

**UN SUDAN
WEST DARFUR PEACEBUILDING ASSESSMENT**

El Geneina, Kereinik, and Beida Localities



June 2021

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This assessment is the work of UN Sudan, including UNITAMS and the UNCT. Interviews for this peacebuilding assessment (El Geneina, Kreinik, and Beida localities) were carried out by UNDP, with funding from the MPTF, after the intercommunal violence that was seen in February 2021. The write up was completed together with UNHCR and the PBF Secretariat. The areas selected for the assessment had all been particularly affected by the recent and ongoing violence in West Darfur and the is peacebuilding interventions had been raised by the communities themselves. Interviews for the peacebuilding assessment – including a total of 60 key informant interviews and 40 focus group discussions – took place in March 2021 and were written up in close collaboration with University of Geneina’s Peace and Development Centre. All communities, including the Massalit and the Arabs, were interviewed with the assessment itself aiming at determining how the integrated mission, including its UNCT and HCT partners, can better use a “nexus approach” in responding to crises in the future.

1.0 Executive Summary

The purpose of this peacebuilding assessment was to better understand the causes of conflict in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities, which have become the major hotspots for violence in West Darfur since December 2019, and to identify potential opportunities for peacebuilding programming in these areas. Given the United Nations (UN) reconfiguration in the five Darfur states, and the light footprint that the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) will have in Darfur, this assessment serves as a pilot project for the possible conduct of peacebuilding assessments alongside humanitarian assessments following an emergency like the ones in El Geneina in January and April 2021.

The key findings of this assessment were the following:

1. The reversal of previous conflict trends with the escalation of urban violence in West Darfur, particularly in El Geneina, and community perceptions that violence is currently emanating from El Geneina to rural areas.
2. Land is at the heart of the conflict in El Geneina, Kereirik, and Beida localities, and the resolution of land tenure and ownership issues is needed for the achievement of durable solutions.
3. Conflict in El Geneina and the Masteri area of Beida locality is increasingly racialized, with attacks being carried out based on skin color. Rhetoric between communities in El Geneina is increasingly hostile, and there has been a steady dissolution of the social fabric.
4. There is a strong link between criminality, intercommunal violence, and politics in these locations, and it is often difficult to discern the actual triggers behind a violence incident or conflict.
5. Markets in El Geneina town are hotspots for violence, and safe and sustainable access to markets by all communities is a critical issue that must be addressed to reduce incidents of violence.
6. The emergence of the armed group, Tamazuj, or the Third Front, which is signatory to the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), as a primary conflict actor in West Darfur is a new development and needs to be further explored.
7. Despite the ongoing conflict in the target locations, there are some fledgling grassroots peace initiatives, including among Masalit and Arab youth, which can be strengthened and built upon.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Background

West Darfur State is one of five states comprising Darfur region in the westernmost part of Sudan. Approximately 700 km of the state’s western border is contiguous to Chad. Though the last population census was taken in 2008, the population size of West Darfur is estimated to be approximately 1,800,000 (Fadl et al. 2017). While the tribal composition of West Darfur is diverse, much of the state falls within the boundaries of the historical Dar Masalit and Dar Gimir Sultanates. Large areas of present-day West Darfur, including the capital El Geneina, are therefore considered by many to be the historical homeland of the Masalit tribe.

By 2018, it was thought that the wider Darfur conflict had relatively eased throughout much of West Darfur, resulting in the full withdrawal of the United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) from the state in May 2019, as a part of the peacekeeping mission’s planned drawdown from Sudan. However, since December 2019, El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities have reemerged as conflict hotspots, with significant violence centered around El Geneina town. Since the withdrawal of UNAMID, some areas of El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities have witnessed repeated cycles of violence and displacement,¹ while others have been identified as areas with longstanding and unresolved tensions. In comparison, the other localities in West Darfur (Kulbus, Jebel Moon, Sirba, Habila, and Foro Baranga) have remained relatively stable in recent years.



It is relevant to note that El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida are the largest localities in West Darfur in terms of population, farming, pastoral activities, and trade. In addition, all three animal migratory routes in West Darfur pass through these localities, which contributes to competition over land and other natural resources between farming and nomadic pastoralist communities.

As in other parts of Darfur, communities in West Darfur are often classified by livelihood and ethnicity (i.e., “African” or “Arab”). The primary cleavage is between communities whose

¹ El Geneina town was the site of large-scale inter-communal violence in January 2020, January 2021, and April 2021. Masteri in Beida locality was the site of large-scale inter-communal violence in July 2020.

members are identified either as “African farmers” or “Arab nomads”, though such categorizations often miss nuances in changing livelihood patterns and tribal affiliations. Broadly speaking, however, the majority of the population in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities are members of the Masalit tribe, which is considered to be an African farming community. The smaller African communities in these areas, which also tend to rely on farming, are the Dajo, Bargo, Tama, Berno, Mahadi, Awlad Mana, Hawarah, and Darouk. As elsewhere in Darfur, Arab communities in West Darfur tend to be nomadic pastoralists or semi-pastoralists. The Arab clans present in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities are the Mahariya² and the Mahamid (which include the Awlad Zaid, Naja, Awlad Eid, and Awlad Janoub).

In January and April 2021, El Geneina town became the site of large-scale inter-communal violence, primarily between the Arab and Masalit communities. The violence in January was triggered by the killing of two Arab men, while the situation escalated in April after the killing of two Masalit men. During both periods, much of the violence was carried out by armed Arab men against Masalit communities living in predominantly Masalit neighborhoods or camps³ for internally displaced persons (IDPs), including Al Jabal neighborhood and Krinding I, Krinding II, Sultan House, and Abuzar camps. However, members of the Arab community have also been badly affected by violence, including in Al Jabal, where the Arab market was targeted. Other communities have been similarly impacted, particularly those considered to be African. In addition, monitoring of the situation outside of El Geneina town has revealed that rural areas close to El Geneina, especially in Beida locality, also suffered from violence during these periods.

Over 300 people have been killed in the fighting in 2021 alone, with about 200 people killed and 300 injured during the first episode of violence and 117 killed and 283 injured during the second (IOM/DTM). In January, the violence resulted in the displacement of approximately 110,000 people, both within El Geneina town and to Alsalam⁴ and Umsheijeria nomadic settlements in Kereneik locality. The violence in April resulted in the displacement of an additional 84,855 people (Inter-sector Rapid Needs Assessment in Al Jabal Area, Ag Geneina Town, West Darfur State, 29 April 2021).

2.1 Objectives of Peacebuilding Assessment

This peacebuilding assessment was carried out with the intention to better understand the causes of conflict in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities, which have become the major hotspots for violence in West Darfur since December 2019, and to identify potential

² The Mahariya is the tribe of General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or “Hemeti”, who is the Deputy Chairman of the Transitional Military Council and commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

³ Though colloquially called “camps”, these IDP sites are formal settlements within El Geneina town, where many IDPs have been living for over 10 years (OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021), thus highlighting the protracted nature of their displacement.

⁴ While officially called Alsalam, this village is called Keskedek by the Masalit community, since it was the site of Keskedek and Kuka villages before the displacement of the original inhabitants.

opportunities for peacebuilding programming in these areas. It therefore serves as a pilot for carrying out further such assessments in the context of humanitarian emergencies, with the purpose of strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and encouraging an integrated UN system response to humanitarian emergencies using a nexus approach.

The main objectives of this assessment are therefore:

- To examine conflict dynamics in West Darfur, with a locality-by-locality focus on El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida.
- To have a deeper understanding of the structural causes of conflict in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities, as well as the conflict drivers and triggers.
- To identify and analyze key stakeholders in the selected localities.
- To identify entry points for peacebuilding programming by the UN and its peacebuilding partners.

3.0 Methodology and Scope

3.1 Secondary Sources

The initial stages of this peacebuilding assessment involved a desk review of secondary sources and existing literature, including academic articles, reports, and recent assessments carried out by UN Agencies, including OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNDP. Data and statistics from these sources have been incorporated throughout this assessment.

3.2 Primary Data Collection

The data collection for this peacebuilding assessment was carried out by UNDP in March 2021, in collaboration with the University of Geneina's Institute for Peace and Development. The data collection therefore took place after the outbreak of intercommunal violence in January 2021, but before the further deterioration of the security situation in April 2021. 10 enumerators were deployed for data collection over a period of 15 days. Data was gathered through 40 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 67 key informant interviews (KIIs), which took place in the selected localities. Participatory Rapid Appraisals (PRA) and Participatory Learning Approaches (PLA) appropriate for community engagement and discussion of sensitive issues were used during the FGDs.

A total of 1,290 stakeholders (44% women; 33% youth; 32% nomads) participated in the FGDs, including community leaders, members of the Native Administration, members of resistance committees, representatives of women's and youth groups, religious leaders, nomads and government officials. A concerted effort was made to ensure that FGDs were conducted with all

the relevant tribes and communities, including IDPs and nomads. In Umsebekha and Geilo⁵ villages of El Geneina locality, nomadic pastoralist and farming communities were able to participate together in the FGDs. In other locations, the discussions were held separately.

A total of 67 KIIs (19% women; 36% nomads) were carried out with members of the Native Administration, government officials, academics, youth leaders, nomads and women’s leaders.

Close coordination with the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the Nomad Commission, community representatives, IDP youth, women’s groups, and resistance committees helped to facilitate the data collection process, despite tensions within and between communities. Data collection for this assessment encountered challenges such as lack of trust between communities, making it difficult to discuss matters related to peace and conflict. Access to the nomadic area of Umtajok in El Geneina locality had to be carried out through a third party assigned by the Nomad Commissioner.

Breakdown of KIIs and FGDs Per Locality				
Locality	Group	# of locations	KIIs	FGDs
El Geneina	IDP camps/gathering points	7	16	9
	Nomadic settlements	3	7	6
	Villages/non-displaced	14	31	16
Kreinek	IDP camps	2	4	3
	Nomadic settlements	1	3	1
	Villages/non-displaced	1	4	2
Beida	IDP camps	1	1	1
	Nomadic settlements	0	0	0
	Villages/non-displaced	1	1	2
Total		30	67	40

Refer to Annex 1 for Detailed List of Target Locations and Data collection demographics

3.3 Geographical Scope

In terms of geographical scope, this assessment is limited to El Geneina and Kereneik localities, and the Masteri Administrative Unit of Beida locality. In the case of Beida, Masteri was chosen as the focus of this assessment due to a recent history of conflict in the area, particularly in July 2020.

Villages, IDP camps, gathering points, and nomadic settlements were purposely selected based on representation and in order to ensure that perspectives of different communities would be

⁵ Unfortunately, Geilo village became the site of intercommunal violence on 18 May 2021, resulting in large-scale displacement of the Masalit inhabitants of this village into Chad.

reflected. Unfortunately, enumerators were unable to conduct FGDs with nomadic communities in the Masteri area of Beida locality. Thus, data collection amongst nomads from Masteri and Nyoro were only possible in El Geneina town through KIIs.

4.0 Historical Overview

The historical origins of conflict in Darfur are largely related to climate change, in combination with poor governance and economic underdevelopment. Desertification in the 1970s and 1980s led to severe droughts in western Sudan and Chad, culminating in a famine in 1984/85. The area that is now known as West Darfur was particularly affected due to the simultaneous influx of Chadian refugees (De Waal 1988). Desertification also compelled nomadic pastoralist groups in the northern part of Darfur, namely the Rizeigat Arabs, to move south towards West Darfur in search of pasture for their animals. This southward movement by nomadic communities, as well as the arrival of conflict- and drought-affected populations from Chad into West Darfur, placed unprecedented pressure on local resources and caused tensions to mount over access to water and land.

Political, economic, and social dynamics in West Darfur are closely linked to eastern Chad. The same tribal communities can be found on either side of the border, and politics, conflict, livelihoods opportunities, and kinship ties have resulted in the back-and-forth movement of populations from eastern Chad to Darfur. In addition, West Darfur has frequently served as a haven for Chadian rebels. The former Chadian president, Hissène Habré, for example, was exiled in El Geneina from 1979 to 1982, until his return to Chad to become President.

Indeed, according to the Small Arms Survey, many of the Arab leaders and politicians in West Darfur arrived from Chad between the 1960s and 1980s and allied themselves with the Sudanese authorities. In 1994, for example, Omar Al-Bashir's regime apparently "rewarded" the loyalty of these recent arrivals by "granting [them] newly created Amir positions in West Darfur's Native Administration" (Tubiani 2017). Even in the period between 2003 and 2008, Arabs from the Chadian side fled into West Darfur, where they were offered Sudanese citizenship and land belonging to non-Arab refugees and IDPs, in exchange for recruitment into armed groups (Tubiani 2017).

Customary land rights in Darfur, and its relationship to traditional governance structures and power, is also major contributing factor to conflict. As per the *hakura* system, land was allocated to settled tribes in specific territories and administered by traditional leaders from these tribes (i.e., the Native Administration). In the areas of El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities, land was considered communally owned by the Masalit tribe. Though nomadic pastoralists were able to utilize this land, and even settle on it, there were few pathways to "land ownership" by nomads, especially on land considered the historical homeland of other communities, such as the Masalit. Within the Native Administrative system, only the relatively low-ranking Sheikh could represent nomadic communities. Thus, over time, nomadic communities in Darfur, such as the Arabs, began to seek their own Native Administration system and right to land.

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the central government issued a series of legal and administrative changes, that would significantly complicate questions of land tenure and local governance in Darfur as a whole. The Unregistered Land Act of 1970 ensured that any unregistered land prior to the issuance of the act would be considered governmental land. This would later create room for the government allocate land to landless tribes. In 1971, through the Local Government Act, the central government abolished the Native Administration, temporarily creating a vacuum in land allocation and dispute resolution, until it was reinstated in Darfur in the 1980s (Tubiana et al. 2012).

However, it was the Emirate Act of 1995, issued by the Governor of West Darfur, that contributed directly to the outbreak of conflict. Through this act, the traditional homeland of the Masalit was divided into 13 different emirates, eight of which were allocated to Arab tribes. This weakened the authority of the Masalit Sultan and resulted in fragmentation of what was ‘Dar Masalit’ (Young et al. 2005). A strong attachment to the notion of a unique ‘Dar Masalit’ had apparently existed amongst the Masalit tribe since the British colonial period, during which ‘Dar Masalit’ served as the first experiment with Native Administration in Sudan (Kapteijns 1985).

Between 1995 to 1999, low-level conflict between Arab and Masalit communities of West Darfur erupted into large-scale violence, resulting in significant destruction and displacement. During this time, three reconciliation conferences were held in an attempt to halt the conflict – one in 1995, another in August 1996, and a third in November 1996 (Young et al. 2005). Finally, in 1999, the Arabs and Masalit signed a ‘comprehensive agreement’ over water, grazing, and land rights (IRIN News 1999). The agreement reportedly included the demarcation of migratory routes and establishment of a dispute resolution mechanism. Nonetheless, the wider Darfur conflict erupted in 2003, during which the central government further politicized what had started as local conflict over land and administration.

5.0 Locality-Level Profile

5.1 El Geneina Locality

As the capital of West Darfur, El Geneina town is the center for political, social, and economic activities in the state. The primary means of livelihoods for communities living in the locality, including El Geneina town, are farming and pastoralism. Even IDPs and nomads living in the urban center travel back and forth from the town to surrounding rural areas to carry out their farming and pastoral activities. Given El Geneina’s proximity to Chad, cross-border trade and smuggling, including by women, are also important income generators.

Since 2003, thousands of families have fled conflict in rural parts of West Darfur into El Geneina town, forming IDP camps such as Krinding I, Krinding II, Sultan House, and Abuzar. Repeated cycles of displacement and re-displacement due to the recent violence have also led to the emergence of 97 IDP gathering points throughout the town, where people come to seek physical security and humanitarian assistance. While the displacement of conflict-affected populations

into El Geneina is a consequence of recurrent violence, the long-term presence of IDPs in the town has, in turn, exacerbated existing conflict dynamics (See *Section 7.0 Stakeholder Analysis*). Thus, there is a narrative in El Geneina that displacement brought conflict from the rural areas into the town.

In turn, due to its centrality, both negative and positive dynamics within El Geneina can have significant impact and/or consequences beyond what constitutes the town itself. It is worth noting that, while conflict in West Darfur was historically more rampant in rural parts of the state, since the withdrawal of UNAMID, violence has become more concentrated in urban areas. For this reason, there is now a widespread perception amongst communities outside of El Geneina town that the current conflict is being generated in El Geneina and expanding into rural areas. Following the violence in January/February 2021, for example, interagency monitoring revealed that several villages in El Geneina and Beida localities were attacked and burned down in the same period, including returnee villages.⁶

While Nyoro village is administratively in El Geneina locality, it is only 10 km from Masteri in Beida locality. The village was upheld as an example of positive relations between the Masalit and Misiriyah Arab communities, and a site for refugee/IDP returns. However, following recent waves of violence it was reported that Nyoro was attacked and burnt, resulting in the displacement of its Masalit population to Masteri. Such incidents indicate that the conflict is now affecting areas that had otherwise remained stable.

Despite the predominance of the Masalit community in El Geneina, the town is diverse and people from many other communities live there, including but not limited to Zaghawa, Fur, Erenga, Tama, Bargo, Hawsa, and Fallata. Though the majority of IDPs are Masalit, those from other tribes, including Arabs, have also been displaced.

El Geneina town is composed of neighborhoods that are either “Masalit”, “Arab”, “mixed”, or “multiethnic”. Multiethnic neighborhoods are considered safer than other parts of the town, such as Alshaty neighborhood, which is reportedly home to nearly 30 different tribes. Neighborhoods that are home to primarily one or two communities, on the other hand, are perceived as more dangerous. Al Jabal neighborhood, for instance, was badly affected during the violence in April 2021 – though Al Jabal is considered “mixed” (i.e., home to both Masalit and Arab communities), the neighborhood is separated into residential blocks that are either Masalit or Arab. In addition, areas where Masalit and Arabs live in close proximity are viewed as more prone to violence. According to local sources, one of the reasons for which Krinding is often attacked is due to the location of a large Arab neighborhood, Um Duwain, directly north of

⁶ These include, but are not limited to, Wadi Nyala, Shoya, Kadado, and Anjimi returnee villages near the Chadian border, which were all found empty in February/March 2021. The inhabitants of these villages returned across the border to Chad, where many of them have refugee status.

Krinding. The proximity between the Masalit and Arab residents of this area therefore lead to incidents of violence.

Conversely, there is reportedly less conflict in the northern and eastern parts of El Geneina locality, where “nomads” are actually semi-settlers and own land, which was given to them under the *hakura* system. According to one commentator, nomadic Arabs in these areas respect the traditional system of land ownership because they benefit from it. Thus, nomadic Arabs from these areas are reportedly also invested in preventing attacks on communities. In addition, the tribal composition is considered “mixed”, with Erenga, Tama, and Maralit communities, as well as Arab and Masalit. In Umsebekha village, for example, while the Fursha is Masalit, the Umda is Erenga, and local mechanisms for peace and reconciliation by the Native Administration are seemingly respected by all communities.

5.2 Kereneik Locality

As the largest locality in West Darfur, Kereneik is considered to be diverse, with Masalit, Tama, Fur, Gimir, Bargo, Dajo, Hawarah, and Berno communities residing throughout the locality. The Masalit, however, are the majority. Nomadic Arab tribes present in Kereneik are the Awlad Janoub, Mahariya, Memah, Awlad Zaid and Naga. Kereneik is also home to the Mahadi Arab tribe, that owns land in the Umtazok village. As in Umsebekha village of El Geneina locality, the Mahadi Arabs in Umtazok were given land in accordance with the *hakura* system. Due to their proximity, many of the dynamics in rural parts of El Geneina locality are often found in rural areas of Kereneik as well.

According to the FGD participants, intercommunity relations in Kereneik town are better than in El Geneina, with disputes being resolved by the Fursha, or Native Administrator, in the absence of a formal court. In Habila Kanary village, communities use local conflict resolution mechanisms to mediate differences between nomads and farmers. The assessment team found that even predominantly Masalit mediators (composed of members of the Native Administration and local population) were able to reconcile two disputing Arab communities.

Meanwhile, in Mornei IDP settlement, nomads retain access to markets, and women from nomadic and IDP communities reportedly socialize with one another in these public spaces. Nevertheless, IDP women living in Mornei reported frequent cases of sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV), both inside and outside of the settlement.

Tensions between farming and nomadic communities still do exist throughout Kereneik, particularly in rural areas. According to interagency assessments, violence, looting, and displacement occurred in villages near Kereneik town, especially in January/February 2021, around the same period as the violence in El Geneina. For example, in February 2021, over 2,000 households were reportedly displaced to Kereneik town from surrounding villages, including Abu Neama, Mazrap, and Garna villages.

Conflict in Kereneik could be linked to three migratory routes passing through the locality. For example, two Arab nomadic settlements (Alsalam and Gimiza) have been established close to migratory routes on land that is claimed by Masalit farmers and IDPs, including members of the Krinding Victims' Committee in El Geneina. The Masalit state that Alsalam and Gimiza were Masalit villages prior to their displacement in the 2003 conflict and are therefore requesting the removal of these settlements from what they perceive to be occupied land. At the same time, Arabs in Alsalam and Gimiza clearly state that: (1) the contested land belongs to all communities and (2) they are seeking basic services from the government and humanitarian agencies. Though violence has not yet occurred in these locations, the contestation of land upon which nomads have settled and the accompanying rhetoric by both sides is contributing to the overall conflict dynamics, both in Kereneik and El Geneina.

5.3 Beida Locality – Masteri Administrative Unit

As in El Geneina and Kereneik, the Masalit are the majority tribe in Beida locality, with the Dajo, Bargo, Tama, and Barno as the smaller African tribes also present in the area. Nomadic Arab tribes in Beida are the Naga, Memah, and Misiriyah. The relationship between nomads, villagers, and IDPs in and around Masteri Administrative Unit is particularly antagonistic, for which reason this area was the focus of the assessment in Beida. A significant portion of the population living in Masteri town are reportedly IDPs from the surrounding areas, including Terbaba and Nyoro villages.

Much of conflict in Masteri is centered around access to water, firewood/grass, and land. Following the violence in El Geneina in January 2021, for example, an incident was reported during which an elderly woman was killed in a water-related dispute. Moreover, farmers in the Masteri area have indicated that armed men from the nomadic community are preventing their accessing to their farmland, which is considered particularly fertile in West Darfur. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, given Masteri's proximity to Chad (25km), attackers are easily able to flee across the border after a violent incident.

Since the eruption of intercommunal violence in Masteri in July 2020, which resulted in the displacement of 40,000 people, nomads have been unable to access Masteri village. At the same time, men living within Masteri village, of whom the majority are Masalit, have been unable to travel beyond a 2km radius. Events in July 2020 were reportedly triggered by the murder of a nomadic man from the Mema tribe. SGBV cases have apparently also contributed to further escalation of violent clashes between nomads and farming communities in the area, due to confrontations after such events. Importantly, the handover of the UNAMID team site in Masteri to the Sudanese government allegedly also increased tensions in the area because the land on which the team site was situated is claimed by Masalit landowners.

The FGDs also indicated that there is significant mistrust between the residents of Masteri and joint Sudanese-Chadian forces stationed in Masteri village as a part of the mixed border forces. Local residents reportedly believe that attacks on Masteri have come from the direction of the

base where the forces are positioned. Moreover, the local authority structure at community level is considered weak. Since July 2020, the Masteri Administrative Unit remains without any governmental representation after the local government officer left the area following intercommunal clashes. FGD participants stressed that the local government has been unable to support traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and has not shown adequate efforts to strengthen social relations between the disputing communities. It is of note that as this report was being compiled, on 19 May 2021, members of the Masteri Peaceful Co-existence Committee signed a document for peaceful coexistence, including Masalit and Arab communities. The process was entirely community driven and is a significant milestone. While it is not yet clear how this will affect the conflict in and around Masteri, the local agreement includes references to opening up of the market, protection of crops, and securing of roads in and out of Masteri so could provide a basis for moving forward.

6.0 Situation Profile

6.1 Security Situation

According to FGD participants, one of the main reasons for this insecurity in El Geneina is an increased rate of criminality linked to the proliferation of arms and trafficking of drugs, such as Tramadol. Oftentimes, incidents of criminality can lead to personal or business-related disputes, including between traffickers and consumers, which can then escalate into wider campaigns of violence. It appears that youth from both Arab and Masalit communities, including IDPs, are involved in the drug trade (See *Section 6.4 Social Situation*). There have also been allegations that the security forces are involved. Drug trafficking has led to violence clashes within the IDP camps, including Abuzar IDP camp (which was the target of recent violence). While weapons proliferation was considered an issue in both El Geneina and Masteri, FGD participants in Kereneik did not mention it as a problem.

Participants and interviewees also identified weak law enforcement institutions as contributing to the deteriorating security situation. For instance, when a conflict erupts, security forces are usually delayed in their responses, which results in an escalation of violence. Some participants further accused the security forces, namely the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), of complicity in violence and intentionally delaying their responses.

According to the KIIs, the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) has contributed to increased positioning by armed actors who are not signatory to the Agreement, including amassing of weapons and recruitment of youth into armed groups. It is generally acknowledged in El Geneina, for example, that the Masalit – who do not feel represented by the JPA – have heavily armed themselves following the repeated violence in 2020 and 2021.

Separately, some interviewees mentioned the armed group, Tamazuj, as a major contributing factor to insecurity. Led by Yasser Mohammad Hassan Bakhit⁷, Tamazuj, which is also known as

⁷ International Crisis Group, 23 February 2021, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/b168-sudans-new-peace-agreement_0.pdf.

the ‘Third Front’, is one of the armed groups that constitutes the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and is signatory to the JPA.⁸ The group is apparently recruiting from the Arab community and has alleged links to former members of the state security apparatus, and even the current government. At the time of data collection, Tamazuj was only mentioned in locations where the movement allegedly has training camps, in the areas east of Masteri and in the northern part of El Geneina, near Al Riyadh IDP camp.⁹ Since then, Tamazuj has steadily become more prominent in the conflict dynamics of El Geneina town and is referred to frequently by community members.

In the more rural areas – thus locations outside El Geneina town, including in Kereneik and Beida localities – tensions and clashes between nomadic pastoralist and farming communities continue to contribute to the overall insecurity (*See Section 6.3 Economic Situation*).

Recent reports indicate that some of the security incidents taking place are being carried out by attackers from outside the local communities. Interlocutors indicate that “armed nomads” are coming from outside of West Darfur (or more specifically, El Geneina, Kereinik, and Beida) and targeting farming communities. Thus, though locations such as Nyoro were previously examples of peaceful coexistence between nomads and farmers, it appears that such locations are under threat from external attacks. Further information needs to be gathered on this issue.

6.2 Political Situation

According to the FGDs and KIIs, the existing conflict is currently being exacerbated by political competition, including between supporters of the National Congress Party (NCP), which is the party of former President Omar Al-Bashir, and supporters of Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). This particularly impacts the situation in El Geneina, which is the political stronghold of West Darfur.

In the KIIs, NCP leaders and affiliates were accused of being behind the sit-ins and blockade organized by the Arab tribes in Nasim area of El Geneina following the attacks on Krinding II in January 2021. Despite the end of the sit-ins in February 2021, those behind the protests continue to demand the removal of Mohamed El Doma, the Wali of West Darfur, who is a member of the Masalit community and was appointed after the 2019 Revolution. Some local communities in El Geneina view the current political deadlock as an attempt by the military component of the transitional government to appoint a military governor in West Darfur. Members of the FFC have insisted on the continuation of the current Wali in his post.

⁸ “Third Front: New Government will be Formed within a Week,” 21 November 2020, <https://www.suna-news.net/read?id=697450>.

⁹ Tamazuj is referred to as “a group from the West Kordofan and Darfur border areas”, and apparently won two seats in the national legislative council during South Sudanese mediation on power sharing in the transitional government (<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/peace-mediators-propose-power-sharing-compromise-between-sudan-s-armed-groups>).

The Arab community in El Geneina is itself considered divided between the Mahariya and the Mahamid (supporters of Musa Hilal). There is apparently strong support for Musa Hilal amongst Arabs in El Geneina, since many are originally from North Darfur, which is a Musa Hilal stronghold. Since those behind the sit-in were primarily from the Mahamid clan, overtures in February by the RSF Deputy Commander, made little impact. However, divisions between the Mahariya and the Mahamid have reportedly been reconciled with the release of Musa Hilal in March 2021¹⁰.

There is a general sense in El Geneina that IDPs do not feel represented by the JPA. There is strong support amongst IDPs, for example, for the non-signatory armed movements, New Justice and Equality Movement (NJEM)¹¹ and the Al-Hilu faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)¹². Their refutation of the JPA was particularly evident during a visit by Dr. Gibril Ibrahim, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning and leader of the signatory Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), to El Geneina on 20 March 2021. During his visit, Dr. Ibrahim stated that people should not consider the territory in West Darfur as the homeland of one community or another, specifying that it should not be considered as either 'Dar Masalit' or 'Dar Rizeigat.' However, his comments were widely condemned by supporters of NJEM and SPLM-N (Al-Hilu faction), as well as supporters of the Al Rayah faction of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA-Al Rayah).¹³

6.3 Economic Situation

As elsewhere in Darfur, communities in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities tend to rely on farming (both subsistence and commercial) and pastoral activities (i.e. livestock production) as a means of livelihoods. Traditionally, the relationship between farming and pastoral or semi-pastoral communities was mutually dependent. Nevertheless, access to farming and pastoral land is a root cause of conflict, with communities conflicting over the seasonal migration of livestock by nomadic pastoralists, the expansion of farming areas, the delineation of migratory corridors, and the destruction of crops by livestock. In some areas, such as Masteri in Beida locality, access to water points by nomads and their livestock has also become a point of contention. Conflict over farming and pastoral lands is particularly prominent from October to

¹⁰ "Sudan: RSF Lt Gen 'had hand in Musa Hilal release", 15 March 2021, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-rsf-lt-gen-had-hand-in-musa-hilal-release>.

¹¹ A breakaway faction of JEM, NJEM is led by Mansour Arbab Younis (known as 'Mansour'), who issued a rejection of the JPA in October 2020 (Source: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/rebel-factions-reject-distorted-sudan-peace-agreement>). Of note, Mansour is from Masteri in Beida locality.

¹² Though based in South Kordofan, Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, who is the current chairperson of the SPLM-N (Al-Hilu faction), is a member of the Masalit tribe, and therefore enjoys strong support from members of the Masalit community in West Darfur, particularly amongst IDPs.

¹³ SLA-Al Rayah is led by Dr. Al Rayah Mahmood, who was the former deputy of Minni Minawi, until their split over Minnawi's signing of the JPA. Dr. Al Rayah is a member of the Masalit tribe, and also enjoys support amongst IDPs and the Masalit community in West Darfur.

December, during the harvest season, and from June to July, during the rainy season when land is being cultivated.

In all three areas targeted by this assessment, access by farmers (including IDP farmers) to their farmland has been hindered by armed men from nomadic communities, thus resulting in their reliance on humanitarian assistance. Within El Geneina town, some commercial activities have also halted in neighborhoods that have been burned down by recent violence, namely Krinding I, Krinding II, and Abuzar IDPs camps, thus further impacting already displaced populations and forcing them to rely on humanitarian aid.

Similarly, access to markets has become a flashpoint for intercommunal violence. Since July 2020, for example, nomads have been unable to enter Masteri, which has impacted their access to livestock markets upon which they are economically reliant. In addition, prior to the most recent bout of violence in April 2021, Arabs in El Geneina were unable to access the market in Abuzar IDP camp, which resulted in significant grievances, and may have contributed to Abuzar being targeted during the April 2021 violence.

According to nomadic youth, beyond smuggling, there are very few livelihoods' opportunities for young people from nomadic communities. This is related to challenges such as widespread livestock deaths. Nomadic Arab youth from El Geneina also stated that basic services available for their communities are very poor and discussed the need for vocational training. They further indicated that they are not receiving positions in the government, and that the UN and other humanitarian organizations do not hire many Arab staff.

Women being interviewed focused on the need for income generating activities and capital to start small businesses.

6.4 Social Situation

Nearly three decades of conflict in West Darfur has contributed to dismantling the social fabric between communities and resulting in persistent narratives such as "Arab versus Masalit", "nomad versus farmer", or "nomad versus IDP". This includes the stereotyping of different tribes, including the labelling of Arabs as "new settlers" or "janjaweed" and derogatory speech towards Africans, such as "zurga" (black) or "abid" (slave). Africans are also referred to as "Nuba" or "ambay" (another word for slave, used in Chad).

While racialized messaging has been present in the Darfur conflict since 2003, according to the FGDs, this type of discourse is increasing in El Geneina locality and Masteri. In El Geneina town, for instance, skin color and tribe can now determine access to markets and certain neighborhoods. Stabbings and killings based on race have become progressively more common, especially in markets. As can be seen by the episodes of inter-communal violence in 2021, such acts of criminality have the potential to escalate into large-scale conflict.

In combination with feelings of injustice, persistent grievances based on community and tribe are contributing to incidents of racially motivated revenge, which in turn result in collective

punishment by one community against another. This can, in part, explain the extreme levels of violence against predominantly Masalit IDPs in January and April 2021. This cycle of violence has reportedly caused both Masalit and Arab communities to heavily arm themselves.

El Geneina town, in particular, is host to a large number of families who have persistently lived through cycles of violence and displacement. Some IDP youth who have grown up in this context have joined gangs locally known as “Colombia”, and have been known to be hostile towards Arabs in the Algamarek and Abuzar areas of El Geneina. While most of these youth are reportedly Masalit, some are also young Arab men, including one of the gang leaders. Other members are young men coming from states such as East Darfur.

Interestingly, some of these young Masalit IDPs reportedly enjoy positive relations with members of Arab community due to their mutual involvement in the drug trade between the markets in Abuzar IDP camp and Al Jabal neighborhood. On the other hand, the targeting of Arabs by some “Colombia” members, particularly in Abuzar, has resulted in retaliation against IDPs by armed men from the Arab community. Some Arab youth interviewed for this assessment indicated that they were “afraid” of coming into El Geneina, in part due to “Colombia”, and stated that relations between Masalit and Arab youth are particularly bad at this time.

There appears to be a growing sense of Masalit nationalism amongst IDPs in West Darfur, based on the historical idea of a ‘Dar Masalit’ and Masalit ownership over this territory. There are now also open discussions about the independence of ‘Dar Masalit’, and this originally historical term is becoming increasingly politicized and polarizing.

Despite the deterioration of social cohesion, grassroots attempts at intercommunity reconciliation, including youth clubs in Al Jabal area of El Geneina town, have been bringing different communities together for dialogue.

7.0 Stakeholder Analysis

This stakeholder analysis is intended to identify the key actors in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities that influence or are influenced by the conflict, how they interconnect, and how they strengthen peace opportunities or exacerbate conflict. While most of following stakeholders were identified through the FGDs and KIIs, additional stakeholders have been included. This stakeholder analysis is by no means exhaustive.

Stakeholder	Key Representatives	Positions	Needs	Capacities for Conflict	Capacities for Peace
Nomadic Arab Communities (Mahamid, Mahariya, Miseriya)	-RSF -Nomad Commission	-Gaining access to land ownership -Securing migratory routes for passage of livestock	-Parity with traditionally landowning communities, or those with a homeland/‘dar’	-Recruitment into armed militias -Support from RSF -Strong links between different clans, including in other parts of Darfur	-Strong representation at the national level of government -Strong links between different clans,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to natural resources -Access to services for livestock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Representation in governance structures at the local level -Equal access to natural resources -Options for settlement in the case that nomadic lifestyles no longer serve their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Capacity for rapid mobilization -Unified tribal leadership structure in both urban and rural areas -Distrust of international community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including in other parts of Darfur -Capacity for rapid mobilization -Unified tribal leadership structure in both urban and rural areas
Masalit Farming Communities (including IDPs and Victims' Committees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sultan of the Masalit -Wali of West Darfur -Resistance committees -Krinding Victims' Committee -Al Jabal Victims' Committee -IDP Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to land for farming purposes -Access to basic services -Justice for past/ongoing conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Safety and security for their community -For IDPs/refugees, sustainable return to areas of origin or integration into current locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Distrust of government security forces -Heavily armed youth who do not listen to Native Administration -Masalit nationalism -Not organized under one leadership (community is quite divided) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strong representation in local government (including at the state level) -High levels of education -Long history of engagement with international community -Strong sense of communal identity
Sudanese refugees in Chad and returnees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Refugees in Chad -Returnees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to land for farming purposes -Access to basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -For refugees, sustainable return to areas of origin -For returnees, provision of safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structures representing refugees and returnees are not unified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seeking support from the international community
State-Level Government Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -State government officials, such as the Wali, Deputy Wali, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They indicate that they want to see restoration of peace and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Maintaining their power and authority at the state-level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communities have lost confidence in their ability to respond to repeated cycles of violence -Nomadic community has insisted for the resignation of the Wali -Limited control of security forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The official counterparts for the international community -Provision of security for IDPs, especially after most recent round of violence
Native Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sultan of the Masalit -Fursha -Amir -Omda -Demlige -Sheikh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have positive relations with government authorities -Want to see restoration of peace and security in their jurisdictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Maintaining their power and authority at the political/administrative level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accused by youth of being politically manipulated -Unable to prevent violence by members of their tribes -Accused of corruption -Some members of the Native Administration are quite hardline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Retain power over land allocation and conflict/dispute resolution, including through the Ajaweed (or mediation) Councils (customary law) -Moderating influence
Resistance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinator s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to land -Access to basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Change in status quo -Opportunities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can be quite hardline in terms of demands. -Capacity to incite violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Influential amongst the youth, particularly Masalit youth

(Newly emerged as a key actor during and after the 2019 Revolution)	-Area Representatives -Committee Members	-Justice for past/ongoing conflicts	-Freedom and respect of human rights		-Dynamic and looking for change to the existing status quo
Arab Youth at Community level	-Grassroots community initiatives for peace (Alwan) -RSF -Tamazuj	-Livelihoods' opportunities -Recruitment into security forces -Demonstration of strength and masculinity	-Opportunities for education and livelihoods -Sense of empowerment and inspiration outside of armed groups, militias, security forces -Representation at political level	-Main source of recruits for the Rapid Security Forces (RSF), Tamazuj, and other armed actors -Poor relations with Masalit youth, especially in El Geneina town	-Reportedly involved in grassroots peace initiatives in El Geneina -Seeking livelihoods and other positive opportunities
Masalit Youth at Community Level	-Grassroots community initiatives for peace (Sudanese Civil Society) -Resistance committees -"Colombia" gangs	-Livelihoods' opportunities -Demonstration of strength and masculinity	-Sense of empowerment and inspiration outside of armed groups, militias, security forces -Representation at political level	-Source of recruits for armed groups and gangs -Poor relations with Arab youth, especially in El Geneina town	-Involved in grassroots peace initiatives in El Geneina
Non-Arab and Non-Masalit Communities	-Native Administration -Community leaders	-Access to basic services -Also interested in land ownership	-Political representation -Parity with other communities	-Tribal alliances (e.g. Tama and Arab) -Interest in land ownership	-Areas where non-Arab and non-Masalit communities live tend to be safer -Mediate between Arab and Masalit communities (perceived as neutral)
Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	-RSF state leadership	-Provision of security	-Land -Political representation -Power	-Considered to be one of the primary conflict actors -Accused of violations, especially against the Masalit community -Unresponsive to attacks against Masalit, and accused of participating in the violence -Not trusted by non-Arab communities	-Could be security providers to communities
Tamazuj (The Third Front)	-Tamazuj leadership	-JPA signatory	-Potentially wants to benefit from the DDR process indicated in the JPA	-Recently involved in much of the violence in El Geneina, including an armed standoff with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) at the Al Arbyba market on 17 May -Not trusted by IDPs	-Signatory of JPA

				-Allegedly recruiting from Arab community	
Central Reserve Police (CRP)	-CRP leadership	-Provision of security		-Their presence is not reliable, and police posts and checkpoints are often found abandoned -Limited capacity and training -Not trusted by Arab communities because they allegedly recruit only from African tribes	-Their presence requested by non-Arab communities for protection and security
Religious Leaders at Community level	-Imams -Religious Sheikhs	-They indicate that they want to see restoration of peace and security	-Influence peaceful coexistence amongst disputing communities	-Some religious leaders have been accused of being spoilers	-Could play a positive role in mitigating violence by preaching about religious values in mosques and urging reconciliation
Women's Groups	-Women groups	-Livelihoods' opportunities -Safety and security	-Political representation and inclusion in political processes	-Encouragement of youth to join conflict (e.g. traditional singers (<i>hakamat</i>) and encouragement of men to join the RSF and travel to Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen for financial incentives)	-Could encourage youth to refrain from joining armed groups or participating in conflict
National Congress Party (NCP)	-Members of the Native Administration -Members of the former regime	-They indicate that they want to see restoration of peace and security	-Retention of power	-Members of the NCP and the previous regime have been accused of being behind the recent violence in El Geneina	-Negative perception on international agencies
Non-signatory armed groups -NJEM -SPLM-N (Al Hilu Faction) -SLA-AI Rayah	-NJEM -SPLM-N-AI Hilu -SLA-AI Rayah	-Non-signatories of JPA -Separation of state and religion (SPLM-N AI Hilu)	If these groups could be brought into JPA, then they could influence their supporters in West Darfur to opt for more peaceful measures	-Significant influence in communities in West Darfur, especially the Masalit and IDPs, to not support the JPA -Ongoing recruitment	-On 28 March 2021, Al Hilu signed an agreement with the Sudanese government on the separation of religion and state, bringing him one step closer to the JPA

8.0 Structural Factors and Conflict Drivers

During the FGDs and KIIs, intercommunal, land and natural resource, political, and criminal conflicts were identified as the most prominent types of conflict in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities. Interestingly, a general trend was that members of the Masalit community do not speak of “intercommunal conflict”, but instead talk about “criminality”, “injustice”, and

“politics” as the main contributors to conflict. When speaking to members of the Arab community, it seems that there is more reference to the “intercommunal” aspects of conflict, as well as a tendency to couch violence in terms of “revenge” and economic grievances.

8.1 Structural Factors

In general, the structural factors behind conflict in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities identified through the FGDs and KIIs are the following: weak governance and basic service provision, competition over natural resources, unresolved issues of land tenure, and perceptions of marginalization.

1. Weak governance and basic service provision:

Throughout Darfur, the Government of Sudan has been unable to protect civilians, provide basic services, and create an inducive environment for investment and economic development. As per the FGDs and KIIs, the lack of access to basic services by communities, however, is one of the primary causes of conflict. Members of nomadic Arab communities have cited access to water, electricity, and healthcare among their demands. In addition, lack of education amongst rural nomadic youth has contributed to limited livelihoods opportunities and their subsequent recruitment into armed groups or militias.

The absence of state authorities from their designated jurisdictions has also contributed to the government’s inability to respond to its citizens’ needs, including through basic service delivery. The absence of the local government officer from Masteri Administrative Unit, for example, was cited as one reason for why traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have been ineffective in the Masteri area.

2. Climate change and competition over natural resources:

As a result of climate change and environmental degradation, land is one of the key issues at the heart of conflict throughout Darfur. In rural areas, the use of land for agriculture versus livestock grazing is a major point of contention between farming and nomadic pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities. Due to environmental pressures, such as drought and desertification, the seasonal movements of nomadic communities and their livestock from the north, through West Darfur, and towards the south, no longer follows previously established migratory patterns. Nomads therefore move into the area with their animals in October instead of February, when farmers have still not finished harvesting. This necessitates the further demarcation of migratory corridors for seasonal transhumance to prevent the destruction of crops by livestock.

In some cases, patterns of migration have changed completely. Outside of El Geneina town, for example, some nomadic Arab communities originating from North Darfur have reportedly been pushed south by climate change and disputes with Zaghawa pastoralists. Rather than returning north during the rainy season, they instead stay with their livestock in the vicinity of El Geneina. This inevitably places more pressure on local resources, such as land and water.

Conflict over natural resources also includes access to water points, including in and around Masteri. For nomadic communities, water points are necessary not only for their community members, but for their livestock as well. In addition, trees are another resource over which there is some competition, since they are the source of firewood and charcoal, which generate income for IDPs, refugee returnees, and nomads.

3. Unresolved issue of land tenure:

Linked to issues of farming and livestock grazing is that of land tenure and ownership, or the *hakura* system. According to IDP participants of the FGDs, the government's redistribution of land for housing, farming, and investment has been a root cause of conflict. For mainly farming communities who have a history of land ownership, such as the Masalit, adherence to the *hakura* system is considered an important foundation for peaceful coexistence. Communities that did not traditionally benefit from the *hakura* system through land ownership, such as nomadic Arabs, have been accused of occupying land belonging to those displaced by conflict starting in 2003. During seasonal returns, IDPs and refugees often find other communities living on and utilizing their land, who then deny them access to this land for farming purposes.

For nomadic Arabs, however, a return to the pre-conflict status quo would likely be untenable since it did not afford them a systematic method of owning and settling on land. For example, while most landowners outside of El Geneina town are Masalit, many Arabs are now farming as well, including on land originally belonging to IDPs and refugees. The narrative of some Arab communities is that this land was empty, and that they themselves would have nowhere to go if removed. For this reason, some members of nomadic Arab communities are requesting that the land be divided, including through appeals to the Masalit Sultan.

However, to members of the Masalit tribe, much of the contested land can only be inherited and even the Sultan does not have the power to redistribute it. There is a general perception that, while Arabs should have the right to use land for grazing animals, farming, and settling in towns, they should not be claiming ownership of territory in 'Dar Masalit'. Thus, it appears that, for the Masalit, there is a need to recognize that the overall territory belongs to the Masalit, even by those Arabs who do own or utilize land.

The matter is further complicated by the issue of 'old settlements' versus 'new settlements.' According to some IDPs, their dispute is with nomadic Arab settlers coming from Chad and North Darfur, rather than those who were already living in West Darfur before the start of the conflict in 2003. In particular, their grievances stem from the previous regime's deliberate policy of settling Arabs from countries such as Chad in Darfur, including West Darfur, as well as the intentional Arabization of local land ownership, including the utilization of Arab village names, rather than the older Masalit village names, in government land registries.

The dispute over land tenure slightly differs between urban and rural contexts. Within El Geneina town, for example, much of the tensions over land are related to Krinding and Abuzar IDP camps. The land upon which Krinding has been established was originally demarcated and allocated (i.e.

sold) to community members in El Geneina who still retain the registration papers/titles to this land. Following the 2003 conflict, IDPs from suburban and rural areas arrived and settled on this land, since there was no one visibly residing on it. Thus, the government will have to either relocate the Krinding IDPs or compensate the original landowners to allow the IDPs to reside there peacefully. Abuzar camp, on the other hand, was established on government land, which the government is now reportedly claiming for the purpose of investment.

4. Perceptions of marginalization:

According to FGD participants, perceptions of marginalization based on very real inequalities is a root cause of conflict in West Darfur. Limited economic development, unequal exploitation of natural resources, and absence of public and private investment in Darfur have resulted in all communities to feel marginalized by the central government.

Certain tribes, including the Masalit, feel politically unrepresented and neglected at the national level, for which reason they were strong supporters of the 2019 Revolution. Generally speaking, these sentiments of marginalization amongst the Masalit may have been fueled by their perceived lack of representation in the JPA. At the same time, Arabs from West Darfur report feeling politically unrepresented at the state and local levels. This was evident by the sit-in organized by some Arab communities in El Geneina in January and February 2021, during which they demanded the resignation of the current Wali, who is Masalit, in favor of a governor who is neither Masalit nor Arab.

The inability of the government to provide basic services to its citizens in West Darfur feeds into perceptions of marginalization, particularly amongst nomadic Arab communities, who have also accused the UN and the humanitarian community of bias.

8.2 Conflict Drivers

The following are some of the conflict drivers identified by the FGD participants and KIIs interviewees, which contribute to perpetuating violence in the already fragile context.

1. Absent or biased security forces:

For most FGD participants and KIIs interviewees, a primary conflict driver is the absence of security forces and weak rule of law institutions, resulting in poor law enforcement, ineffective justice system, and impunity. Security forces are either unable or unwilling to intervene during attacks against civilians or other incidents of violence, in some cases allowing the violence to continue for days. Participants and interviewees also pointed towards a lack of police training on basic policing practices, human rights, and gender issues.

The participants and interviewees also accused the security forces of tribalism. Government recruitment of Arab youth into the RSF, at the exclusion of other tribes, was mentioned as an issue. Indeed, the RSF has been accused of involvement in the violence, especially against the Masalit. Meanwhile, members of Arab communities in El Geneina stated that recruitment for the

Central Reserve Police is from primarily non-Arab communities, causing the police to be biased against them.

2. Lack of justice and weak rule of law:

FGD participants in El Geneina also discussed the absence and/or ineffectiveness of the judiciary and prosecution as contributing to conflict. For example, participants accused the West Darfur State prosecution office of leaking the names of the complainants and witnesses following violence in Krinding I in January 2020 to the alleged perpetrators. The complainants and witnesses were reportedly offered monetary restitution in exchange for withdrawing their cases, and those who refused were allegedly killed in this year's violence. Beyond West Darfur, FGD participants accused Sudan's Attorney General, Tag el-Sir el-Hibir, of being influenced by military elements in the federal government, and therefore delaying the prosecution of those accused of committing crimes in West Darfur.

3. Criminality and proliferation of arms:

General criminality, such as drug trafficking, and the proliferation of arms are seen as conflict drivers, resulting in disputes that can escalate into wider intercommunal violence. The proximity to the Chadian border has facilitated both drug trafficking the ability to disseminate and access arms. In addition, FGD participants and KIIs interviewees suggested that the JPA has enabled members of armed movements to return to West Darfur, thus causing an increase in the possession of weapons (See *Section 6.1 Security Situation* and *Section 6.4 Social Situation*).

4. Weakened role of the Native Administration:

According to FGD participants, the Native Administration is considered biased and politicized, therefore holding less influence amongst local communities. Opposing perspectives on the Native Administration were particularly evident within the Masalit community, namely between IDP youth, who make up the resistance committees, and members of the Native Administration, such as the Masalit Sultan, who are accused of being too close to the NCP. During the data collection, this division was particularly evident in El Geneina and Masteri towns. Masalit youth representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the Native Administration, who they feel are being used politically by the NCP through provision of money and vehicles.

The frequent physical absence of key members of the Native Administration from West Darfur, such as the Masalit Sultan, further contributes to a weakening of their role. Given the Native Administration's reduced influence, especially amongst youth, its capacity to mediate disputes and conflicts appears diminished.

According to interviewees, the Native Administration was already weakened by the Sudanese government's decision in 1994 to upgrade and appoint Arab Omdas to Amirs, which was contrary to historical and cultural traditions. Prior to this development, only the sons of Sultans could be Amirs.

5. Cycles of displacement:

Cycles of conflict-related displacement and re-displacement amongst IDPs and Sudanese refugees is a key contributor to continued violence, including at a psychosocial level. In El Geneina, some IDP youth, having been raised in the context of repeated violence and displacement, have begun to perpetrate violence through acts of criminality, including by joining gangs such as 'Colombia' (See *Section 6.4 Social Situation*).

Not only does persistent displacement exacerbate grievances amongst the affected communities, it also places pressure on the locations to which populations are fleeing, including on the provision of basic services such as housing, water, health, and education. In El Geneina and Masteri, for instance, most public buildings have been occupied by IDPs following recent attacks.

6. Recruitment of youth into armed movements

The recruitment of youth into armed groups, such as Tamazuj, and militias was also identified as a conflict driver by the FGD participants. This applies to ongoing recruitment of both Arab and Masalit youth (See *Section 6.1 Security Situation*).

9.0 Recommendations for Peacebuilding Programming

Despite substantial efforts by humanitarian agencies and organizations to address the ongoing violence in El Geneina, Kereneik, and Beida localities, a more comprehensive, unified, and strategic approach towards peacebuilding is needed for the entirety of West Darfur. Ideally, this process would be led by UNITAMS and supported by UN Agencies, Funds, and Programs (AFPs).

One persistent request made by conflict-affected communities in El Geneina, including during data collection for this assessment, is the redeployment of international forces for the Protection of Civilians (POC). The UN system therefore needs to work together in order to decrease community expectations that international forces could be redeployed to Darfur.

The following are some potential ideas for peacebuilding programming in the locations targeted by this assessment:

1. Direct engagement by UNITAMS and other peacebuilding actors with local authorities and communities in El Geneina, who are frequently requesting peacebuilding support from the international community.
2. Use of the UNITAMS good offices functions to mediate between local actors and authorities including by providing support to the Conflict Resolution and Mediation Committee.
3. Enhance engagement with women's organizations at the subnational levels, and explore potential opportunities for women's inclusion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities.

4. Building on grassroots peacebuilding efforts that encourage confidence building, advocacy, and dialogue between disputing communities, especially between Masalit and Arab youth.
5. Community perception studies to better understand the lack of community support for the JPA in parts of West Darfur, including amongst IDPs. This would strengthen the design and implementation of any potential JPA dissemination activities by the UN and its partners.
6. Engagement at West Darfur-level with leaders and communities who feel sidelined by the JPA, including supporters of NJEM, SPLM-N (Al-Hilu faction), and SLA-Al Rayah.
7. Advocating for safe access to markets by all communities, including through unarmed observers/community policing to monitor that markets remain open and usable by all communities.
8. Comprehensive neighborhood-by-neighborhood programming in El Geneina town, based on urgent peacebuilding needs, including:
 - a. Establishment of permanent police stations in Al Jabal, Krinding, and Algemarek areas.
 - b. Establishment of water sources in key parts of Al Jabal neighborhood, to prevent disputes over access to water between Masalit and Arab communities.
 - c. Community reconciliation committees in neighborhoods of El Geneina where Masalit and Arab communities live close to one another, including between Krinding and Um Duwein neighborhood to its north.
 - d. Livelihoods support, such as vocational training and provision of microcredit, including for young men and women.
9. Outreach and dissemination of the Juba Peace Agreement to ensure that communities understand that this includes provisions that could address their grievances.
10. Advocating for national-level land reform to support sustainable solutions to unresolved issues of land tenure. This can also include capacitating the Land Commission and supporting its initiatives at the subnational levels, such as monetary compensation for individuals who have lost their land. Without the resolution of land issues, the achievement of durable solutions for IDPs and Sudanese refugees in Chad will not be possible.
11. Continuation of projects to demarcate livestock migratory routes and maintaining that these routes stay open.
12. Strengthening the state-, locality-level, and administrative unit judiciaries, including through increased capacity building for judges and other judicial officials.
13. Development-oriented programming for nomadic communities, based on their requirements, including improved health facilities and training of midwives. This is particularly important considering accusations that the UN system in El-Geneina is biased against nomads and excludes them from humanitarian assistance. Any infrastructure support for nomadic communities would have to be mindful of the sensitivities around housing, land, and property (HLP) issues.
14. Creation of safe spaces can also help to address issues such as tribalism and hate speech.

15. Mental health support for 'at-risk' youth, including in IDP camps in El Geneina, to reduce youth recruitment into gangs and militias.
16. In Masteri Administrative Unit, supporting the drilling of boreholes or construction of water wells for both humans and livestock, and facilitating the establishment of water management committees to reduce intercommunal tensions related to water access.
17. Increase in activities to protect animals owned by both nomadic and farming communities, such as veterinary services.
18. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program for areas targeted by this assessment.
19. Supporting platforms for citizen engagement with local authorities to advocate for good governance, anti-corruption, delivery of basic services, and POC.
20. Construction of returnees' homes using sustainable and durable materials in order to enable returns.
21. Activation of forest protection laws to prevent overcutting of trees for charcoal, firewood, and bricks production, and exploration of alternative forms of energy for local communities to utilize that can also reap peacebuilding dividends.

Annex 1: Detailed List of Target Locations and Data collection demographics

Locality	Community Type	Location	Key Informant Interviews				Focus Group Discussions						
			M	F	Nomads	Total	Number of FGDs	M	F	Nomads	Youth	Total	
El Geneina	IDP Sites and Gathering Points	Abuzar	3			3	1	17	5	0	6	22	
		Al Riyadh	1	1		2	1	7	30		10	37	
		Dorti	1	1		2	1	20	10		7	30	
		Ardamta	2	1		3	2	5	25			30	
		Disabled Gathering Point	2			2	2	10	40		20	50	
		Al Gadima School	2			2	1	5	50		15	55	
		Al Zahra School	2			2	1	17	10		11	27	
	Nomadic Settlements	Gukori	2		2	2	2	40	20	100	30	60	
	Neighborhoods in El Geneina	Al Thourwra	1	2		3	1	20	8		8	28	
		Al Jabal (Non-displaced)	1	1		2	1	20	15		10	35	
		Al Jabal (Nomads)	2	1	1	3	1	20	0	20	7	20	
		Al Kifah	1	1		2	1	20	10		12	30	
		Ardamta	1	1		2	1	17	12		9	29	
		Al Riyadh	2	1		3	1	20	7		7	27	
		Aburandi/Nomi	1	1	2	2	1	25	20		20	45	
	Villages Outside El Geneina town (Non-displaced, IDPs, and Nomads)	Al Nasaim	1	1	2	2	2	20		20		20	
		Moli	2			2	1	30	10		16	40	
		Gokar (Non-displaced)	2			2	1	16	40			56	
		Gokar (Nomads)	2		2	2	1	30	0	25	12	30	
		Geilo	2		1	2	2	30	20	15	7	50	
Nyoro		2		2	2	1	15	20		10	35		
Kereneik	Neighborhoods in Kereneik town	Kereneik town (IDPs)	2			2	2	25	30		20	55	
		Kereneik town (Nomads)	2	1	3	3	1	17	0	7	3	17	
	Nomadic Settlements	Umsheijeria	2		2	2	2	70	35	100	35	105	
		Alsalam	3		3	3	2	50	30	70	40	80	
	Village	Umtajok (Nomads)	2		2	2	1	35	7	43	20	42	
	Village	Habila Kanary	2		1	2	1	15	25		20	40	
	IDP Settlement	Mornei	2			2	1	20	15		12	35	
Beida	Village	Masteri (Non-displaced)	1			1	2	25	20		22	45	
		Masteri (IDPs)	1			1	1	37	23		15	60	
Total:			54	13	24	67	40	718	572	410	424	1,290	
			KII				FGD						
			Men	54	81%	Nomads in FGD						410	32%
			Women	13	19%	Youth in FGD						424	33%
			Nomads	24	36%	Women in FGD						572	44%