.

The Nuong who live in the extreme south of Unity State live on two ridges of high land set in an area, which is low lying, and of the areas surrounded by swamps. They are less accessible than other Nuer groups. The available grazing appears to be largely in the direction of Lake Nyubor which is in Dinka area and is already overcrowded with herds of the Ciech, Atwot and Agar Dinka. In each year there is considerable political friction between Nuer and Dinka of this region. The Dok and Jagey Nuer occupy the central region west of the Bahr el Jebel. They have their permanent settlements in a long line between Adok and Ler, following the banks of the inland watercourses. In most years they are able to graze their herds on the Bahr el Jebel toiches, but in high years, when these are less accessible, they turn to the Bilnyang system.

The Western Jikany Nuer occupied the triangle formed by the junction of the Bahr el Ghazal and Bahr el Jebel, with a small section living north between Leik Nuer and Kwil Dinka. Permanent settlements used to be scattered over a wide area inland from the river. The main source of dry season grazing were along the edges of the two rives. The main Dinka groups living alongside Western Nuer and bordering them west of the Bahr el Jebel, in Bahr el Ghazal region, include the Aliab, Ciech and Atwot living south and southwest of the Western Nuer; and the Ruweng (Alur, Kwil and Awer) to the northeast of the Western Nuer.

The economy of western Nuer was based on livestock herding, agriculture and fishing. It was an economy based on migratory movement between permanent villages and cattle camps. The few towns in the area functioned as administrative posts for the Sudan government and as market centers. The utilization of three types of land, high land,

¹² The New Sudan Council of Churches (1999); Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace Council Communication, September 1999, Yirol, Bahr el Ghazal.

¹³ Human Rights Watch; (May 2001); Analysis of the Current Fighting and Its Relation to Famine.

¹⁴ The Jonglei Investigation Team; (1954); The Equatorial Nile project and its Effects in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, vol. 11, Khartoum.

intermediate and flood or toich land was through a cycle of seasonal migration. Generally speaking total population were concentrated together only for a short period in the year; first at the height of the rains when the younger men, the herdsmen, have returned with the cattle to rejoin the rest of the community; and secondly at the height of the dry season when of necessity all members of the community must be in the cattle-camps on the toich, for most of the region there was by then little water inland and only such food as can be stored was available elsewhere. Seasonal activities were therefore conditioned by a continuous changing in concentration and dispersal of the population. The seasonal aspects of this form of land utilization were of great importance, and they were variable according to local conditions.

In the toich, pools, lagoons, and channels, which flank the main river, were the principal fishing grounds. In the dry season many of these waters drop, making it possible for fishing parties to wade through, spearing and trapping as they go, having blocked the exits beforehand. Fish was also caught by damming up the inland watercourses, which the fish migrate as the water rises.

c. Background to the Conflicts

Similar to most areas occupied by the Nuer and the Dinka who share the same boundaries and use grazing land during parts of the year, the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Western Nuer land are partly engraved in history. It has already been stated that the Nuer and the Dinka regard each other (natural) traditional enemies. The history of conflict can be traced back to the first movement of the Nuer into Western Nuer, although one is not sure of the origin of the Nuer and the Dinka who now claim this area as their own. The period of numerical expansion from natural process led to the absorption of large numbers of Dinka whose original identity was lost within a generation or two. This period coincided with the slave trade from the north. This was a period of disharmony, internal strife, and political fission within the Nuer community, and internal cohesion only returned when external threats increased.

The period following the re-conquest of Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces was accompanied by the emergence of prophets among the Nuer, which resulted in increased raids on Dinka cattle and attempts to expand their territory to the west. The colonial administration exerted a lot of effort to bring the Nuer under control with some success, and the cooperation between the administrators in Dinka and Nuer land reduced the conflicts between the two groups. Disputes were settled in annual meetings between the district authorities of Western Nuer and eastern parts of Bahr el Ghazal, (district commissioners with their respective chiefs); cattle and abducted girls were returned to their respective owners and parents following such meetings.

The events of the first civil war in South Sudan (1955-1972) did not have a major impact on Western Nuer, although following the end of this war in 1972, they became part of the Nuer who formed Anyanya II during the late years of 1970s, which was led by Eastern Nuer, mainly the Jikany and the Lou. The Regional Government that created in South Sudan lacked economic resources and political power to develop the region. This was reflected in the economic stagnation, deterioration of the general conditions of living, and increasing social and political instability in the region.

The resurgence of the current civil war in 1983 changed the political relations between the Nuer and Dinka on the Zeraf valley and between the Nuer themselves in the Western Upper Nile. This event reinforced the enmity between the Nuer and the Dinka and to some extent between the Nuer themselves. At the initial stage of this conflict, recruitment to the SPLA/M was along ethnic lines, with a dominance of Dinka Bor and Kongor, thus the SPLA/M was initially seen as a Dinka movement. Arms were acquired by these groups with

the intention of self-defense, but were used to settle disputes with the Nuer and Murle and to revenge the cattle rustling practiced by them¹⁵. The split with Anyanya II during the early part of the present conflict sowed the seeds of some of the current conflicts in the region. Subsequent splits in the SPLA/M appeared to have contributed to the competing armed groups in the area. In 1984/85 the Nuer in Fangak area killed many Dinka from north Bahr el Ghazal who trying to cross to join the SPLA in the East. The retaliation by the SPLA was severe and resulted in the killing the Nuer and burning their villages. Thus the hatred towards the Dinka increased

During most of the past 15 years in Western Upper Nile, the armed forces of the government have been confined to garrison towns and to roads leading from those to the north. The government's military strategy during the greater part of this period has been to support proxy forces, the Baggara Arab militias from the north and pro-government Nuer groups within the south. These militias have been encouraged to attack and loot Nuer and Dinka settlements and cattle camps, driving their inhabitants further south or into government garrison towns or to government-controlled north of the country¹⁶.

d. Major Causes of the Conflict

i. Competition over Grazing land

The physical features of much of Western Nuer determine the pattern of human and animal movements, and in part influence inter-ethnic and inter-tribal conflicts in the area. There are a number of different ways in which the population in the area manage to obtain water in the dry season, the first and most obvious being from the main rivers themselves, and second from the larger inland water-systems. Some of these watercourses contain running water throughout the year, or water can be found in pools or in shallow wells dug in their beds. Generally speaking the inhabitants place most reliance on the natural forms of dry season water supplies.

All Nuer and the Dinka in the western zone are compelled to migrate during the dry season and set up their cattle camps near permanent water supplies and where the receding waters of the rivers leave green and succulent grass for their animals. At first their cattle are widely distributed over the 'intermediate' plains, but concentration increases as the season advances until, just before the break of the rains, all cattle are on the *toich*, the land along the riverbanks. The distance covered in these seasonal migration vary considerably.

ii. Cattle Rustling and Abduction of Girls

The looting of cattle and abduction of children, in particular girls, has been a normal practice among the Dinka and Nuer in the area during the dry season when they are concentrated in the *toich*. Girls were taken and are groomed as wives and source of cattle for the individual abductors. The availability of arms in recent years, especially following the emergence of Anyanya II in the last years of the 1970s and during the current civil war increased the level of cattle rustling among the groups. The Nuer who formed the bulk of Anyanya II acquired arms, which they used, together with the Messeiriya Arabs of South

¹⁵ Nyaba, P.A. (1997): *The Politics of Liberation: An Insider's View*; Fountain Publication Ltd. Kampala, Uganda.

¹⁶ Rhodes, T. (2000); *Famine Politics and the Cycle of Relief Failure in Sudan's Civil War: A Case Study of the OLS Relief Operation in the Bahr el Ghazal Famine, 1998*; Global Politics network; www.globalpolitics.net (See also, Deng, B.L. (1999), *Famine in the Sudan: Causes, Preparedness and Responses*; *Social and Economic Analysis of the 1998 Bahr el Ghazal Famine*, Sussex ; and *Southern Sudan Annual Needs Assessment*; Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, Nairobi, 1998; Duffield, M. (1994); *War and Famine in Africa*; Oxford Discussion Paper No. 5).

Kordofan, to attack the Dinka. Today the militia leaders are the main actors in cattle looting in the area.

iii. The Current Civil War and the Oil

The split between Anyanya II and the SPLA in mid-1980s had an impact on Dinka-Nuer relations in the western areas being described here. But the split within the SPLA/M has had the most impact since it expanded the conflict in the area, resulting also into intra-Nuer conflict. The improvement in relations between the SPLA and some of the Nuer Groups following the collapse of the 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement increased the level of intra-Nuer conflict.¹⁷

e. The Stakeholders

The main stakeholders in the conflict include the Western Nuer, the Dinka, the Militias and the parties to the major conflict in the Sudan. The Dinka and Nuer elites in the major urban centers in Sudan are also playing an important role in the current conflict. The oil companies operating in the area are indirect partners to the conflict among the various groups.

f. The Impact of the Conflict

Western Nuer is probably one of the least developed parts of South Sudan, in spite the humanitarian assistance provided mainly from the Southern Sector. The discovery and the commercial exploitation of oil have made little impact on the local population by way of improving the quality of life in the area. On the contrary, it has resulted in the large displacement of the population and the depopulation of large areas of Western Nuer. Traditional forms of production are no longer possible, thus famine is a norm in the area. The delivery of humanitarian assistance is made risky and often

3.2.3 The Upper Nile/South Kordofan Border Dispute

a. Introduction

The nature of the relations described and analyzed below is to some extent different from the other conflicts in parts of South Sudan. This part of Upper Nile is an important dry season grazing area for the nomadic groups from the Kosti and South Kordofan, and although the dispute is partly related to the utilization of the natural environment by the nomads and the Shilluk groups, it also involves the authorities in South Kordofan and Upper Nile States because of the changes in administrative boundaries taking place in the area. Talodi Province in South Kordofan consists of four Mahaliat, two are regarded by UNICEF as the most disadvantaged (*Red*). (See Map 6 for location of the Area)

The exploitation of Gum Arabic in areas of Upper Nile adjoining South Kordofan is the main issue here, which is leading to the annexation of areas of Upper Nile into South Kordofan. The local population in Upper Nile, as well as in the other parts of South Sudan, is not aware of the economic value of the ***acacia seyal***, which is the main source of Gum Arabic. The groups involved in gum Arabic collection are the Arab merchants from North Sudan. In South Sudan, an office of the Gum Arabic Company is located in Renk and its lorries travel south as far as Fashoda to collect the gum Arabic from the merchant collectors. The

¹⁷ Koke, P.N. (1992); Adding Fuel to the Conflict: Oil, War and Peace in Sudan; in Doornbos, C. (ed), Beyond Conflict in the Horn, ISS, The Hague.

relations between groups and the states in this zone are important because of their impact on post-conflict South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains.

b. Location and the People

The two localities border each other in this zone, Fashoda Locality in Upper Nile and Kalogi Locality in South Kordofan. Fashoda Shilluk land and its name are derived from the name given to the royal seat of the Shilluk Reth (King). Most of the Shilluk inhabitants of the area live on the ridges of high ground close to the White Nile on its west bank. Few Shilluk live away from the river, notably on Khor Atar 20 kilometers inland from Kodok. Under the present distribution and system of land use the area has little use of wells, but increasing population and soil deterioration in the riverain area will indicate the necessity for inland water supplies in the future.

The economy of the Shilluk¹⁸ is still of the subsistence type, adapting to the nature of the physical environment. The economy depends on a balance utilization of land, and they are more depending on crop production than the Nuer and most of the Dinka groups. The seasonal movement of the population is limited compared to these other groups. Cultivation is carried in the toich, the highlands and in the hinterlands. The vegetation west of the Nile on the Shilluk side is characterized by thick growth of ***Acacia mellifera*** and ***Acacia seyal***, although part of the area is open plains of grassland. Fishing is the second most important source of food and income for the Shilluk. Cattle have declined significantly among the Shilluk.

Mainly several Arab, the Alwad Suru and Nuba groups, inhabits Kalogi Locality, which borders Fashoda in Upper Nile. The Arab groups, together with those of Kosti use this area for grazing during the dry season. However, the groups using Fashoda Locality for grazing include the nomads from Kosti in the White Nile State, mainly the Seleima and the Ahamda nomads. The Seleima are the largest and most compact group who claim Guhayna origin like most Baggara sections in the west. The Seleim mainly keep sheep and they exploit this area more than the Ahamda. Inland water supplies in the dry season are extremely scarce and a fair amount of grass is left untouched since the animal stock are driven to the river early in the season. After that only a strip of land which can be reasonably grazed by livestock watering at the river every second day is utilized, and by the end of the dry season it is grazed flat. The Kawahla tribe also uses this area, especially the area west of Jebel Megeinis where a number of Hafir have been constructed mainly for cultivation of crops and have been constructed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Kawahla send their livestock to north of Abbassia in the dry season

The Shilluk who own a few numbers of cattle practice a certain form of transhumance, which has certain points of similarity and certain points of contrast with that found in the semi-arid zone. The Shilluk cattle moving from the toich to the settlements are not conditioned by the rainfall but the rise and fall in the levels of the River. They cannot move to a region where rainfall is lighter. The Nomads, on the other hand move into areas of lighter rainfall during the wetter months of the year. Superficially their annual cycle of movements appears identical with that of the Shilluk. In fact, their movement is conditioned by the amount of pasture and water available on the routes. These physical conditions determine the concentration and distribution of the population during the different seasons. However, the cycle of movements is much the same, though the actual timing of the movements is different, since in the areas of the nomads the rains do not break until June, long after the Shilluk cattle have moved back to their cultivations.

¹⁸ Evans-Pritchard, (1948); *The Devine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*; The Fraser Lecture, Cambridge University Press.

Reeds, which grow on the numerous islands on the Bahr el Jebel, are cut by the Shilluk and provide an important source of income. The reeds are sold in most towns of North Sudan for roofing and fencing. The practice of burning grass, near the rivers and on the islands by the nomads during the dry season, results in the loss of these reeds.

c. Background to the Conflict

The boundary between the Semi-Arid Region of the nomadic groups and the Flood Region of the Shilluk is set at Melut, east of the White Nile. On both sides of the Nile the inland dry season pasture and water supplies are insufficient for the Arab stockowners of the northern part and there is constant pressure southwards to the river swamp pastures of the Shilluk. This is not a recent trend, but in the past public security required that grazing boundaries be fixed and that the number of "invading" livestock be determined by agreement. Thus, nomadic groups, in particular the Ahamda and Sileimat Arabs, take their livestock from Kosti across Upper Nile border into Shilluk land as far south as Torakit. In considering the degree of pasture utilization in this area, there were administrative arrangements put into place, and no tribal rights disputed this point, although the nomads often contest this right. In the past the movement of the Sileimat Arabs to Upper Nile during the dry season was regulated by agreement between them and the Shilluk King who gave authority to the chiefs to allocate specific grazing areas and routes to the nomads and in return collect taxes for the use of the land from these groups. This traditional practice appears to have been undermined by the present civil war.

Some individuals from the nomads abduct children of the Shilluk when they return to their areas of wet season grazing. The political representatives from the affected areas have voiced some concern over the trend of kidnapping children of the Shilluk, and they fear that the Shilluk are likely to take action in order to protect themselves and their children. Recent reports indicate that the nomadic groups are increasingly involved in animal rustling (cattle and sheep). Thus, a conflict has been developing on the western part of Upper Nile between the Shilluk and the Sileimat Arab nomads who come to graze on the banks of the River Nile during the dry season. The incident of Jebelein town in 1990 when many Shilluk fell victims of attacks by the Arab groups marked a turning point in the Shilluk/Nomads relations.

The economic exploitation of Gum Arabic in Fashoda Locality has introduced a new dimension to the situation of conflict in the area. Gum Arabic and its exploitation is increasingly becoming a source another conflict in the area. Gum Arabic has not been exploited in the area until very recently, and its increased exploitation has been due to the relatively good security situation prevailing in the area following the Khartoum/Fashoda Peace Agreement in 1996. Gum Arabic is now an important source of income for the Arab collectors who come to the area for this purpose. The Shilluk and the government of Upper Nile did not recognize its economic value until recently when its prices became very high. Attempts to annex territory belonging to Upper Nile by authorities in South Kordofan have been noted by members of the State Assembly in Malakal as a cause for concern.

d. The Causes of the Conflict

This conflict can be described as a resource-based conflict between the nomads and the farmers and a border conflict between the two localities, Fashoda in Upper Nile and Talodi in South Kordofan. The first type of conflict is traditional, which appears to have escalated during the past few years partly because of the current civil war, which has resulted in the breakdown of the traditional arrangements regulating the use of pastureland and access to water on the River Nile. The nomads from the Kosti area and from South Kordofan who use

Shilluk land during the dry season have in recent years adopted a hostile attitude towards the Shilluk and no longer honor past agreements regulating their access to the dry season pastures.

The 1989/90 violent conflict between the Shilluk and the Arab groups in Jebelein Area in which many Shilluk lost their lives, have made the Arab groups have a feeling superiority over the Shilluk who are regarded as the supporters of the SPLA/M. The current civil war was felt in this north-south border area during the 1980s and early 1990s when attacks by the SPLA in this area resulted in a large number of displaced people who fled their agricultural lands to areas north of Jebelein and to Kosti and Rabak towns. Although the Shilluk were affected equally by these attacks, they were regarded as the allies of the SPLA and they became targets of the Arab groups in the area.

The second type of conflict is that between the authorities in the two localities mentioned above. The area along the borders of the two localities has an extensive growth of acacia *seyal* and *mellifera*, which are important for Gum Arabic collection. The local Shilluk population are not aware of the economic importance of the acacia, while the merchants from the north have been involved its collection. They come as far as Shilluk land to collect the Gum Arabic, but this has not posed a problem to the local authorities in Upper Nile. Concern was expressed, however, when there were attempts to change the administrative boundaries of the two localities with the annexation of part of Fashoda Locality into Talodi Locality in South Kordofan. The national authorities normally sanction changes in administrative boundaries, and therefore, the authorities in Upper Nile regarded the steps taken by the South Kordofan as an endorsement by the national government. The political representatives from Fashoda Locality, i.e. the members of Upper Nile State Assembly, expressed alarm and concern over this development as leading to a potential conflict between the two localities. Past attempts by the national authorities to annex parts of Upper Nile into the White Nile State were cited as examples confirming the long-term intent by authorities of South Kordofan to change the boundaries of the two states in their favor.

e. The Stakeholders

The stakeholders to the conflict in this zone include the Shilluk and the nomads from the White and South Kordofan who use this area during the dry season. It also includes authorities of the two states and those at the national level that are responsible for sanctioning any changes to borders between states and localities.

f. Impact of the Dispute

The current disputes in the area are still low-keyed and are not widely felt among the general inhabitants in Fashoda Locality. The area generally lacks the basic social services, e.g. schools and health facilities, and this is largely due to the impact of the major conflict in South Sudan.

3.3 Nuba-Baggara Relations

a. Introduction

The various ethnic groups in South Kordofan have co-existed more or less peacefully despite occasional disputes over land or water sources. However, today grassroots conflicts constitute one of the most serious problems facing South Kordofan today. Local security has increasingly been consistently disturbed since the 1980s for various reasons and at varying degrees from one administrative level to another. Of recent, these conflicts have multiplied threatening not only peace and order but also the very survival of some

communities. Tensions have increased between some groups with the arrival of civil unrest into the Nuba Mountains¹⁹.

The escalation of the conflict hardened the ethnic divide, and the Nuba became aware of their ethnic identity overriding the religious divided among them. The central authorities treated the Nuba who are predominantly Muslims in a manner similar to that of the people in South Sudan, particularly those in northern Bahr el Ghazal. Civilian populations were cleared out in large areas of the Nuba Mountains and relocated into “peace villages”. Differential treatment of the groups in South Kordofan by the central authorities in favor of the Arab groups played a part in forming the loose “Nuba identity” enough to raise them into world stage as a group in their right. The support provided by the central authorities to groups like the Hawazma, Shanabla and Jellaba against the Nuba in the current civil war is partly responsible for the Nuba-Hawazma and Nuba-Shanabla grassroots conflict, which are analyzed below. The impacts of such conflicts have been devastating when rendering services to local communities through Government, NGOs or UN agencies. The other result was mass displacement of the Nuba groups to neighboring towns or Khartoum. Internal displacement exceeded 200,000 persons to the different provinces.

b. Location and the People

The Nuba Mountains area lies largely in Southern Kordofan, with a small extension in Western Kordofan, and is almost in the geographical center of the Sudan covering an area of about 50,000 sq. km. It is located in a region classified as semi-humid, with rainfall extending from mid-May to Mid-October, averaging about 600 mm, allowing grazing and seasonal rain fed agriculture. South Kordofan state can be classified into two main ethnic groups, the Nuba and the Baggara Arabs. Other minor groups e.g. West Africans and Northern Sudanese traders (the Jellaba) are also of significant importance.

The term “Nuba” is applied to agglomeration of groups currently occupying the Nuba Mountains and parts of Western Kordofan; and they were labeled so to differentiate them from the Baggara groups who arrived into Kordofan pushing the Nuba into the mountains. Stevenson²⁰ identified more than 50 languages and dialects clusters, re-grouped into 10 major groups. It is believed that the group referred today as “Nuba” was widespread in the Sudan but was forced to retreat by the incoming Arab groups to the mountains where there was adequate water supply and easy defense²¹. Today the Nuba make up about 90% of the population of South Kordofan, and the most important Arab groups include are the Baggara, mainly the Hawazma, the Messeiriya Zuruk and a minority but influential groups of traders referred to as the “*Jellaba*”. The main Nuba groups are the Moro, Ajanj, Kawaleib, Tira, Atora, Nymanj, Miri, Kamda and Tegale. Most of the Nuba are settled around foothills where water is available. The minority ethnic groups include the Dinka, Borgo, Borno, Dajo and the West Africans (Fellata). Most of these minority groups are believed to have settled in South Kordofan five decades ago. The West Africans are mainly involved in horticultural activities all over the State²².

¹⁹ Suleiman R. (1993), *The Crisis in the Nuba Mountains*; Workshop on the Sudanese Civil War; St. Anthony College, Oxford University. (See also, Salih, M.A.M. (1991); *Generation and Migration: Identity Crises and Political Change among the Moro of the Nuba Mountains*; *GeoJournal*; *Africa Watch* (Dec. 1991), *Sudan Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Secret War against the Nuba*; *Africa Watch* (Sept. 1992); *Sudan Eradicating the Nuba*; Bauman, G. (1987), *National Integration and Local Integrity: The Miri of the Nuba Mountains*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, Burkhart.

²⁰ Stevenson, R.C. (1984); *the Nuba of Southern Kordofan: Ethnographic Survey*; Khartoum University Press

²¹ Nadel, S.F (1947); *The Nuba*; Oxford University Press; (See also Sargar, J.W (1922); *Notes on the History, Religion and Customs of the Nuba*, Sudan Notes and Records; No. 5.

²² MacMichel, M.A. (1912); *The Tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan*, Cambridge University Press.

The Nuba can be considered to be new comers into the North-South Conflict; they were drawn to take sides in the current conflict in the later parts of the 1980s. They, together with other groups in Kordofan and Darfur, had traditionally formed the background of the national army fighting the first civil war in South Sudan. Before the current civil war the Nuba regarded themselves as forming part of an alliance with their Baggara groups with the central government, and the notion of a "Nuba" identity was vague. The current conflict appeared to be one of the factors that raised the level of awareness of the Nuba to identify themselves as a group who have been marginalized by the Arab groups, represented by the central government, the Baggara groups and the Jellaba.

The physiographic setting of South Kordofan plays a distinct role in determining the amount of rains and consequently the vegetation cover and the availability of water. The water resources are generally controlled by climate, geological and topographic conditions as well as the geographic location. The Southern part of Kordofan is underlain by the Basement complex rocks which are generally devoid of stored groundwater, except where they are locally fractured. The Nuba uplands receive more rains exceeding 850 mm/year compared to the surrounding plains to the north or east. They are cooler, better vegetated and are hence richer in agricultural and grazing resources. Ecologically it varies from poor Savannah and grazing rich Savannah in the center and south where rainfall ranges between 500 and 900 mm/year, between June and October. The amount of rain received annually drains into the wadis and khors and eventually into Bahr el Arab and White Nile. Rainfall, surface water and ground water are the main sources for water in the area.

The majority of the inhabitants of South Kordofan are rural settled in small villages scattered sparsely all over the region. The nomadic population makes about 10% of the total population of the region, whereas the urban population makes a total of 13%. The main occupation is agriculture, traditional rain fed or mechanized, depending on climate or soil types. In the clay plains, mechanized farming was introduced in 1968 as a Government intervention on a large scale at Habila and the southeastern parts of the Nuba Mountains. The intervention was mainly exploited by the private sector according to the concessions made by the Government to secure food and cash crops. Only well-to-do farmers (the Jellaba) profited from such concessions.

The indigenous landowners, the Nuba and the Baggara Arabs, hardly had any significant role to play in this intervention. Their land, as they perceived, was confiscated from them and the only benefit they could get was working as paid laborers. For the Jellaba, it was the best opportunity for them to boost their traditional trade. Indeed, South Kordofan used to produce about 12% of the country's sorghum and sesame and 5% of its total cotton production from these modern mechanized farms. The civil war in the Nuba Mountains disrupted most of the mechanized farming schemes. This inevitably led to sharp decline in sorghum production. At present the State imports instead of exporting sorghum for local consumption.

The Nuba economy depends on subsistent shifting agriculture practiced on three types of land, which results in the fragmentation of land. The first is the land around the family enclosure (known elsewhere as the "*Jubraka*" where mainly women grow early maturing crops. The second are the hillside farms (terraced plots on the hillside), where later maturing crops are planted. The third category is the farms located far from the village in the clay plains and cultivated by men. The Nuba practice of shifting agriculture poses a lot of risks over land use by different groups of communities in the area. Land is planted with a selection of crops and farmed until a new plot is needed. This practice requires a regular demand for new land.

In any given area, the Nuba recognize three types of land ownership: individual owned land, vacant land which is recognized as communal land owned by the village or hill

community, and vacant land which does not belong to anyone. The agricultural production pattern in the Nuba Mountains involves several risks, particularly the fact that harvesting is spread over a long period of time, large tracks of land are left unused in the practice of shifting agriculture, allowing herders greater room for grazing without interfering with crop production; but with the introduction of large-scale mechanized farming this integrated system collapsed, limiting the land available for shifting agriculture and grazing²³.

Livestock raising referred to as “the walking Bank”, is no of less importance than crop production in this State. The Baggara Arabs and some Nuba and West African groups mainly practice it on traditional basis. About 80% of the livestock is owned by the Baggara Arabs who lead a pastoral mode of life. They migrate seasonally north and south in search of better pastures. During the rainy season (from July to October) they move northwards as far as the southern margins of North Kordofan to avoid the muddy conditions and the biting flies in the southern parts of South Kordofan. During the dry season (from November to June) they penetrate deeper into the Nuba Mountains and beyond to graze their animals on the rich pastures where water is in plenty (e.g. Lake Keilak and Bahr Abyad). Kadugli and Talodi have the highest animal concentration in the State (>50% of the total animal population in the State, particularly cattle. The Baggara Arabs have taken cultivation only during the last two decades when they lost most of their cattle during the drought of 1984 and 1991. Now they grow millet, groundnuts, sesame, kerkade and water melon besides cattle herding. Most of the crops they grow go to the market and the income is often invested in developing animal husbandry.

3.3.1 The Nuba-Hawazma Conflict

a. Background to the Conflict

The area of concern is AlPetrol Locality, which was formed in July 2001 as a result of amalgamating 3 former localities, western Kadugli, eastern Kadugli and Um Dorain. The main Nuba groups include the Moro, Korongu and Miri. The Hawazma who are part of the Baggara, occupy a large area in the Nuba Mountains. Although they are widely distributed, they traditionally occupied the area between El Obeid, Dilling and Talodi. Some early writers considered the Hawazma to be more mixed with indigenous groups than any other Baggara groups. The Hawazma are divided into three major sub-groups, the Abu El Ali, (which include the Dar Gawad, the Awlad Ghabush, the Dar Bayti, and the Na'ayli; the Halafa, (which include the Dar Ali, Dar Faid, Al Asirra, Awlad Ghohaym, and Togia, and the Rowowga, (which include the Dar Gama'a, Awlad Nuba, and Delahia). The last group of the Hawazma is considered by the others to contain more Nuba blood and is thus regarded as non-Hawazma, and their names are suggestive of this claim²⁴. It is also believed that the rise of the Hawazma as a powerful group pushed the Messeiriya west to the areas they now occupy.

Historical evidence suggests that when the Baggara (Hawazma) entered the Nuba Mountains²⁵, they curved the plains among the main sections, driving the Nuba into the relatively barren hills. A large part of the area fell to the Hawazma. The arrival of the Baggara coincided with the beginning of an intense period slave trade, which was considered low-keyed and not well organized prior to the coming of this group. Each section of the Baggara who controlled a specific territory retains the supplies of grains and

²³ Leif O. Manger (1984); Trade and Traders in the Sudan; Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen.

²⁴ MacMichel, M.A. (1912); The Tribes of Northern and central Sudan, Cambridge University Press

²⁵ Nadel, S.F (1947); The Nuba, Oxford University Press; Stevenson, R.C. (1984); The Nuba of Southern Kordofan: Ethnographic Survey; Khartoum University Press, Khartoum.

slaves. There were crosscutting ties between the Baggara and the Nuba, although their extent and limits varied greatly from one group to another.

Two hundred years of delicate and precarious cooperation between the local Arab groups and the Nuba has collapsed into bitter and bloody feuds. The ethnic divide now seems permanent. It appears that successive calamities in the past, the slave trade, Turkish rule etc. imposed a common destiny upon the Nuba conducive to the development of a loose unity and a growing feeling of a common identity of being “*Nuba people*”, i.e. a common ethnic identity has been forced onto the diverse groups of the Nuba by actions of other more powerful groups. Some Nuba argue that the attitude of most Arab groups (including the Jellaba and the intellectuals) towards them as racially motivated, and generally arrogant, and this has been reported to be one factor that contributed to the poor political relations in the area.

In the past, problems arising from land and water disputes were resolved at annual meeting of Nuba Mekks and Arab Sheiks. The meeting usually took place on neutral ground. Agreements reached in these meetings were honored by both sides and were supported by government authority. In recent years, however, droughts in northern Kordofan and Darfur pushed the Arab nomads deep into Nuba territory often before the harvest is completed. This has resulted in clashes between the Nuba and the nomads. On the other hand, large areas of land were allocated to merchant farmers. The encroachment of mechanized farming into the Nuba Mountains, however, did not only affect the Nuba, but also the Baggara groups who did not benefit from the distribution of the schemes in Habila. On the contrary their movements in search of grazing and water were restricted by the schemes, forcing them to use land traditionally used by the Nuba for agriculture.

b. Causes of the Conflict

i. Natural Resource Use

This type of conflicts centers on land use types in the locality. Land use is mainly in the form of rainfed agriculture on which all tribal groups compete. Agricultural lands are used by small holders (upland traditional farming) and by traders (Jellaba) who are able to cultivate large tracks of land in planned agricultural schemes. Horticulture is practiced at the villages of Demeek and Berdab. Forest products (Gum Arabic, wood and charcoal) form good revenue for the locality.

Conflicts over these resources ceased during the war period because most of the areas were not accessible, particularly at the Dorain area. In fact there was no agricultural activity in the latter area. Conflicts over resources also involve cattle and camel owners on one hand and the farmers on the other. The deliberate intrusion of herders into farmlands owned by settled Nuba or Arabs often result in armed conflict. On the whole, the Locality is rich in resources and there should be no conflict over them. Their vast arable areas with very few people engaged in agriculture. Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists persisted and increased in the areas not affected by the war. Both farmers and herders found themselves squeezed into fewer areas than usual with the traditional tribal routes becoming narrow and the farmers opting to cultivate along the “maraheel, the animal corridors”, thus violating traditional customs and practices. Conflicts in such cases always result in bloodshed²⁶.

Conflicts over water points occur when some settled tribes make fences around water sources to hinder pastoralists from having access to them. Water sources become the

²⁶ Suleiman, M. (1994); Civil War in Sudan: The Impact of Ecological Degradation; Institute for African Alternatives, UK.

main factor in conflicts between the local and other foreign tribes. These conflicts emphasize tribalism leading to divisions on ethnic lines. The main sources of conflict include the drought, which has brought large numbers of Baggara and their animals to the mountains, and the allocation of the best land to merchant farmers. Probably the single most important cause of conflict in the area is the encroachment of mechanized agriculture in areas of Nuba where shifting agriculture is practiced. The Nuba have not been able to benefit from land allocation in the mechanized schemes because they are poor.

ii. Political and administrative Control

Political rivalry between the two main ethnic groups, Nuba and Hawazma, in the region since 1969, made the Baggara Arabs feel that the Nuba who dominated the scene curtailed their political role. This resulted in prejudice, particularly that the Arabs have not abandoned their hidden hatred for the "Abeed" The Nuba on their turn did not forget the historical experiences of slave trade by both the Baggara and other Northern Sudanese Slave Traders.

The political rivalry between the main tribal parties in the area has been aggravated by the old sectarian parties, which tried to exploit the tribes since the 1953 elections. When indigenous parties came up in the 1960s advocating for the Nuba cause, the Arabs were suspicious about their intentions and did not support them. Instead they became more hostile and provocative and spared no chance to accuse the Nuba as racist, similar to the Northern political elites. These parties manipulated both the Arabs and Nuba. Recently the rivalry took an ideological stance with the current Government raising religious slogans, which split the Province and locality into Nuba and Arabs, i.e. transforming the conflict into ethnic one. The newly created native administration was on political basis to serve the interests of the Government. Thus, several fragmentation and rearrangements took place within the Province and traditional leaderships, which weakened their position.

iii. The Civil War

Account of the development of this conflict goes back to colonial days, but the current status of relationships in the area deteriorated with the start of the current civil in the Nuba Mountains in 1985. In fact, the first seed of this conflict was sown during the Interim Military Government when some political leaders and generals in the army succeeded in convincing the Arab groups that the Nuba rebellion was primarily directed towards the very existence of the Arab Tribal Groups in the area with the State coming next. The Government considered the Arab tribes as the first line of defense and so started to provide them with arms. Most of the Nuba interviewed in the locality accuse certain generals in the army and party leaders of being responsible for arming and antagonizing the Arab elements against the Nuba groups. The idea of party militias started from then on; these militias were transformed into paramilitary forces (PDF). The war took its ugly face of tribalism because of this support by the government, during the democratic period.

The present government legalized the situation of the PDF but it added a new dimension, the religious dimension, after raising the slogan of Jihad (holy war). The continuation of the war in the Province and beyond in the Nuba Mountains was tragic to human life. The area was devastated in terms of its resources and physical infrastructure and social services. The emergence of the civil war in the Nuba Mountains and its transformation into ethnic polarization and the feeling of injustice stemmed from inequality in wealth sharing. Besides the absence of social services and the decrease in economic growth amongst the local groups (Nuba and Arabs) was the confiscation of their land, the core of their economy. The Nuba felt that the establishment of the State-Supported Mechanized Farming Corporation on their tribal lands meant that they would lose their only asset. The Nuba hence, resisted the Government's development policies in the Nuba Mountains, which did not target the

local people. Instead, their lands were allocated to capitalists from outside the region and the Nuba and Arab protests were met with suppression.

Such policies, no doubt, rose the already hard feelings of grievances among the Nuba groups who thought they were the rightful owners of the land. They also felt they were the most disadvantaged economically and socially in addition to having lost their land to some foreign groups. The Baggara Arabs²⁷ saw that the allocation of land for mechanized farming was at the expense of the available communal grazing land. This made them feel that their main source of economic activity has been confiscated. In fact, the horizontal expansion of the mechanized farming meant less grazing lands, and so the north-south “maraheel” had to be diverted to other directions and into areas already inhabited by other tribes. Hence these policies led to the increase of intensity of competition on the remaining land.

e. Stakeholders

The stakeholders in the conflict include the Nuba in the Locality and their elites in the urban centers (including those in the Diaspora), the Hawazma, the Jellaba and Arab intellectuals in the urban areas within and outside the area, and the parties to the current civil war.

f. Impact of the Conflict

The use of the para-military groups in the Nuba Mountains resulted in an increased use of violence against civilians and elimination of individuals by attrition. The result was a massive displacement of the local people and forced removal of others and their relocation into peace villages. The re-occurrence of famines in the Nuba Mountains though can be attributed largely to the major conflict in Sudan, the role of the Para-military groups is important in reducing the ability of the local people to grow enough food for themselves.

3.3.2 Shanabla- Nuba

a. Introduction

The Shanabla²⁸ is a group that is believed to be recent arrivals to Sudan and their name does not appear before the 18th century, and thus they are probably also the most recent arrivals to South Kordofan. Their relations with the Nuba are therefore limited, although it is reported that they are making a profound impact on the traditional coping mechanisms of the Nuba, particularly honey production. They have penetrated many parts of the Nuba Mountains including areas under SPLA control, and the temporary cessation of military hostilities between the GoS and the SPLA/M has made it possible for this and other groups to penetrate into most of the Nuba Mountains.

The Shanabla use the same territory of the Hawazma and the Dar Hamid in Kordofan and were believed to be closely related to the Dar Hamid group, until they severed their relations with the Dar Hamid and some migrated to the White Nile in Ed Dueim area and are more sedentary than those in Kordofan, while others joined the Kababish in the north. Thus, unlike most groups in North Sudan, the Shanabla have no *Dar* in Kordofan, and their presence in the Nuba Mountains was not significantly felt until the onset of the current civil war. They are regarded as alien to this state. Currently, the Shanabla are accommodated in Dar Bedderiya 30 kilometers east of El Obeid where the Amir and some of his subjects

²⁷ Suleiman, M. (1994); Civil War in Sudan: The Impact of Ecological Degradation; Institute for African Alternatives, UK.

²⁸ MacMichel, M.A. (1912); The Tribes of Northern and central Sudan, Cambridge University Press.

had been allotted a piece of land in which there are four villages for those members of the community who opt for settled life. They are also found scattered in West Kordofan in areas such as Odaya, Foga and Um Bel. They are regarded as similar to the Kawahla with regards to watering and grazing facilities.

The tribe is composed of 10 clans comprising 42 sub-clans. The clans are Awlad Hadad, Awlad Hawel, Awlad Abdalla, Awlad Nasir, Awlad Khashum, Awlad Daani, El Subeihat, Alwamra, Abu Amir and Um Braish. In the administrative hierarchy, Mohamed Alamin El Obeid Akam is the Amir of Shanabla. Four Omdas and 73 Sheikhs assist the Amir. It is difficult to describe the many migratory routes they take to enter the Nuba Mountains in South and West Kordofan States. However, it is possible to show the pattern of movements into these States.

b. The Economy and Land use patterns

The Shanabla of South Kordofan are predominantly camel owning nomads who seasonally cross from North Kordofan to South Kordofan using different migratory routes. The number of groups owning camels includes²⁹ the Hamar, Majianin and Maaliya who undertake seasonal migration into South Kordofan. Shanabla migratory routes can be classified into three distinctive patterns. The first pattern consists of a number of routes that pass through Tabasa, Abu Karshola and Um Bereimbeta leading to different locations in the eastern Nuba Mountains localities of Rashad, Abu Gibeiha and Talodi. Then the second pattern consists of routes that pass through Sidra, Kurtala and Habila leading to Al Patrol locality (Um Dorein and Kadugli). The third pattern comprises the routes that pass around El Dibeibat and Abu Zabad leading to Western Dilling locality and Lagawa in West Kordofan. The conflict between the Shanabla nomadic tribe together with other camel owning tribes and the local population of the Nuba Mountains is a serious challenge to peaceful coexistence in all the areas where there is scarcity of water.

The Nuba groups in direct confrontation with the Shanabla include the Atoro, the Moro and the Kawalib, who like the rest of the Nuba groups are settled agriculturalist, practicing shifting cultivation on the low lands and Terrance cultivation on the mountains. Honey collection during the year is an important activity among the Nuba and an important source of income. Honey is most abundant where there is good tree growth, particularly those with good flowers.

Water, land ownership and pasture are the critical factors in the survival of Shanabla, Baggara and other nomads. These resources are also the source of acute competitions between nomads and Nuba, between nomads and other settled communities and between South Kordofan nomads and nomads entering from North Kordofan. Besides, agricultural policy is another factor affecting lives of both nomadic and settled communities in South Kordofan. The Shanabla, Baggara, Nuba and other minorities experience many serious difficulties other than shortage of water and pasture. Access to water sources and pastures are problematic in relation to distribution policies of large-scale agricultural schemes. Findings of UNICEF mission (April 2003) shed more light on social and economic dynamics in the different communities that interact with the Shanabla.

c. Causes of Conflicts³⁰

i. Access to Grazing Land

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Part of the information in this part of the report was obtained from the UNICEF fielded Mission in 2003.

Access to water points and pastures are a serious source of conflict between different communities in south Kordofan. For the Shanabla and other nomads, it involves meandering journeys to avoid confrontation with agricultural communities and large-scale farming territories. Nomads negotiate passages and encampments around water points with local government authorities, traditional tribal leadership and owners of mechanized farmlands.

Shanabla clans continuously negotiate their survival and that of their herds of camels with different Nuba and Baggara communities along their migratory routes. These routes are often blocked by extensive agricultural farmlands that encapsulate water points (hafirs) intended in the past to serve nomads during their seasonal movements. Deadlocks in negotiation process often result in inter-community confrontations.

Like most camel owning groups, the Shanabla routinely cut down the top of trees to enable their camels to eat the succulent leaves of these trees. This practice leaves the tree bear and it usually withers out after a while. The cutting of trees deprives the Nuba of an importance source of income by making impossible for bees to exist in the area. (*The Nuba think that it is the urine of the camels that is chasing away the bees*). The farmers and the cattle owning communities resent this practice because it denies them the shade for humans and animals. The farmers and cattle owners often burn the grass, which affects the trees, to deny the camel nomads access to the grazing land. This practice further destroys the habitat of bees in the area.

ii. Availability and Access to Water

The Water Authorities in South Kordofan State is aware of the importance of water, which is an element for conflict resolution among communities. They are working along this line to reduce conflicts. Breakdown of traditional system in which regular inter-tribal conferences were held prior to the movement of nomadic communities from the north to the south and vice versa contributes to many conflicts. This situation has been dictated by the civil war. These conferences used to facilitate co-ordination of movement of people and livestock and regulation of interactions between people along migratory routes. They used to decide on critical issues such as timing and duration of encampment, and schedule of movements.

Recurrent droughts in North Kordofan have caused environmental degradation to the extent that there are early movements (September/October) of nomads from the north into different parts of South Kordofan than in the past. This situation is in direct contradiction with agricultural practices in South Kordofan where late maturing varieties of crops are being cultivated. Harvests of these crops take place in December/January each year. Traditional areas of water holes for livestock consumption are currently potential locations of human settlement and horticultural development in many parts of south Kordofan. Agricultural development policies target the same areas, a situation complicating inter-communal relationships. Prospects are remote and bleak for grazing and herding small and big herds (camels) in the long run.

Most Hafirs are more than 30 years old and are silted. Others are not accessible to nomadic groups because they fall inside large mechanized farms. The same is true for the few check dams built to harness water in some streams. Some dams are already subject to serious conflicts. This is the case of Talwadi where the indigenous community has refused its maintenance on the ground that it will encourage Arab communities to settle on their land. The accessible dams are Maad al Rugaal, Abu Alhassan, Seissaban, Wad el Milesa and Khashum al Kalib. There are hafirs at Habila, Al Geney, Khashum al Kalib, and Fayo. Others such as Abu Bratabo, Al Gharik and Al Harhar are dilapidated and fall within the planned large-scale agricultural schemes.

Water yards are potential sources for watering camel and cattle herds. However, the water yards at Um Bereimbeta and Khor Eldaleib are in the state of disrepair. In addition, hand pumps are suitable sources of water for human consumption, but they are subject to frequent breakdown due to over usage. Camels consume great quantities of water. The mission learnt that the average consumption of water by a camel is about 20 gallons per week. The size of a camel herd is 75 animals. This means that one herd consumes about 6,000 gallons of water in one month. Dams and Hafirs are more convenient for animal consumption, but hand pumps break down under pressure of pastoralists to use them for watering herds.

Access to water sources and pastures is impeded by allocating large scale mechanized farms and planned agricultural plots of land blocking the traditional livestock migratory routes from the north to south and vice versa. Further, the distribution of large-scale agricultural scheme neglect indigenous inhabitants who end up as laborers on farms that used to be their community land. This is an important cause of conflict between indigenous communities, nomads and owners of large-scale farms. Both the indigenous settled communities and nomads acknowledge that the agrarian policy in south Kordofan is the main cause of political and grassroots conflicts in the state. One participant of the Habila meeting describes the situation as “Mechanized farms are intended to develop people and the area, but they have turned out to be the real source of conflict.”

iii. Government Authority and Security

Government authority is weak and the gap between traditional authorities and communities result in the lack of control over incidents of insecurity. High level traditional leaders of the camel owning nomads live in North Kordofan while their subjects migrate under sheikhs. Examples were cited when there were incidents involving the Shanabla around Um Bereimbeta (2002) and Teital (2003). A UNICEF fielded mission found out that there are existing ties, in form of traditional alliances, between sections of Nuba tribes and Baggara nomads. However, the Shanabla are not part of the arrangement of traditional alliances. They depend on low level arrangements with communities they have been living with for long periods of time.

Rudimental structures for the management of water resources exist on the ground. The Shanabla, Baggara nomads and settled communities agree to share water resources through transactions. The nomads pay the host community to acquire a space to make a water hole. They also hire labor to draw water for their livestock. This type of arrangement could be formalized and upgraded into a village water management committee. Sometimes violence breaks out where water management is weak. The mission learnt that death occurred when one nomad filled a collection ditch while his herd was still grazing at a distant location. The person prevented his colleagues from watering their animals until his herd would make it to the water point. This situation provoked violence.

There are positive inter-communal relationships between settled and nomadic communities including the Shanabla. The concentration of Shanabla and Baggara nomads has created exchange systems and markets. For example in Tibsa and Khor Eldaleib, local Nuba communities confirmed that the Shanabla help in transporting harvests from distant fields to villages. Also, they transport bamboo from forests to roadsides where traders buy them and ensure transportation to markets of their preference.

iv. Impact of the Civil War

The Shanabla acknowledged that they had a problem in the areas controlled by the SPLA in the Nuba Mountains. They have lost considerable heads of camels in disputes with the movement. Shanabla leaders, followers and intellectuals indicated that they would prefer

discussion of their problems with communities in Nuba Mountains because the area has the grazing space for camels. They also acknowledged incidents with communities in Nuba Mountains that involved specific Shanabla families.

Although water is by far the most important in the lives of the nomads, educational and health needs are also considered necessary. They expressed to need to have mobile schools and clinics. The Shanabla and other camel owning communities have very high degree of illiteracy. They lag behind the Baggara nomads in the field of education.

c. The Stakeholders

1. The Nuba and the Shanabla
2. Traditional authority and local government agents.
3. The elites of the two communities
4. The Jellaba
5. Parties to the Current Civil War

d. Impact of the Conflict

Apart from the loss of an important source of livelihood for the Nuba, the grassroots conflict in the areas is posing to be a potential threat to the stability in the area. The manipulation of groups (i.e. the Shanabla) by some parties to the civil war, provoking a reaction from the Nuba, might be a cause of instability in the area. So far, there is no apparent threat to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Nuba population so far as the cease fire lasts.

3.3.3 Conflict in Lagawa

a. Introduction

Lagawa area is of particular importance with regards to the types of conflicts in the region. It is the zone that links West Kordofan with South Kordofan, and in a way it is the triangle through which many Dinka from Bahr el Ghazal must pass through to areas of West Kordofan in search of labour. Moreover, many of the nomadic groups use this area as a transit route on their way to South Kordofan or to their grazing areas of Bahr El Arab (Kiir), the border between South and North Sudan.

Lagawa is situated in West Kordofan State, and it extends between Lat.10⁰ and 20⁰ North of the Equator, and between Log.28.3⁰ and 30⁰ East. Lagawa town is the Headquarter of the province. Lagawa province lies within the Savannah belt of the Northern Hemisphere tropic, which is classified, as hot and semi-arid. Average temperature ranges between 40⁰ C. in the hot summer months and 20⁰-C. in the cool winter months.

b. Population Groups and the Local Economy

The province, with a population of about 163,400 people, has three localities, viz. Lagawa, Keilek and El Sunut. 15.6% of the population was described as nomads, the rest been settled in rural settled areas and urban areas. The Province is a composite of ethnic groups represented by the Messeiriya (Arabs), Nuba, Daju, Fellata, Borno-Borgo (of West African origin) and Dinka. The Messeiriya are the dominant group in the area followed by the Nuba and Daju. The Messeiriya group includes Awlad Heiban, Ghazaya, Zuruq, Alwad Sileem and Mataneen. The Nuba group includes the Kemda, Tulushi, Tima and Abu Junouk. The Dinka are mainly either agricultural labour migrants or war displaced or they are found largely in El-Sunut Local Administrative Area, particularly in Um-Rosoom, El-Mahfora and Hilat El-Nazir.

Until 1996, a large number of drought and war displaced people were located in what were called "peace villages" and they include Nimir, Malan, Ladi, El-Fogara, El-Bataya, Melies, and El-Koa. The majority of them are women and children. Conflict over land is not common between the landowners and the displaced in most parts where the displaced are found, although in some few areas such conflicts occur, especially in areas occupied by the Daju tribe. Many other groups migrate to the area for pasture and water during the dry season, and they include the Shanabla, Kawahla, Hamr and Maalya. The Messeiriya and the Nuba practice transhumance, while the Daju, Fellata, the Borno-Borgo and Dinka are sedentary.

The area consists of distinctive but inter-related features in terms of soils, vegetation and drainage, and they include, first, the mountainous highland area, which is an extension of the Nuba Mountain highlands and forms the natural divide between Lagawa province and South Kordofan. Most of the wadis and khors originate from these highlands. Second, the wadis, which originate from the highlands and traverse the area from NE-SW, are the dominant features of the area. The wadis are important source of surface and groundwater. Third, the Lakes occupy a surface of 8 sq. km. and the most important are Keilek and Abyad, which have water all year round. Fourth, the floodplains, which extend between Wadi Ghalla and Wadi Shallengo, are situated between Lagawa and Kadugli provinces, and are a complex system of channels. Fifth, the Qoz Land which occupies the north-eastern part of El Sunut area; most of the transhumance activities are concentrated in this area.

In general, the area is rich in water, particularly surface water. The main source of surface water is rainfall, which together with climate and the rainy season control the availability of surface water in the area. But the huge volume of surface water from the rainfall is lost through the high rate of evaporation; thus most of the surface water dries out during the dry season. Groundwater is available in the area, but the types and structure of the geological formations control it. Lagawa province falls in the basement complex, which inherently limits ground water. But due to fracturing and weathering, appreciable volume of ground water can be obtained from the basement rocks in the area. Other sources of underground water are the alluvial aquifers of the wadis and some Nubian Sandstone's outlines in Arak and Dabat Abeid. These basins are localised and provide limited amount of water all year around.

Lagawa province falls largely within the semi-arid area. Rainfall affects both the ecology and the type of economic activities of the area. The economy of Lagawa province is a mixture of traditional subsistence and mechanized rainfed agriculture and animal husbandry, which are largely conditioned by the ecological characteristics of the zones described above. Subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry are the most important economic activities for the population in the rural areas. The main traditional systems are the sedentary production system of the staple foods plus cash crops and transhumance involving nomads who move seasonally in search of water and pasture. The two systems however, merge to form a continuum of settlers keeping livestock and nomads engaging in crop production. But although rainfall is adequate for most crops, crop failure usually occurs because of poor distribution, which causes alternate drought. Rains may start June and about 73% of the rainfall occurs during the three months from July to September. The sedentary production is made up of traditional smallholding farmers, and "Harig" cultivation is practised in new areas. Crop yields are generally low throughout the area, although it is much higher in clay than in the goz soils.

The livestock production system constitutes a major source of livelihood for the population in the project area. The majority of families own livestock and some own large numbers. Cattle account for most of the domestic animals in the area followed by sheep and goats in that order of importance. Livestock production depends almost entirely on natural rangelands. The livestock herders move southwards to perennial water supplies and pasture during the dry season and revert northwards to the "Dar", centre camp on goz pastures during the rainy season to avoid sticky mud and biting flies. Crop production for the livestock herders is of

secondary importance. Sorghum and millet, as a staple crop, sesame and groundnuts, as a cash crop, are grown on a limited scale on heavy clay and goz soils. Sometimes tomatoes are grown in the wadis. A few members of the family are left behind to cultivate these crops while the rest of the members of the family move with the animals.

c. Background to the Conflict

The various ethnic groups in Lagawa area have co-existed more or less peacefully despite occasional disputes over land or water sources. However, like most parts of South and West Kordofan, today grassroots conflicts constitute serious problem communities in the area. The remoteness of the area makes it a potential zone for the recruitment and training para-military groups to be used as fighters in other parts of the country. Local security has increasingly been consistently disturbed since the beginning of the current civil war in South Sudan for various reasons. These conflicts have multiplied threatening not only peace and order but also the very survival of some communities.

The escalation of the conflict appears to be linked to the emergence of a “Nuba Identity”, which has hardened the ethnic divide in the area. Differential treatment of the groups in area by the central authorities in favor of the Arab groups played a part in forming the loose “Nuba identity” enough to become a rallying point for those who consider themselves marginalized in the area. The support provided by the central authorities to some groups against the Nuba in the current civil war is partly responsible for the grassroots conflict.

There was no conflict between the Nuba and Daju on the one side and the Messeiriya groups on the other before the advent of the civil war in Lagawa Province. Peaceful co-existence prevailed on the basis of customs and traditions. At the initial stages of the current civil war, and when the SPLA/M first made their incursion into the province in 1985, the Nuba realized their support would pose a threat to their physical existence in the area, and so they did not support them from the onset. Later, however, when the Nuba elements realized that some parties began arming some tribal groups under the pretext of defending themselves and their properties, they approached the SPLA to provide them with arms to balance the situation. This move by the Nuba resulted in their being called rebels. The militias misused the slogans of “jihad” (holy war) to indiscriminately kill the Nuba. When the Government intervened to restore peace and order, it failed to achieve peaceful coexistence between the parties to the conflict.

However, some Messeiriya groups and sheikhs interviewed in the locality stated that both they and Nuba have been victimized. They have been marginalized by the Central Government for years. But one sheikh of the Messeiriya reported that the Nuba continues to support the SPLA/M. But since they, the Messeiriya, are Arabs, the central government is the only alternative for them to support.

d. Causes of Conflicts

i. Natural Resource Use

Because of the large number of livestock and the meager resources (water and grazing land), most of the pastoral groups migrate to areas beyond their locality to acquire sufficient livestock demands. Competition over these resources often leads to friction. For instance, Awlad Heiban accused the Fellaita of trying to have monopoly over vast areas of land, thus prohibiting other groups from making use of the available resources. The agents of Awlad Heiban often try to persuade the Fellaita to allow them to have access to these resources, on the basis that grazing land is communal. If this failed, conflict leading to bloodshed often arises. For this reason there is still some tension between the two groups. Awlad Heiban

were asked to leave the territory according to customs and tribal norms. This cost them dearly in terms of cattle loss and more friction with other neighboring groups.

Large areas of this region are open grassland³¹. These grasses are burnt during the dry season for the production of tender re-growth preferred for grazing. Burning affects both the quality and quantity of range. Over grazing is also one of the factors leading to poor range condition. It results from crowding near watering points and in recent years from the inaccessibility of traditional grazing land and closure of some traditional cattle routes (murhals) because of the civil war. Animal husbandry is in a way destructive to the environment. The attitudes of the animal users are merely exploitative with little concern over the protection of the pasture. The result is always disastrous to the eco-system and to the communities depending on it.

ii. Trespassing over Farm Lands

Farms in this area are normally fixed and there is little practice of the traditional shifting cultivation particularly where there is scarcity of good arable land. The surrounding land is usually good grazing land, which tempts the herders to graze nearby. Sometimes, however, cattle monitoring is not efficient and so they intrude into the cropped land, causing serious damage to crops. In some cases there is deliberate violation by the herders who attack the farms during the night and then disappear leaving no evidence for accusation. The Nuba and Daju are the victims of such violations. The animal owners often possess firearms, and they use them to threaten the farmers. The Daju and Nuba leaders stated that such violations have now diminished after the authorities also armed them as paramilitary Popular Defense Forces (PDF).

In an attempt to promote local initiatives in food production, farmers in Lagawa province expanded mechanized rain fed farming, without learning from lessons of such activities in other parts of the country. The unplanned expansion of large mechanized farming is another important factor affecting grazing routes and areas. The mechanized schemes and large farms of orchards have blocked traditional grazing areas and cattle routes. Furthermore, the unplanned expansion in agricultural schemes removed enormous masses of trees leaving land subject to erosion and harmful effects on the environment.

Natural forests form part of the range and contribute substantially to browse by camels, goats, sheep, wildlife and even cattle. Natural forests are also invaluable for providing gum Arabic. They also provide food to the local population and are an important source of cash income. Forests are an important source of building material, furniture, fuel wood and charcoal. The need of households for these forest products has led to the deforestation observed near urban centres and even in rural areas. Lack or absence of fire lines has resulted in the destruction of many valuable trees.

iii. Violations of Maraheel (Tracking Routes)

Violations of the Maraheel (or cattle routes), resulting into conflict, arise when herders (Awlad Heiban) in this locality, find that farmers (in this case Hamar, Manaseer group or Bedderiya) have cultivated the maraheels. Moreover, the farmers make fences around the water sources, e.g. hafirs, pools, etc. Such acts are considered illegal by the nomads, since they regard these water sources as communal rights of the pastoralists. Conflict is bound to happen particularly when water demand becomes acute after the rainy season. When the herders become desperate they opt for violence to have their animals watered.

³¹ Bunderson, W.T. et al. (1984); Rangeland/Livestock Research Activities/98/83/ WSARP Publication No. 29

iv. Cattle Rustling

This is a new type of conflict, which came into existence after the formation of tribal militias in the area. Some individuals from the Arab Messeiriya groups misuse the motive behind militia presence to gain wealth in the form of cattle looted after tribal skirmishes. This has now turned into armed robbery and as the saying goes “the one who has a Klashikov lives free” (*Al Indo Klash yaesh balash*). Such notions found encouragement among nomad adventurers who wanted to make quick wealth through attacking the Nuba groups who are regarded as weak (*kolo mangon gaddomo ahmar*). Under such pretexts they loot, kill and kidnap Nuba individuals especially where state law and authority are weak or absent. Nuba and Daju leaders in the locality say their local authority is weak and consequently they have suffered from such attitudes that eventually turn into ethnic conflicts.

iv. Political and Administrative Control

Historically, both Nuba and Daju were under the guardianship of the Messeiriya until 1992 when the former groups claimed to have their separate administrations. The very idea of having an independent native administration on the old Dar Messeiriya territory was not welcomed by the matter domineering group. The conflict led the Nuba and Daju villages being burnt by the Messeiriya. Now both the Nuba and Daju have their own tribal administrations.

According to Nuba elites interviewed in the localities, the Messeiriya who are party to this type of conflict do not recognize the rights of the Nuba and Daju as equal citizens. There is hence mutual prejudice but often triggered by the Messeiriya who insist on using such notions as “Abeed” (slave) for groups like the Nuba, Daju and Dinka. These groups resent such notions, which are not only offensive to them, but also drive them to join the SPLA as a last resort. Again the widespread arms among the Messeiriya tilted the balance in their favor particularly during 1988/89.

Political rivalry in the Locality may be less tense between the Nuba/Daju on the one side and the Messeiriya on the other. Power struggle among the Messeiriya sub-groups witnessed severe tensions, which led to disputes over power on village levels. In fact the old Nazirate under the paramount chiefs of the Messeiriya, which used to be only three, has now been fragmented into 13 Nazirates (amirs). The Nazirate on their turn have been divided into several tens of Omodias and sheikhdoms. At present the Messeiriya native administration has been weakened due to such fragmentation. Government intervention in appointing the traditional leaders made such administration ineffective.

e. The Stakeholders

The major players in the conflict include the Nuba, the Daju, and the Fallata, the Messeiriya (Alwad Heiban), the para-military groups and the major parties in the major war. The elites, inside and outside the area, play an important role in inter-group conflicts.

f. Impact of the Conflicts

One of the major problems in Lagawa province of West Kordofan is the inability of the population to grow enough food for household consumption as a result of the conflicts, in addition to the years of civil war. The rural populations were most severely affected by the war. There has been a dislocation of the social fabric of the affected population and the economic activities have been brought to halt in most areas.

Prior to 1983, Lagawa town was the most important market centre in the province for livestock and crops. As a result of the civil war, Abu-Likri in Keilek Administrative Area became the main market centre, in addition to weekly markets in many of the villages in the area. However, as Lagawa province becomes inaccessible during the rainy season, most of the agricultural and animals products are not sold during this period. In addition, government taxes levied by the local councils inhibit the population from transporting their goods to other markets during the dry season. Women in particular lack market outlets for their products and handicrafts.

3. 4 Dinka – Baggara Relations in the Kiir (Bahr el Arab)³²

a. Introduction

The area under study in this section provides an example of the relationship between two groups that has the same economic background, but who differ with respect to religion and “race”, and where the impact of the current civil war is immense on both human and animal population. The Kiir/Bahr el Arab region is the transitional zone that links the South and North of Sudan, which for over the last three centuries has been the meeting point of two different cultures, the African culture represented by the Dinka and the Arab Culture represented by the Baggara. However, it is also noted that the racial divide between the two groups is blurred because of the long history of contact and inter-marriages between them. It is also a zone where the two cultures melt producing groups, e.g. the Messeiriya Zuruk, which is a blend of the two cultures through intermarriage and assimilation. Some estimates suggest that about 30% of the Rezeigat have Dinka ancestry and their physical complexity tends to confirm this fact. The opposite is also true for the Dinka many of whom claim ancestry to the Rezeigat, although the numbers are reported to be small.³³ (See Map 7 for location of the Area).

This zone extends from the western borders of Sudan with Chad and Central African Republic across the Southern Parts of Darfur and South Kordofan to the borders with Upper Nile where Kiir/Bahr el Arab joins the Bahr el Ghazal to enter the Bahr el Jebel. It is the dry season meeting point by the two groups of predominantly cattle pastoralists. The use of the resources of the Kiir/Bahr el Arab Region has resulted in the development of strategic interests by the two groups upon which economic, social and political relations have emerged, and which are being manipulated today by new actors. The Bahr el Arab (Kiir) is not only a meeting point for the Dinka of northern Bahr el Ghazal and the Baggara; here they come to fish and market their goods (including animals)³⁴.

The two groups are mainly pastoralists rearing mainly cattle, goats and sheep, with some camels among the Rezeigat. practicing a transhumance form of mobility. The climatic conditions dictate the pattern and distance of human and animal movement and their concentration during the different periods of the year. While the Baggara are nomadic, the Dinka practice some form of transhumance, which cannot be described as nomadism. The Baggara moves from north Darfur to Kiir River (Bahr el Arab), while the Dinka move their

³² Part of the information contained in this section was obtained from interviews with Dinka Chiefs in Ed Daein area and traditional authorities of the Rezeigat and the Zaghawa in 2003. The Director of the Ministry of Social Welfare, South Darfur State, provided an insight story to the Dinka-Rezeigat relations and the role of the youth in sustaining the animosity between the two groups. His comment on the new alliance developing between the Zaghawa and the Dinka in South Darfur was also very interesting.

³³ Nyang’oro J.E. (2001); *The Effectiveness of Civil Society Initiatives to Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace: A Study of Three Approaches in the Greater Horn of Africa. Case Study Four: Local Level Intergroup peace Building in Southern Sudan: An Assessment of Effective Practices; Management System International.*

³⁴ Nyaba, P.A. (2002); *Money Makes the War Go Round: Transforming the Economy of War in the Sudan*, Brussels.

cattle to the area during the peak of the dry season, and they also use part of area for agriculture. The Dinka generally stay in the area for about three months in the year between December and March/April and they move back to the areas of permanent settlements where they carry out some cultivation. The Baggara stay a longer time in the area than the Dinka, often lasting between six and eight months depending on the conditions in the north.

The Dinka who own comparatively large numbers of cattle practice a certain form of transhumance, which has certain points of similarity and certain points of contrast with that found in the semi-arid zone occupied by the Baggara. The Dinka cattle moving from the settlements to Bahr el Arab (Kiir) do not move to a region where rainfall is lighter. The Nomads, on the other hand move into areas of lighter rainfall during the wetter months and from these areas to dry season grazing land during the year. Superficially their annual cycle of movements appears identical with that of the Dinka. In fact, their movement is conditioned by the amount of pasture and water available on the routes. These physical conditions determine the concentration and distribution of the population during the different seasons. However, the cycle of movements is much the same, though the actual timing of the movements is different, since in the areas of the nomads the rains do not start until June/July, long after the Dinka have moved back to their cultivations in normal times. Moreover, the actual movement of the cattle camps is relatively similar; at the initial stage of the movement, the camps are relatively small composed of the smallest lineage groups (*farig*) to larger groups as the peak of the dry season approaches. The maximum period of concentration is at the peak of dry season just before the onset of the rains.

Traditionally the location of the cattle camps of the different groups was made by agreement in an annual conference organized by the authorities prior to the movements of the cattle into the zone. The duration of stay of each group, in particular that of the Baggara groups was determined during these conferences, although climatic conditions, i.e. the start of the rains and the availability of water and grazing in the north where the Baggara would move, were also important factors.

Disputes, often resulting into violent conflict, appeared to have been a norm in the relations between the two cultures; but also traditional mechanism developed over the centuries that not only resolved such disputes/conflicts but also to prevent their occurrence. The expansion in numbers of both human and animal populations over the centuries, coupled with deterioration in the natural conditions in the northern parts of Sudan, resulted in an increased pressure over the resources of the Kiir River; moreover, the Baggara groups tended to stay longer in the area than in the past. This led to increased disputes and conflicts over the years, and the weakening of the traditional administrative structures increased the cycle of violence in the zone.

The area is vast, isolated and was far from administrative centers in the South and North Sudan. The presence of government administrative and security arrangements were generally weak, thus the reliance of the traditional mechanisms for dispute/conflict management and prevention. Over the years the demography of the zone has been changing, particularly in areas of West Kordofan where the Dinka (Ngok) used to be numerically dominant. This part of the analysis will describe the relations between the Dinka of North Bahr el Ghazal and the two dominant Baggara groups, the Messeiriya and the Rezeigat.

In spite of the political differences between the south and north, the Dinka of northern Bahr el Ghazal have often looked to their neighbors for labor opportunities in times of strife and famine. Dinka from north Bahr el Ghazal typically migrated north to look for work, even in non-famine times, because the single railway in the south runs north from Wau. Now the famine drives some into the Western Kordofan towns of Meiram, Abyei and En Nahud.

Moving southwards entails walking very long distances through areas without food, and the best option was to move north. West Kordofan is host to a long-term population of IDPs who have fled drought and insecurity in northern Bahr el Ghazal. It is expected that the State will continue to serve as a transit point for displaced populations coming from northern Bahr el Ghazal and western Upper Nile traveling to urban centers or mechanized schemes in the east and north. Some IDPs from the southern conflict zones are expected to remain in the state although the majority is likely to transit the area.

The majority of the IDPs in South Darfur and West Kordofan are Dinka from Aweil (Northern Bahr El Ghazal State and Gogrial (Warab State). The two states are part of Bahr El Ghazal Region, which was divided into four states in 1994 under the Federal system of rule in Sudan. The two states do not border En Nahud Province, and in order to reach the province, the Dinka have to travel through an area controlled by the Messeiriya. Aweil was considered to have the largest population and the most densely populated area of South Sudan. A number of questions have been asked regarding the reasons why the Dinka from Gogrial and Aweil chose En Nahud, which is Hamar land, as their place of refuge instead of settling among the Messeiriya. It is well known that Hamar land has long been a tradition area for seasonal agricultural laborers from Aweil and Gogrial. This relationship started as earlier as 1950s. The Dinka came to work as laborers or sharecroppers, mainly in groundnut production. They have to cross the area inhabited by the Messeiriya who the Dinka of North Bahr el Ghazal considered their traditional enemies; thus their preference of the Hamar who they regard as their traditional friends.

b. The People and the Economy of the Zone

i. The Dinka Group

The Dinka, mainly the Malual, the Rek and the Abiem inhabit the northern part of Bahr el Ghazal Region extending from the border with the Fertit of Raga to Western Nuer. The Ngok Dinka clans are found in the area now known as Western Kordofan State, mainly in Abyei and Meiram.

The Dinka of Northern Bahr el Ghazal depended to a large extent on subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing, and the environment influenced their way of life, and the economic adaptation demanded by it. The agricultural system remained primitive and by modern standards inefficient. It was static and satisfied the simple needs of the inhabitants, providing them with a livelihood at subsistence level, but was based on the balanced utilization of the natural resources of the area by stock and crops, aimed at self-sufficiency in all essentials. Farmers grew a limited variety of crops such as sorghum, millet, groundnuts, and tobacco (for household use). Sorghum and millet were by far the most important crops especially among the agricultural communities. Crop production was dependent on the use of simple tools. Crop yields were therefore, very low and often not enough for family consumption. The relatively short rainy season and low rainfall set limits to the types of crops produced and crop husbandry was a risky undertaking in many of these parts of the country and crops failures were frequent and cereals were frequently in short supply.

Animal production was an important source of livelihood among the Dinka of north Bahr el Ghazal, and for the majority of the communities, agriculture, though important, was secondary to animal husbandry. It was estimated that over 2/3 of the people of northern Bahr el Ghazal were dependent on animals, mainly cattle. But apart from cattle, sheep and goats are also kept in few numbers. A significant feature of cattle owning groups in Southern Sudan was the part played by cattle both in the economy and in social life. In the first place the products of cattle- both for food and for technological purposes- were of profound importance. Cattle provided an insurance against years of poor crops and formed

an essential item in the economy. Cattle were also highly valued as a wealth and prestige and were used in the payment of bride wealth in marriage, and it formed the basis of the social and cultural fabric of these communities. Recent estimates suggest over 60% of the livestock population in northern Bahr el Ghazal was lost during the 1990s as a result of counterinsurgency activities and more than 40% of the families lost all their livestock.

Although pastoralism is the way of life, agriculture forms an important part of their survival strategy. Fishing is an important activity among the Dinka and it is both a source of food and cash income. In the toich, pools, lagoons, and channels, which flank the main river, were the principal fishing grounds. In the dry season many of these waters drop, making it possible to fish by spearing and trapping. Fish was also caught by damming up the inland watercourses, which the fish migrate as the water rises. Dried fish from the Kiir River and other areas of North Bahr el Ghazal are found in many markets in the North, particularly where there is a large concentration of Dinka, e.g. in the camps for IDPs.

The social organization was dominated by tradition, and while the economic organizations and division of labor were based on sex, the family was the most important social and economic unit within the larger kinship group. Kinship defined the structure of roles and relationships based upon blood ties and marriage. It also defined various rights of group membership, succession, inheritance of property and locality of residence. The village was the focal point of community life and most networks, associations and assistance were based on it.

ii. The Baggara Groups

The Baggara group that is dominant in the area is the Messeiriya in Kordofan and the Rezeigat in Darfur. Both groups are divided into major sub-groups. The main sub-groups of the Messeiriya are the Zuruk and the Humur. The Humur, who are largely involved in the conflict with the Dinka in both North Bahr el Ghazal and Ngok Dinka in Western Kordofan State are further divided into two main sections, the Ajaira and the Felaita, and each of them are further sub-divided into smaller sections. The Ajaira section of the Baggara Humur appears to be dominant in the major conflicts with the groups in the Kiir (Bahr el Arab) zone; the main sections include the Al Khayr and Alwad Omran. The Felaita include the Metanin, Awlad Surur, El Gubarat and the Salamat. The Rezeigat are also divided into sub-groups; those in South Darfur include the Mahamid, Maharia and Nawaiba. The sections belong to well-known camel-owning groups in northern Darfur.

The Messeiriya move in a regular seasonal cycle through four distinct areas: the Babanusa, the Muglad, the Goz and the Bahr el Arab (Kiir River). Their movement is dictated by the demand of the dominant activities, cattle husbandry, and agriculture, mainly the cultivation of millet. The area occupied by them is described as "Low Rainfall Savannah", a belt of which lies east and west of central Sudan. Rainfall is generally low in the north and increases southwards, the amount ranging between 450 to 900 mm annually. The movement of cattle through the four areas is dictated by the conditions of grass, water, ground underfoot, and the presence of flies. In normal times, most of the cattle are generally concentrated on the Bahr el Arab from January to June. It is, however, observed that the Messeiriya are spending an average of eight months in the Bahr el Arab grazing areas because of poor conditions to the north. Agriculture, though important, is secondary to animal husbandry, and millet is the dominant crop cultivated by the Messeiriya. Cotton was introduced into the area and was grown in the clay plains.

c. Background to the Conflict

The contact between the two groups in the form a competition over pasture and water during the part of the year when both groups are concentrated in the area was natural. In

the past each group was allocated specific areas for grazing. The Dinka have specific places south of River Kiir where their dry season cattle camps are located. In normal times, when water and pasture are good, both groups stick to the areas allocated for them. The relations between the Baggara and the Dinka over the centuries of their contact could be described as vacillating between peaceful co-existence and violent conflict, and these relationships appeared to have cultivated some form of suspicion and mistrust between each other. They have constantly been engaged in raids and cattle rustling over the years, and often abducting women and children of each other. But, while conflicts between the two pastoralists are as old as the history of relations between them, in the past, there were traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

However, it is important to note that some historical events, e.g. the entry of the Turko-Egyptian rule and the Mahdiya, appeared to have resulted in the deterioration of relations between the two groups, in particular the role of slave trade whose intensity increased during these two periods. The Baggara groups played a vital role in raiding the Dinka for the supply of slaves to the merchants from the north. The Baggara horsemen raided areas of Bahr el Ghazal and Upper and took many Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk into slavery, and the more slaves they brought on these raids the more economic benefits they received, an incentive for further raids in search of slaves. This practice was abolished after the reconquest of Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces. In recent years, with the involvement of the belligerents in the north-south conflict, what used to be purely tribal conflicts have now become dominated by political overtones; thus complicating the situation for vulnerable civilian population of northern Bahr el Ghazal.

The serious deterioration in the relations between the Dinka and the Baggara appeared to have started during the 17-year civil war in South Sudan, which ended in 1972 with the Addis Ababa Agreement. The Baggara were involved in the fight against the Dinka of North Bahr el Ghazal who represented the "Southern Rebels" during that period. Although the involvement of these groups was to a large extent not significant, it evoked memories of Baggara raids during the 19th century. The violent conflict in Abyei area 1975 and 1977 was a split-over of the 1955-1972 north-south conflict. Many Ngok Dinka took active part in the 17-year civil war, and many were recruited to serve in the Regional Government of South Sudan. A large section of Ngok intellectuals expressed the view that Abyei become part of South Sudan, and this view appeared to have been accepted by a many ordinary Ngok.

The eruption of the current war in 1983 had more dramatic effect on the Dinka-Baggara relations, when the interventions by the parties took a more elaborate form than in the first conflict. Various militia groups and popular defense forces were formed and armed by both parties to the conflict. In the north, the "fursan" (known as *muraheelen* in West Kordofan) were recruited from among the Baggara groups. The 'fursan' is the Arabic word for "cavaliers or horsemen". The *Muraheelen* was armed beginning in 1985 by authorities to attack their Dinka neighbors, and this was regarded as a cheap form of counterinsurgency. The Dinka were organized into youth groups called "*tet-weng*" or "*get weng*" to protect their cattle and villages against the attacks of the *muraheelen*. The Dinka were regarded and are still regarded as the civilian base of the SPLA, and the Baggara (and soldiers) were and are rewarded with total impunity and war booty: cattle, grain and human beings (women and children). Often the *Muraheelen* conducts joint operations with the army, so that the raids became large and devastating³⁵.

Prior to 1982 the Rezeigat and Messeiriya of Kordofan and Darfur used to find their wet season grazing far to the north towards the Libyan desert, but in that year a devastating long-term drought began and virtually wiped out the grazing, forcing the these groups thereafter to turn south towards Bahr el Ghazal to feed their livestock during the dry

³⁵ Christian Aid (2001); *The Scorch Earth, Oil and War I Sudan*, London.

season. To help them do so, authorities began arming them in the mid-1980s and encouraged them to attack the Dinka of the area. The Dinka, being poorly armed at the time, were killed in thousands until the SPLA stepped in and organized resistance. The Baggara then entered into agreements on grazing rights with the local Dinka. But as time went on the authorities started arming the Messeiriya and Rezeigat with the view of devastating and depopulating the area, driving the Dinka south of the Lol river and then eastwards towards the territory of the Nuer, where they would also enter into conflict, after which the Baggara would be given free access to it and to the land between the Lol and Kiir Rivers. Many villages were burned in the process, women and children are abducted and thousands of cattle were taken³⁶.

The start of the current civil war in the South of Sudan resulted in an increased intervention by the parties to the conflict in communal conflicts in this and other areas of Sudan, particularly in South Darfur and West Kordofan, where parties to the conflict overtly or covertly supported the various communities in the area. The politicization of the traditional conflictual relations resulted in the escalation of conflicts and the polarization of the groups along racial lines, e.g. the emerging alliance between the Dinka, Zaghawa and Maalya versus the Baggara Groups.

Although the Baggara militias were active as early as 1983, under the 1969-85 military rule they and the Anyanya II, a mostly Nuer Militia, coordinated raids with the army. The murahleen tribal militias were formed in the mid-1980s. They were incorporated into the army after 1989, and since then the term has been applied to all militias of the Rezeigat and Messeiriya, and to denote tribal militias who raid villages in the south. The Murahleen started to be armed by authorities beginning in 1985 to attack their Dinka neighbors. The Dinka were regarded and are still regarded as the civilian base of the SPLA, and the Baggara (and soldiers) were and are rewarded with total impunity and war booty: cattle, grain and human beings (women and children). Often the Murahleen conducts joint operations with the army, so that the raids became large and devastating. The government turned to arming the Baggara as militias in the past because conscription was unpopular in Sudan. The traditional role of the Murahleen was to accompany the herds of cattle ahead of the rest of the tribe in the seasonal movement of the herds; they travel on horseback, and were traditionally armed to protect themselves and their herds against wild animals and cattle raiders. The equivalent of the murahleen among the Rezeigat of south Darfur are called "fursan", the Arabic word for "cavaliers or horsemen."

One important function of the murahleen since 1989 has been to accompany the military supply train to Wau. They put their horses on the train, which are taken out on reaching Bahr el Ghazal and used against Dinka villages. The Dinka, who do not have horses, also lacked modern weapons and protection, since northern Bahr el Ghazal was not considered of strategic military importance to the SPLA. One of the consequences of the deliberate policy of transferring formal into informal warfare is to spread violence and insecurity across the countryside. The divide-and-rule military tactics of the warring parties in the major conflict have produced sharp differences between the Messeiriya and the Dinka who used to share grazing land, watering points, etc. and have destroyed the vital traditional systems of checks and balances between groups.

The two groups appear to have realized the destructive consequences of the external interventions in their "local politics", and for the Rezeigat, there is a new realism that their future survival will depend in re-establishing good relations with the Dinka. The number of conferences and peace treaties during the past few years appears to be a manifestation of this new realism. Both groups realized that in spite of the often-bad relations,

³⁶ Flint, J. (February 12, 2003); Conflict of Interest: Why Sudan's Greatest Potential Asset has become its Curse; the Guardian.

intermarriages take place, more often the Rezeigat marrying Dinka girls than vice versa. The complexion of many Rezeigat and Messeiriya Zuruq (Black Messeiriya) probably reveals this fact of intermarriages. Prior to independence, even during the period of the “close-district act”, both groups were brought together annually to attend conference that reviewed the relations between them. Chiefs from other parts of South and North Sudan were brought to attend these conferences. All disputes were settled in these meetings, including the payment of ‘diya’ (blood money), return of stolen cattle and abducted girls, etc.

The Dinka/Baggara rivalry has escalated from tribal animosity to a government counterinsurgency strategy whereby some of the Baggara groups have become government proxies in military operations against the Dinka of North Bahr el Ghazal and the Ngok Dinka, perceived as the backbone of the SPLA/M. This role, for the Messeiriya, was forged under the Military rule of 1969-85 and applied by the Democratic Government in 1986-89. The Babanusa-Aweil-Wau railway corridor is one of the most important routes linking the south to the north. Since its completion the railway reduced the importance of the river route to Wau. This corridor has played a significant role in the previous south-north conflict, and in the current civil war.

In the past, the government had strict control over the annual movement of the Messeiriya to the dry season grazing areas, but with time this control was lessened and the Messeiriya had less fear of camping in Nuer and Dinka during this part of the year. The Messeiriya regarded all land as belonging to the government and, therefore, they had the right to use it. Thus, disputes arose between the Messeiriya, the Dinka and the Fellata nomads from Nigeria who also used the area for grazing.

Mechanisms used to exist for settling conflicts between the Baggara and the Dinka, mostly by inter-tribal conferences backed by the power of the state. Agreements between the two sides have produced truces from time to time. During the first civil war (1955-1972), the Baggara entered into grazing agreements with local commanders of the Anyanya southern guerrilla movement, whereby the Baggara paid taxes in money and cattle in order to graze and water their livestock in Bahr el Ghazal during the dry season. These were not renewed at the outset of the second civil war, however, and the Baggara began to make annual armed incursions into Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, taking advantage of the local unarmed populations. Since the beginning of the second civil war in 1983, however, the national government has not intervened to try to settle disputes between the Baggara and the Dinka. However, the government intervened to mediate dispute between other tribes.

d. The causes of the Conflict

On the surface of it, this conflict can be described as a resource-based conflict, where the two groups compete over the right to use grazing land and water. But over the years, these traditional disputes over land and water, which often resulted into violent armed conflicts, became politicized and were impacted by the two civil wars in South Sudan. While prior to independence land ownership of the “dars” was vested in the tribes, the abolition of the Native Administration 1970 left all land not registered as private in the possession of the state. This change in the system of land ownership was one factor, which allowed the expansion of mechanized farming into south Kordofan and Upper Nile. These mechanized schemes cut across the transhumance routes of the nomads.

While they had previously followed routes offering the best pastures and plenty of water, they now have to move rapidly, and under tight control along narrow corridors. Intrusions on the well-defended mechanized farms incurred heavy penalties. Kept in check by the army and squeezed off the land by the mechanized farms, the nomads turned on their traditional enemies, the Dinka. In early 1980s the intrusion by the herders into the

smallholdings of the small-scale farmers erupted into violent disputes. With the deterioration of the civil war in the south, violence escalated along the Baggara-Dinka transition zone. For the militia, raiding and pillaging turned into a way of life with devastating effects for the Dinka.

The conflict in the Kiir (Bahr el Arab) zone is often described as due to competition over the control and use of the natural resources, mainly water and pasture, between the Baggara and the Dinka. However, although this is the dominant reason, political relations play an important role. The dynamics of this conflict, which is generated by competition over resources, occurs within a political context dominated by the GoS and the SPLA/M. The support extended by both parties to the civil war ostensibly for their strategic military objectives of thwarting each other's objective of moving the war south or north, has given legitimacy to one of these groups to abuse the rights of the other. Thus, the main causes of the conflict include the role of religion, racial and ethnic superiority, and competition over resources.

The environmental degradation that affected the northern part of Darfur and Kordofan during the 1970s and 1980s due to changes in climate and rainfall resulted in desertification. These droughts changed the patterns of movements of the nomads from and to the Kiir River (Bahr el Arab). The long dry seasons also meant that the nomads arrived early and stayed longer, reported to be about 8 months on average, in the area. This was coupled by increased droughts in north Bahr el Ghazal. The period of contact between the two groups was lengthened, thus increasing competition over the shrinking resources as a result of increased population, both human and animal. Conflicts were common and frequent, though prior to mid-1980s, they were limited in scope and were easily contained and resolved through the traditional mechanisms. While the traditional system of rule was abolished in all areas of North Sudan in early 1970s, they continued to play a vital role in the area.

The conflict in the area has other dimensions, the assumed superiority by one group over the other. The Messeiriya and Rezeigat perceive themselves superior to the Dinka, and this feeling has been translated into violence against the Dinka, which has led to the violations of human rights. The military balance between the groups, which is in favor of the Rezeigat, is reinforcing this feeling of superiority. The support given to the Baggara has allowed them to abduct women and children, and caused an immense humanitarian disaster in the area.

Although small arms and light weapons are not themselves a cause of conflict, their accessibility and low cost tend to increase conflicts, encourage violence rather than a peaceful resolution of differences, and spiraling demand for, and use of, such weapons. Direct exposure to military activities, with a clear intent to disrupt the normal lives of other groups, often result in the acquisition of arms. Groups awash in such weapons often find themselves caught in a culture of violence, which is likely to continue even after the formal conflict ends. For young men, many of whom have known little else besides war, and have little or no education; their weapons become a status symbol and a means of making a living. Rezeigat youth have been described as a group whose future survival is tied to the gun.

The limited opportunities for economic survival have made them to look into the current conflict between the Dinka and the Baggara as the only alternative to survive. The recruitment of youth into para-military groups re-directed the economic frustration of nomadic herders who have been squeezed out of the traditional pasture in the north by drought towards combating the war in the south. Once organized, the para-military groups are exempted from prevailing traditional agreements between the users of the Bahr el Arab (Kiir). Some people described them as a group that has lost the moral soul of their communities and families.

e. The Stakeholders

The stakeholders to the conflict are the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal and the Messeiriya/Rezeigat. The parties to the present major war in Sudan are also important in the Dinka-Messeiriya conflict. They provided and continue to provide arms and training to para-military groups in the area. However, they can also play a role to ending this conflict by restraining them, in particular the youth of the two communities. The elites of the two main communities are also important.

A very important group within these two communities is the youth who form the backbone of the militias. The Messeiriya and Rezeigat youth in particular have been described as a group, which has lost its religious integrity, who have taken tooting cattle and abducting women and children as a source of income as well as a way of life.

f. The Impact of the Conflict

As a consequence of the current civil conflict in the country, a large population of the Dinka has been displaced to north Sudan. The raiding, looting and burning by all parties prior to 1998 cause forced displacement of large numbers of civilians and led to a progress of erosion of the means of livelihood, whereby entitlement and/or access to crops, herds and fish have all been reduced. Moving southwards entails walking very long distances through areas without food, and the best option was to move north. In addition, South Darfur and West Kordofan host a large number of long-term populations of IDPs who have fled drought and insecurity in northern Bahr el Ghazal. It is expected that these States will continue to serve as a transit point for displaced populations coming from northern Bahr el Ghazal and western Upper Nile travelling to urban centers or mechanized schemes in the east and north. Some IDPs from the southern conflict zones are expected to remain in the state although the majority is likely to transit the area.

The displacement of a large number of people has resulted in the separation of families. Many families are female headed and they lack the support of the males and other kinship groups. Family ties have weakened and are disintegrating. By the same token kinship networks and local ties of reciprocal obligations were weakened. The burden on women in economic activities has been increased as a result of the war as many men are involved in the current war, and many women are household heads. In the urban centers, women are main bread earners through their role in beer brewing and have become victims of constant harassment and imprisonment.

Migrant laborers from Bahr el Ghazal to the north using the railway route in the past; and many IDPs who came to the north during the 1980s and early 1990s came through this route. This is the closest area to Western Upper Nile (Unity State) where most of Sudan's oil is produced. In northern Bahr el Ghazal PDF/Muraheleen raids along the Babanusa/Wau railway line cause frequent displacements. It is generally accepted that the armed horsemen of the Baggara militia, played a crucial role in the generation of the famines of 1988 and 1989. Their government-sanctioned raids transferred Dinka cattle wealth to the Baggara, abducted Dinka women and children, and played a major role in causing the Bahr el Ghazal famine of 1988. The raiding of Dinka became frequent since the end of the 1970s, as it became a source of income and exchange for the militias and the merchant traders. The democratic government of 1986-89 derived much of its support from the Baggara and much of its finance from wealthy western merchants. Some of these merchants were involved in the livestock trade fuelled by raiding Dinka land and were keen to support the Baggara tribes who made up the muraheleen.

3.5 Conflict In The Jebel Marra Region

a. Introduction

The Jebel Marra, and for that matter South Darfur, will be an important area in the pattern of future grassroots conflicts in Sudan. First, it is the most stable ecological zone in the whole of Darfur, and thus it will continue to attract pastoralists from the ecologically marginal parts of Darfur. Second, the demographic profile of the area suggests a rapidly expanding population whose survival depends on land resources and whose demand for food is increasing; the potential for soil degradation is very high. The current population of South Darfur is estimated at 2.9 million people with a total fertility rate of 6.5 children per woman³⁷. Moreover, the expanding population appears to be expense of the Fur who are likely to become a minority in the area. This fact is likely to undermine the delicate political balance among existing groups in some of the localities in both West and South Darfur where the Fur make a very important group. Third, in spite of the fact the area is rich in natural resources; socio-economic indicators show that it is one of the least developed parts of Darfur. The disparities are potential source of future. (See Map 8 for location of the area)

b. The People and the Economy

Darfur is divided into several “dars” (homelands) of the Fur and other groups determined by livelihood as much as ethnicity³⁸. The ecological and social distinctions are more meaningful than the administrative divisions imposed by the governments. Ethnicity was not in itself clear-cut, given the long history of racial mixing between indigenous “non Arab” people and the “Arabs, who are now distinguished by cultural-linguistic attachments rather than race. The Arab group is often divided into two, the Baggara (cattle nomads) and the Aballa (camel nomads). The Fur group is now divided into two states, South Darfur and West Darfur, making them a minority in these states. The Fur in Western Darfur formed part of the EU-funded Jebel Marra Project, which excluded the Fur of South Darfur. In relative terms, there was considerable improvement in agricultural practices in the project areas.

The Fur, largely peasant farmers, occupy the central belt of the region, including the Jebel Marra massif, the richest and most stable area in terms of soil fertility and water resources. The area around Jebel Marra is the second most important potato production area of the Sudan, although production figures are not available. Jebel Marra has a cool, wet climate generally well suited to potato production. Soils are generally fertile, deriving from the volcanic materials in the uplands.

In this central zone are the non-Arab Masalit, Berti, Borgo, Birgid, Tama, Maidob, and Tunjur groups, who are all sedentary farmers. These non-Arab groups established the “Darfur Development Front (DDF) in mid-1960 with the main objective to protect and lobby for the interests of the indigenous people of Darfur in the political scramble for power at the center. These groups appeared to have formed an alliance with those in the northernmost zone of Darfur, i.e. the Dar Zaghawa, part of the Libyan Sahara, and inhabited by camel nomads, particularly the Zaghawa and Bedeyat, who are non-Arab in origin, and the Arab Mahariya, Irayqat, Mahamid and Beni Hussein. It is the most ecologically fragile of the

³⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Sudan 2002; Population Data Sheet for Sudan by States – 2001.

³⁸ O’Fahey, R.S. (1980); *State and Society in Darfur*, London, C. Hurst and Company.

three main zones and most acutely affected by drought. Its occupants have frequently been active in armed conflicts in the region, either against settled farmers or amongst themselves, amid growing competition for access to water and pasture.

The Arab nomads of the eastern and southern zone of Darfur, who comprise the Rezeigat, Habbaniya, Beni Halba, Taaisha and Maaliyya, herd cattle rather than camels. The area is less severely affected by drought than the northern zone, although still highly sensitive to fluctuations in rainfall and less ecologically stable than the central zone. In addition to the distinction between cattle and camel herders on the one hand and the settled farmers on the other, there is a significant urban population of traders, government officials and other professionals who form an important section of the stakeholders to the conflicts raging in the region.

b. Historical Background to the Conflict

Armed raids on rich agricultural areas and skirmishes with rival groups are part of the historical way of life for the nomadic herders, and constitute a survival strategy in the face of natural calamity and threatened destitution, enabling the maintenance of their social fabric. While the Fur and other cultivators did not traditionally have the same degree of military organization, their relations with the nomads alternated between negotiation and hostility over the intrusion of nomads' herds on to farming land.

For the last two decades Darfur witness more than 40-armed conflicts³⁹. This phenomenon of tribal conflict is closely related to environmental changes within the region. Ecological changes, drought and desertification that started early 1970 had driven a number of tribes in the north from their tribal "dars" to the South. This large movement to the south provoked very high competition over the resources (land, pasture and water). Southern Darfur tribes, especially the camel owners, began to resist this new invasion. Conflicts between the Mahria and sections of the Baggara became common phenomenon between 1985 and 1995. During this period conflict in South Darfur included the Mahria and the Beni Halba in 1983, the Mahria and Habbaniya in 1986, the Mahria and Birgid in 1998, and the Zaghawa and Birgid in 1990.

The pattern of conflict changed from low-intensity, small-scale outbreaks from the 1950s to the 1970s, to high-intensity, persistent and large-scale battles in the mid-1980s. The earlier conflicts were predominantly clashes between nomadic groups over access to pasture and water, or theft of animals. Since the mid-1980s there has been a more systematic drive by the nomads to occupy land in the central Jebel Marra massif, on the scale of a civil war, with entire villages wiped out and thousands of lives lost on both sides. While drought-stricken livestock herders attempted to survive by encroaching on the fertile central zone, the Fur have fought back to retain what they see as "their" land.⁴⁰

The attempts of successive governments to achieve peace have been alternately inefficient and heavy-handed. Arms were channeled into Darfur by the central authorities, especially

³⁹ Suliman, M. and A.O. Osman (1994); *War in Darfur: The Desert versus the Oasis Syndrome*; London, Institute of African Alternatives. (See also, Tobin, I.N. (1985); "The Effects of Drought among the Zaghawa of Northern Darfur", In *Disaster*, No. 9 pp 213-223.

⁴⁰ Suliman, M. (1990); "Civil War in the Sudan: From Ethnic to Ecological Conflict", in the *Ecologist*, 23(3), May/June 1993. (See also Salih, M.A.M.; (1989); "Ecological Stress, Political Coercion and Limits of State Interventions", in Hjort Af Ornas, A. and M.A.M Salih (eds), *Ecology and Political Environmental Stress and Security in Africa*, Uppsala, Scandinavia.

between 1986 and 1989, which armed the southern Baggara as a militia to fight against the SPLA (at that time threatening insurgency in the region) and also armed the northern Arab tribes, who were loyal to the Ansar. Although the Fur farmers are also largely Ansar, preference appeared to reflect the influence of the “jallaba” merchants whose primary commercial interest was in the livestock raised by the nomads.⁴¹

The power struggle in neighboring Chad spilled over into Darfur, with leading the opposition, using Sudanese territory to launch attacks on the government of Chad. In this way the Zaghawa, who were aligned with both the Ansar and the opposition groups from Chad, since their ethnic group straddled the border, also obtained modern weapons. In response, the government of Chad helped armed the Fur. Libya encouraged the notion of an Arab “corridor” into central Africa, which lent at least moral support for the Darfur Arabs’ incursion into the fertile Jebel Marra area hitherto occupied by the Fur. Arabs and Fur clashed around both Jebel Marra and the southwest of the region in 1988-89. A peace conference in mid-1989, mediated by the Sultan of the minority Masalit, temporarily settled some of the issues.

The Zaghawa and Mahria fought a four-year war with the Fur (1983-87). The drought of the early 1980s drove the nomadic Zaghawa and Arab groups southwards into central Fur region of Jebel Marra. Some sought water and pasture for their animals, but many had lost so much animal wealth that they were seeking to settle permanently. The Zaghawa who moved to urban centers had some success in petty trade, but those who kept to rural areas encountered hostility from the Fur farmers, who realized that the move might this time be permanent, and from the government who accused them of camel rustling. The Fur elite in local government resented the nomads’ intrusion rather than seek accommodation. Police and army burned down numerous Zaghawa settlements. The influx of modern weapons into the area had a dramatic impact on the conflicts in the area.

In the late 1980s conflicts shifted to a new area, the Jebel Marra region. Two aspects could explain this shift. First, the strong and effective resistance of the Baggara groups to the incoming of the Mahria and Zaghawa. Second, Jebel Marra region remain an island with abundant resources in a sea of desert, i.e. land and pasture were abundant. With the influx into the area tension between the Mahria pastoralists and the sedentary Fur population increased⁴².

From 1987 to Present, the Arab alliance against the Fur was formed. The element of racial prejudice became further entwined with the environmental roots of the conflict with the formation of an alliance of 27 Arab nomad tribes and their declaration of war against the “Zuruq” (blacks) and non-Arab groups in Darfur. The response of the Fur was to form its own militia force, at first for local self-defense and later as part of a short-lived but significant linkage with the SPLA in 1994. This short-lived incursion of the SPLA into Darfur further polarized the groups in the area; the Arab Militia allied with the government against the Fur, who they saw as their enemies. The conflict in Darfur took a new twist in February 2003 with emergence of the Darfur Liberation Movement (later renamed as the “Sudan Liberation Movement/Army – SLM/A), and what used to be called “armed robbery” turned into a full-fledged rebellion against the central government.

⁴¹ Harir, S (1993); “Arab Belt” versus “African Belt”” Ethnic-political Conflict in Darfur and the Regional-Cultural Factors; in Harir, S, and Tvedt, T. (eds) (1993); Short-Cut to Decay: The Case of the Sudan; James Corey, London.

⁴² Suliman, M. and A.O. Osman (1994); War in Darfur: The Desert versus the Oasis Syndrome; London, Institute of African Alternatives. (See also, Waal, A. del (1990); War in Sudan: An Analysis of Conflict; Peace in Sudan Group.

The main aim of the nomads was to seize land, and they would often give notice to Fur village before the raids to make ways for the “liberating” or “cleansing” forces. Nonetheless, the toll on population and resources was high. By the time of the 1989 peace conference, many Fur and Arabs had been killed, and many more displaced and homes destroyed.

c. Causes of Conflict

In the attempt to understand the impact of ecological changes in Darfur on the state of war and peace in the contemporary history of this region, the most striking observation is that the farmers and the pastoralists are causally interlocked in a complex web of solidarity/strife relationship with each other. They exercise mutual solidarity in times of normal hardship, but in times of severe hardship, when survival is strengthened, they engage in violent conflict. Armed conflicts that are currently raging in the Jebel Marra Massif in Darfur since 1980s are typical ecological conflict along distinctive ecological borders, in this case, the borders of the semi-arid places roamed by “Arab” nomads and those of the wet oasis of the Jebel Marra of the settled Fur farmers.

The groups confronting each other in the current conflicts have a long history of guarded cooperation and relative peaceful coexistence. In the past, they exchanged goods and services; indeed some of the herds that the Arab nomads reared belonged to wealthy Fur who did not opt to become nomads themselves. The Fur sold most of their herds on the onset of the drought in 1982/83. This was considered a severance of economic relations, which strained the relations between the Fur and the Arabs.

The movement of people and herd from one affected eco-zone to another, which was already occupied by a different ethnic group, was a recipe for tension and hostility. Conditional agreements used to be reached when the need for sharing land was required. But now that this need was for prolonged periods, even for permanent sharing, the strains became greater. These difficulties were particularly prevalent in the drought-stricken western provinces of Darfur.

In the past those in distress simply moved to a nearby richer eco-zone. However, the expanding population, political and ethnic tensions and general worsening of the environmental situation increasingly hampered this exit option. As central government control of law and order in the countryside weakened, physical security considerations were also becoming increasingly important in the decision of affected people to abandon their homelands and move to urban centers, where food was in greater abundance and physical security was relatively better maintained.

The Sahel drought coupled with interference by government and the struggle for local political power appeared to have polarized the ethnic groups whose identities and inter-relationship had hitherto been fluid. The only way out of the crises will be the recognition of its environmental and development origins and the negotiation of equitable access to resources in a fragile eco-zone.

The following are some of the important reasons behind the conflicts in the region⁴³:

- Competition for power and position in the localities, the provinces, the state and national assemblies and in party leadership;

⁴³ Suliman, M. and A.O. Osman (1997); *Ethnicity: From Perception to Cause of Violent Conflict. The Case of the Fur and the Nuba Conflicts in Western Sudan*; Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), London, UK. (See also his Article: (1998); “Resource Access: A Major Cause of Armed Conflict in the Sudan. The case of the Nuba Mountains, International Workshop of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), Washington DC; USA.

- Conflict between traditional and government administrative and political structures. Unlike government structure, traditional structures lacked access to power and resources, although they enjoy popular recognition and respect.
- The militarization of youth, both nomads and sedentary, through military training, access to weapons.
- Conflict over access to power structure between local elites and tribal chiefs, fueled by tribal affiliation and persistent conflicts between the “Dar Owners” and the “Nomadic tribes”.
- Competition between farmers and pastoralists over access to land, water points, etc.

Overall the causes are likely to be important in sustaining conflicts in the area:

- Resource depletion because of unsustainable land use and climate variations in the form of persistent drought, which forced large numbers of people to move and forcing pastoralists to move to wetter areas, i.e.. Jebel Marra Massif;
- Concentration of human and animal population in marginal lands, which creates increasing pressure on land and water resources in societies of little economic differentiation.
- Political polarization in the area and economic and social deprivation of the area

d. The Stakeholders

It appears that the stakeholders to the conflicts in Darfur are clear; they include the presently the Arab and non-Arab communities in the area who compete over the use of natural resources, including land, and over political power. These communities have developed their own military strategies, including the formation of para-military groups, some of whose members have been recruited by the warring parties in the major conflict in Sudan. However, both groups have access to external support, within the country and outside Sudan. The political parties appear to be competing over the support of the different groups in the area. In addition the elites of the communities in the urban areas, together with the “Jellaba” and the expanding group of traders from the non-Arab communities, are important players to the conflict. The Zaghawa, in particular is seen as a threat to the traditional trader group, the “Jellaba” whose control of trade in the area is diminishing.

e. Impact of the Conflict

Darfur, including the Jebel Marra area, which is at the center of the current conflict, is the least developed region of Sudan. The grassroots conflicts in the region have had a devastating effect on the few services that have been provided by donors, UN and other agencies. UNICEF funds the “Nomads Education Program”, and this has been severely affected in many parts of the region.

4. Epilogue

On the face of it, many grassroots conflicts in Sudan are characterized as resource-based and are predominantly between agriculturalists and pastoralists. Environmental degradation may be an apparent cause of some of the current conflicts. The concentration of large populations in the few areas meant an increase in the use of the resources This appears to be an over-simplification of a complex and dynamic situation of conflict whose root causes may be traced to history and early contacts among the various groups. The triggering factors might be competition over resources and unequal access to and distribution of resources, both national and local. The pluralistic nature of Sudan is reflected

in the conglomeration of many tribal groups, which descended from different cultural backgrounds. The groups in Sudan are social, regional and cultural units to which the members share common sense of belonging.

The civil wars in Sudan appear to be a clear manifestation of country that has failed to form a nation-state from its diverse racial, cultural, and religious groups. The current civil war has changed the traditional relationships among ethnic and tribal groups. While tribal conflicts existed in the past over the ownership and use of natural resources, the warring parties have now translated these conflicts into political ethnic conflicts, and support to groups by parties to the civil war in Sudan is based on the traditional conflicts. It is true the Nuer and Dinka in Upper Nile, the Dinka and the Baggara, and Dinka/Bari and Mundari competed over the ownership and use of natural resources, mainly grazing land and cattle. Today, this conflict has taken a much wider political dimension, which has been manifested, in the internal divisions among the various groups in the rebel movement and within government control areas. The Dinka and the Baggara have traditional conflicts over grazing land in Bahr el Arab. Today, the north-south conflict has magnified this conflict, and various national governments arming of tribal militias in the area has political under-tones. This is true for the groups in the Nuba Mountains. Inter-ethnic conflicts in Darfur have for a long time been described as “armed robberies” by “armed bandits”. It appears that these “armed robberies have developed into full-blown rebellions against the Central Authority, mainly because of the glaring inequality in regional development in Sudan

A number of indicators suggest that some communities in Sudan will continue to experience conflicts in future, though may be at reduced intensity. Such areas include north Darfur and Kordofan, the Upper Nile Region (in particular, Jonglei and Unity States), and Eastern Equatoria. Potential areas of continued conflicts in Upper Nile include the Sobat Corridor. The present civil war has resulted in permanent settlements of Nuer in areas traditionally regarded as Dinka land on the River Nile. The split in the SPLA/M in early 1990s resulted in the eviction of large numbers of Dinka from villages north of Bor. The Nuer tribe currently occupies these villages. The present areas of oil exploration will also be future areas of conflicts as the population is expected to return to their original lands when the current civil war ends.

The north-south divide will pose a major point of future conflict among communities living in these areas. These areas include Abyei, Hufirat El Nahas, etc. The border between Upper Nile and South Kordofan could become a source of future conflict if the present trend of land annexation continues. The area of Upper Nile along this border is becoming an important source for Gum Arabic collection, and traders come to collect it annually. In order to protect these traders, some of the local authorities in South Kordofan re-adjust the borderline. Members of the State Assembly in Upper Nile expressed some concern over this trend and its future implications.

The present grassroots conflicts together with major civil war have several negative consequences on the lives of the people of Sudan. The population lost not only their way of life but also their properties including animals. It has resulted in the disruption of the social fabric of the tribes in parts of Sudan. Families have become separated as a result of displacement. The role of the social institutions, which used to operate to hold together families and communities have been weakened.

Conflicts have affected the production potential of the rural population, and coupled with nature, it has rendered the local population unable to produce enough food for their survival. Many inhabitants have lost their cattle since the start of the current war, especially after 1987. Cattle acted as cushion during times of food deficit. The animals are likely to have been further depleted as a result of increased raids by the Baggara and this has become a major cause for the depletion of the Dinka cattle. Household food security has

been severely affected by the conflicts in many areas of Sudan. Some evidence suggests that the soils around these towns, where most of the population in government control areas cultivate, are no longer capable of sustaining continued production under current farming practice where sorghum and millet are the dominant crops. The traditional shifting agricultural production system, which is known to be stable and biologically efficient, is no longer feasible because of the current war.

Conflict prevention in Sudan needs efficient instruments either from inside or outside the country. These instruments include tackling the causes of conflicts and crisis such as poverty and risks to national basis of life at their roots. Making a real improvement in the social and economic living conditions of the people and changing the political framework conditions with the aim of creating structural stability are the best basis for development which encourages peace, sharing of wealth and power and enabling communities to plan socio-economic change in situation of violence and conflict. An important element of successful development in a post-conflict situation is the ability of authorities to control the number of small arms and weapons that are now widespread among the different groups involved in conflicts. It is argued and accepted that a "human rights based response will contribute to an effective and sustainable resolution of the small arms problem in a conflict and post conflict situation.

Specific interventions should include strengthening social institutions and mechanisms for example by supporting democratic reforms advising the government in organizing its legal systems, and promoting the civil society. The conflict resolution mechanism works according to the traditions of Native administration, where the native administration plans and executes means of conflict resolutions. The role of civil society organizations has become important since some of the stakeholders in the current grassroots conflict are important members in these organizations. It is observed from various efforts and discussions that the resolution and/or mitigation of grassroots conflicts in Sudan is a must, although the end to the current civil war could reduce many such conflicts in many parts of the country.

But while poverty, which is the result of lack of development, is prevalent in most of the regions, grassroots conflicts will be hindrances to any effort to eliminate or reduce it. How these conflicts can be ended may depend on how the parties to the conflict accept the basic principles of equity and justice in distribution and use of resources. Poverty eradication is an important instrument of intervention in conflict mitigation and resolution in Sudan in general. But it must be understood as a product of complex structural processes imbedded in the political economy of the country. Within this complexity, identifying the key causes of poverty is a precondition for formulating an effective anti poverty strategy. The primary causes of poverty in the Sudan can be summed up in the failure of the state-led development strategies since independence, including the more recent macro economic reforms. Compounded by the burdens of natural disasters and civil wars and conflicts, this failure has manifested itself in limited and inequitable access to all forms of capital, physical, financial and social development. Deprivation from capital leads to lack of remunerative employment and increased poverty.