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Dear Colleagues,

This month's **CSF Research Update** brings you a curated roundup of key open-source research and analysis to support aid actors working in Sudan. These updates provide timely insights into evolving dynamics, helping strengthen conflict-sensitive and effective aid responses.

We also feature select articles from the **CSF Knowledge Hub**, offering historical context, lessons learned, and background analysis. You can find all the publications below in the CSF Knowledge Hub.

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## Community-Led Response & Social Cohesion

## Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Risk and Accountability

*Becky Carter and Hassan Alattar Satti*

May 2025

Mutual aid has been a lifeline for many in Sudan's conflict. This study explores how mechanisms of social solidarity have been shaped by the war and their interaction with external funders. It adds to the evidence base on community-led response during protracted crises and on conflict sensitivity and considers how international actors could strengthen the quality of their partnership with grass-roots bodies.

## Supporting Mutual Aid in Sudan: Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Risk and Accountability

Becky Carter and Hassan-Alattar Satti

BASIC Research

May 2025



Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research (funded by UK International Development) aims to inform policy and programming on how to help poor and vulnerable people cope better with crises and meet their basic needs through more effective social assistance. All costs related to BASIC Research are covered by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). For more information about the programme, visit [BASIC Research LinkedIn](#) and [BASIC Research OpenDoors Collection](#).

NUMBER 1

## SUDAN WORKING PAPER

MAY 2025





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**The evolving role of regional universities in Sudan's ongoing war and post-war rebuilding: Pillars of resilience and recovery**

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## The evolving role of regional universities in Sudan's ongoing war and post-war rebuilding: Pillars of resilience and recovery

*Hussein M. Sulleman*

May 2025

CSF recently highlighted a study by the Rift Valley Institute examining the impact of Sudan's war on universities. This research complements understanding the impact of war on higher education policy. While universities in active conflict zones were heavily disrupted, institutions in relatively stable areas managed to host students and staff, helping absorb the shock. A key takeaway from the study is the potential

# Urban War and Reconstruction

## Urbicide in Khartoum: An Analysis of the Al-Amarat and Mayo Neighbourhoods

*Deen Sharp, Sara Hagalhassan, and Tarig Ali*  
July 2024

Sudan's commercial markets have shown remarkable resilience despite severe conflict, displacement, and infrastructure collapse. This study examines how cross-border trade, private sector actors, and supply chains are adapting to support humanitarian response. It highlights the critical role of supporting local markets, strengthening supply chains, boosting consumer purchasing power, and fostering collaboration between humanitarian and private sector actors.

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JUNE 2025

BRIEFING NOTE

## Urbicide in Khartoum An Analysis of the Al-Amarat and Mayo Neighbourhoods, 2023-24

Deen Sharp, Sara Hagalhassan & Tarig Ali



Nostalgic for Sudan and its scene of the town (Credit: Galal Younis)

### Key messages

- The war in Sudan is reshaping Khartoum's urban landscape through both direct and indirect violence. This includes not only the systematic destruction of the built environment but also looting, the forceful seizure of property and restrictions on mobility, forms of urbicide that fragment the city and undermine urban life.
- Across Khartoum, both the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have targeted civilian infrastructure and markets, causing heavy casualties and damage.

- Urbicide by both SAF and the RSF extends beyond physical destruction to include the denial of services, occupation of property and restrictions on mobility. The RSF has employed a strategy of spatial control, imposing roadblocks and checkpoints, that isolate entire neighbourhoods.
- The war is producing divergent outcomes. The urbicidal tactics have driven displacement in some areas while accelerating conflict-induced urbanisation in others. Elite areas like Al-Amarat have been emptied and militarised, while working-class area Mayo has absorbed new populations. Military strategies are profoundly reshaping patterns of settlement, mobility and access to services.

## Two years of war in Sudan: How the SAF is gaining the upper hand

*Ali MahmoudAli; Jalale Getachew Birru;  
Nohad Eltayeb*

April 2025

Sudan's conflict has entered a new phase as the SAF retake Khartoum and advance across central and southern regions. Strategic offensives and new alliances are reshaping power dynamics, while cracks within the RSF deepen. The analysis highlights

Posted: 15 April 2025 | Region: Africa | Category: Analysis  
 Authors: Ali Mahmoud Ali; Jalale Getachew Birru; Nohad Eltayeb

Watch the [recorded webinar](#) examining the important shifts leading to SAF's advances, and the impact this new phase of war will have on the dynamic of the conflict.

After 23 months of war, on 21 March, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its allies regained control of the presidential palace in central Khartoum, along with all the ministries and government buildings surrounding it. As the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) troops withdrew from Khartoum city – a move the group called strategic – the SAF announced full control of Sudan's tri-city capital on 26 March.<sup>1</sup> The recapture of Khartoum city thus marks a watershed moment in the conflict: The SAF has now gained the upper hand, particularly in central Sudan.

Though Khartoum's fall may seem to have unfolded quickly to casual observers, it represents the culmination of an offensive that began at the end of September 2024 with [coordinated attacks](#) on RSF-held positions in the tri-cities of Khartoum state – Bahri, Omdurman, and Khartoum cities. The SAF also recaptured the capital cities of [Sennar](#) and [al-Jazirah](#) states, forcing the RSF into an increasingly defensive position in Khartoum. The SAF's campaign eventually ousted the RSF from central Sudan, breaking their siege on several SAF bases in Khartoum, Sennar, and North Kordofan states and cutting vital supply routes, leaving RSF troops surrounded by the SAF in central Khartoum. Overall, since the offensive began, the SAF and its allies have regained over 430 locations across central and southern Sudan (see [map](#) below).

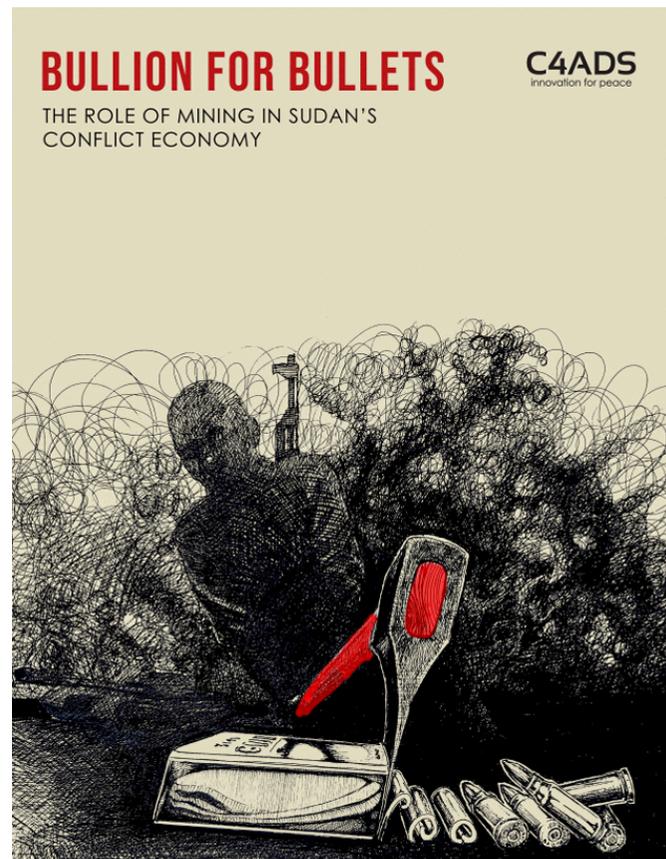
# Conflict Economy & Trade Dynamics

## The Role of Mining in Sudan's Conflict Economy

**C4ADS**

**May 2025**

The importance of the report that it analyse pre-export SAF and RSF control over gold. Using trade data, corporate records and satellite imagery, it fills a gap in the literature around the topic as most of the existing research focus on gold revenue from the point of export onward. Understanding the gold supply chains dynamics could inform humanitarian, legal and economic interventions.



## Darfur's Long-Distance Trade

**SPARC**

## ISSUE BRIEF

**DARFUR'S LONG-DISTANCE TRADE**

Impact of war and Rapid Support Forces' trade embargo

## Introduction

When the current war in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke out on 15 April 2023, analysts expected the economy to become a battleground in which the two belligerent parties would seek to maximise the economic gains critical for achieving dominance (Abushama et al., 2023). As trade, especially long-distance trade, is an essential component of Darfur's economy, it was almost certain to be impacted by the ongoing conflict. Eventually the RSF was able to control much of Darfur (except for El Fasher) and thus the region's economy came effectively under its control.

This brief provides an overview of the effect of the war and the subsequent embargo imposed by the RSF on regular trade into and out of areas it controls, focusing particularly on Darfur (see Box 1). The embargo obstructs the trade and export of locally produced commodities

in areas under RSF control (mostly in western Sudan) to other destinations in Sudan and effectively outside the country. The conflict has impacted the lives of a wide range of people at various levels of the trading chain: producers, traders, businesspeople, transporters and wage labourers. The impact is both direct and indirect, affecting many sectors and trade within the region itself. See also SPARC (2025) brief *The impact of war on trade and markets in Darfur: destruction, resilience and adaptation*, which explores how markets and trade within Darfur have been affected by and have adapted to the conflict situation. Based on first-hand accounts and monitoring by researchers in each of Darfur's states, the brief draws attention to some of the overall consequences for Darfur's economy, and thus the affected population, to inform actors in the humanitarian, development, food security and peace sectors.



Thickening goods over long distances and non-tariffs roads. © Wirestock Creators / shutterstock

## The impact of war and trade markets in Darfur

SPARC

April 2025

Trade in Darfur is being transformed under the weight of conflict. This analysis explores how violence has dismantled key market networks, upended trade routes, and reshaped economic life across the region. It highlights the resilience of local traders—particularly women—who navigate insecurity and rising costs, while also exposing how conflict-driven economies are deepening hardship for producers and consumers alike.

A deep dive into how conflict has reshaped long-distance trade in Darfur, this brief unpacks the ripple effects of embargoes, shifting trade routes, and rising transport costs. It reveals how traders, producers, and transporters navigate a new war economy, exposing emerging power dynamics and the growing dominance of armed actors in commercial networks.



**SPARC**  
Supporting Pastoralism  
and Agriculture in Recurrent  
and Protracted Crises

April 2025

## ISSUE BRIEF

## THE IMPACT OF WAR ON TRADE AND MARKETS IN DARFUR

Destruction, resilience and adaptation

## Introduction

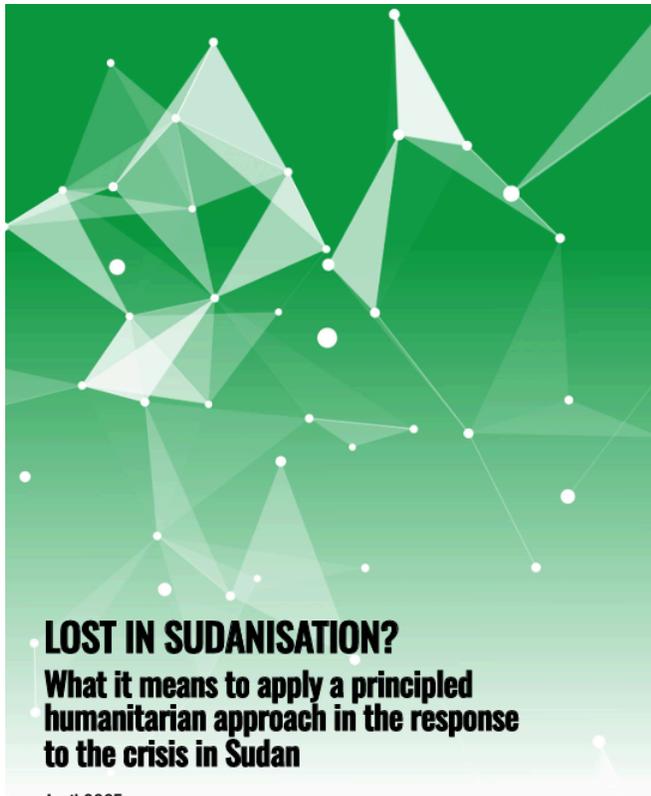
This briefing note provides an overview of how trade and markets in Darfur have adapted, positively and negatively, to the conflict since full-scale war broke out in April 2023. It is focused mainly on trade and markets within the five Darfur states. It complements the SPARC brief *Darfur's long-distance trade: impact of war and Rapid Support Forces' trade embargo*. Although Darfur had already experienced 20 years of violent conflict since 2003, the nature and intensity of the current war is on an entirely different scale, now extending nationwide and fuelled by

wider geopolitical interests. This brief identifies some trends that have amplified adaptations to the conflict in Darfur since 2003, and some that are new. It is based on first-hand observation and data collected by a network of researchers across all five Darfur states who are in regular contact with traders in each of the Darfur state capitals (see Box 1). The focus is on trade and market dynamics; it is beyond the scope of the brief to capture the consequences for agricultural production and producers.



People at the central market in Kufum, in pre-war Darfur. © Albert Gonzalez Palam / UNAMID

# Humanitarian Access & Principles in Practice



April 2025



## Lost in Sudanisation? What it means to apply a principled humanitarian approach in the response to the crisis in Sudan

*Sudan INGO Forum, HERE-Geneva*

*April 2025*

Most of INGO acknowledge the importance of humanitarian principles, however its often treated as an abstract framework rather than practical tools for decision making. Debates around neutrality, access, and engagement indicate the lack of a shared strategy. The paper recommends reactive red lines toward a collective approach to principled action. Principled action that impartially and proportionality inform operational choices.

## Gravitating toward the Middle East: How Sudan's changing regional context fuels conflict and hinders mediation

*Øystein Rolandsen and Antoni Sastra Bel*

*May 2025*

Sudan's civil war is shaped by a complex interplay of internal divisions and the growing involvement of external actors, particularly from the Middle East, who are advancing their

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Gravitating toward the Middle East: How Sudan's changing regional context fuels conflict and hinders mediation

Øystein Rolandsen, Antoni Sastra Bel

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effective mediation, as both international and regional powers often prioritise competing agendas over a unified peace process. The report offers a rational and grounded analysis of how Sudan's mediation efforts can move forward, despite these geopolitical constraints.

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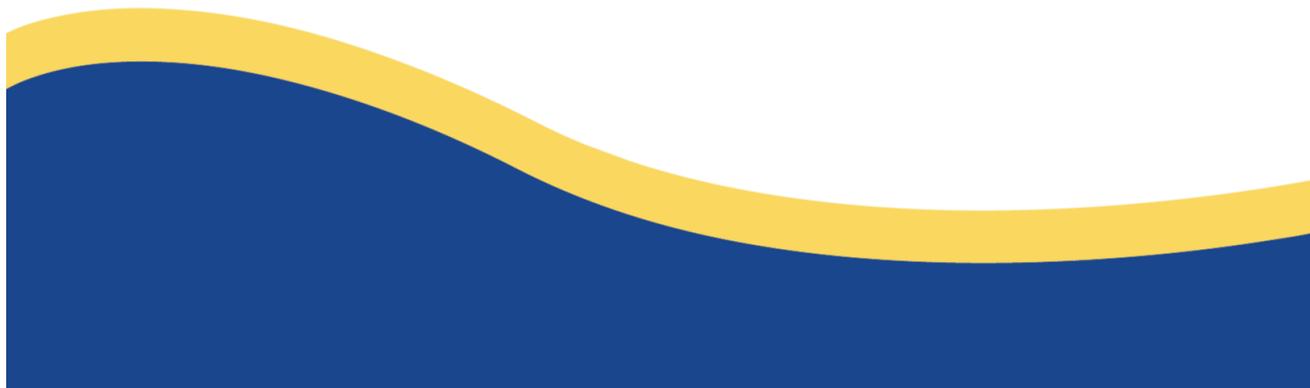
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