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This **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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Humanitarian Context and Foresight Analysis

shape conditions for the population and humanitarian response in 2026

ACAPS

November 2025

Sudan's conflict is shifting quickly, and future changes in control will shape access, services, markets, and protection needs. The ACAPS report sets out four possible scenarios for 2026 and what each could mean for humanitarian planning in an increasingly unpredictable context.

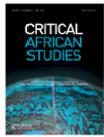
SCENARIOS

How control and governance could shape conditions for the population and humanitarian response in 2026.



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Conflict and Social Dynamics



Critical African Studies



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Political togetherness: pursuits for change among the protesting youth in Sudan 2018–2022

Mai Azzam & Lovise Aalen

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Political togetherness: pursuits for change among the protesting youth in Sudan 2018–2022

Mai Azzam and Lovise Aalen

September 2025

Years of youth-led volunteerism helped re-politicise Sudan's public spaces and build the momentum behind the 2018 revolution. Cross-class collaboration, especially from the middle class, was key. The authors describe this shared spirit as "political togetherness," shaped by trust, solidarity, and lived social bonds.

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Climate Change, Conflicts and Food Security in North Darfur State, Sudan: Risks and Implications

July 2025

Based on interviews and fieldwork, the study highlights how recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, and resource degradation have intensified competition over land and water exacerbating intercommunal tensions and undermining livelihoods. It shows that these climate-related stressors are not isolated from conflict dynamics, but instead entangle with ethnic politics, displacement, and armed mobilisation, creating a feedback loop of vulnerability.



Localisation and Aid Systems

Accelerating Localisation: A Roadmap for The Sudan Humanitarian Fund

Nicholas Noe

September 2025

Sudan's humanitarian funding shows a major localisation gap, with only a small fraction of the 2024 response plan reaching national NGOs. Sudanese organisations report delayed, minimal sub-grants that undermine their work. The publication sets out urgent steps to strengthen localisation, including deeper engagement with local actors and

ACCELERATING LOCALIZATION

A Roadmap for The Sudan
Humanitarian Fund

NICHOLAS NOE
SEPTEMBER 2025

Economy, Livelihoods and Structural Drivers

increasing school enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa

Zuhal Elnour, Khalid Siddig, Harald Grethe
October 2025

Using Sudan as a case, the analysis models how lowering household education costs affects enrolment and the wider economy. Reducing primary education costs cuts the number of out-of-school children and boosts long-term growth but leads to higher post-primary dropouts. Lowering costs across both primary and secondary levels improves tertiary enrolment and strengthens the overall skill profile of the workforce.



Economy-wide implications of increasing school enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

The high number of out-of-school youth in developing countries constitutes a pressing challenge with profound implications for attaining sustainable development. Sudan, for example, has the fifth-highest number globally while struggling with sluggish economic growth and high youth unemployment. In this study, we assess the potential economy-wide implications of options to enhance enrolment among youth by lowering private household spending on education and training services, taking Sudan as a case study. Cost reduction is considered for: a) primary education, b) secondary education, c) primary and secondary education, and d) all formal educational cycles and vocational training. We developed a recursive-dynamic single-country Computable General Equilibrium (STAGE-Eds) model that captures vocational training, secondary education by type (vocational and non-vocational), and education and training choices at different levels, with broad coverage of existing bridges between education and training. STAGE-Eds also establishes endogenous and consistent linkages between the educational and training system and the skill levels of the labour force through its-stage nested production functions. The findings suggest that cost reduction in primary education significantly reduces the number of out-of-school children and enhances long-term economic growth. However, it increases dropout from post-primary education and vocational training. In contrast, cost reduction for both primary and secondary education improves enrolment in the tertiary education cycle and promotes the overall skill composition. Funding such cost reductions from foreign development aid and grants yields higher economic benefits than increasing domestic taxes.

1. Introduction

Out-of-school youth pose a significant challenge in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Despite improvements in primary and secondary school enrolment rates, reducing dropout rates remains a persistent struggle in the region (Glewwe and Muraijharan, 2016). High dropout rates disrupt the continuity of education, limit employment opportunities, and prolong periods of unemployment, thereby attenuating the overall quality of life for affected individuals and constraining educational opportunities for future generations (Louise et al., 2015; Neve et al., 2020). The socioeconomic consequences include exacerbated

poverty and social inequality, economic instability, and perpetuation of intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. Sudan, a low-income SSA country (World Bank, 2023a), has the highest number of out-of-school youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the fifth-highest number globally (UIS - UNESCO, 2023). This situation is worsened by high dropout rates during primary and secondary schooling, intensifying gender and regional disparities (UNESCO, 2018). Such circumstances hinder progress toward the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG 4) and are reflected in Sudan's low Human Capital Index (HCI) of 0.30, significantly below the global average of 0.57 (World Bank, 2023b; Ghosh, 2024). This figure suggests that the

Abbreviations: CGE, Computable General Equilibrium; CEF, Constant Elasticity Function; GDP, Gross Domestic Product; HCI, Human Capital Index; MAME, Manpower for Millennium Development Goals Simulation; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; MDGs, Millennium Development Goals; MRA, Manpower Requirement Approach; NEET, Not in Employment, Education, or Training; SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals; SAM, Social Accounting Matrix; SSA, Sub-Saharan Africa; VET, Vocational Education and Training.
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ISSUE BRIEF MARKET MONITORING AND LOCALISED RESEARCH IN EXTREME CONFLICT

Learning from Darfur

SPARC

Introduction

Trade is the lifeblood of the economy and people's livelihoods in Sudan's Darfur region. Goods are exchanged between different livelihood and ethnic groups, and between urban and rural populations for their food security. This interdependence is also how social relationships are forged and sustained. Darfur has long been a major engine of Sudan's national economy, particularly through long-distance trade and the export of its agricultural and livestock commodities (SPARC, 2025a).

Systematic monitoring and analysis of trade and markets in Darfur has therefore been important for development and humanitarian policy and programming for decades. This has been conducted on an ongoing basis through the respective state ministries, and in times of crisis with the additional contribution of international actors. It has played a critical role in early warning of deteriorating food security and in the planning and targeting of humanitarian assistance.



Displaced women trading in Tawila displacement camp, Darfur © Mercy Corps

Market Monitoring and Localised Research in Extreme Conflict

SPARC

October 2025

A locally led network monitored Darfur's markets during one of the war's most inaccessible periods, capturing trade flows, price shifts, access constraints, and cross-border dynamics despite collapsed data systems. The brief also documents security risks, market targeting by SAF and RSF, and fragmented trade routes, offering key lessons for food security analysis and market monitoring in highly insecure settings.

Distorting Trade and Fueling Conflict

SPARC

October 2025

The war economy is transforming trade in Darfur, driven largely by RSF and Dagalo-linked commercial networks. Field research shows how the RSF has monopolised key commodities and pushed out long-standing traders through privileged access to capital, transport, and tax exemptions. Widespread looting, banditry, market relocations, and expanding checkpoints have created a severely distorted market system that undermines livelihoods and intensifies conflict.

Supporting Pastoralism
and Agriculture in Recurrent
and Protracted Crises

ISSUE BRIEF

THE WAR ECONOMY IN DARFUR

Distorting trade and fuelling conflict

SPARC

Introduction

This brief explores how trade is fuelling conflict through the war economy, with a focus on Darfur, Sudan. The first part describes the intertwined political and economic interests of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its leaders in Darfur; this has a long history and is critical to understanding the war economy in Darfur today (see Box 1 for definition). The second part describes how the RSF provides preferential access to traders from its own constituencies. The depth and prevalence of both of these aspects has major consequences for long-term established traders in Darfur.

The brief's overall purpose is to explain and analyse these dynamics in order to inform conflict-sensitive, market-oriented humanitarian programming. Since the RSF now controls most of the Darfur region – except for the city of El Fasher and a few enclaves in the far northwest – its involvement in the war economy emerges as a central theme. However, the RSF is not alone in this: the

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its allies are also deeply involved in war economy practices, particularly in areas outside Darfur (Abushama et al., 2023).

The brief also documents some other forms of malpractice, such as banditry and looting, that hinder the normal functioning of the market economy in Darfur. This distortion of Darfur's markets effectively victimises the majority of the population and threatens their well-being.

The analysis is based on first-hand accounts and predominantly qualitative data collected by researchers in each of Darfur's states for the period November 2024 to July 2025, as part of the project, *Understanding markets and trade in a context of extreme conflict and humanitarian crisis, with limited access, in Darfur, Sudan* (see Box 2). Additional information was gathered by interviewing key informants, including traders and academics based in Cairo, as well as a review of recent and relevant documentation.



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