

## THEMATIC BRIEF

# DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR IDPs

## KEY BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO LOCALLY INTEGRATE OR RETURN

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### KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

- **Actors should support local integration**, given the high numbers of IDPs who prefer to stay in their area of displacement. Programming and policies that support the **rule of law, access to secure land tenure and food security are critical** to help address the main barriers to local integration.
- **The Government's National Strategy on Solutions (draft) stipulates a process to identify areas conducive to return and should include security and access to agricultural land as essential criteria.** Actors across the humanitarian development and peace (HDP) nexus should align their programming and invest in service provision in prioritized return locations.
- **Actors should recognize and support a hybrid approach to local integration**, where IDPs stay in their current settlement while returning seasonally to their land of origin to cultivate crops.
- **Actors need to acknowledge that creating conducive environments for return are longer-term processes** linked to resolving inter-communal conflict. Therefore, it is essential that actors **in parallel also support interim solutions** in the locations where IDPs currently live.

A key priority necessary for lasting peace in Darfur is finding durable solutions for displaced populations and addressing the root causes of conflict. This is a central objective of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) signed in 2020. Results from the eight studies in Darfur conducted under the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2020–2021 show that a majority of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) prefer to stay and integrate locally, and less than one-third prefer to return to their place of origin. The findings point to three key obstacles to local integration: the security situation, the insecure tenure of agricultural land and the food insecurity. In all three areas, IDPs face greater challenges and are more vulnerable than their non-displaced neighbours. For IDPs who prefer to return, the main barriers are insecurity in home areas and difficulty to re-gain access to their land. Achieving durable solutions to displacement is closely linked to resolving inter-communal conflicts, which is likely to be a longer-term process. Thus, supporting solutions to displacement requires actors to adopt more flexible or hybrid solutions while also acknowledging that IDPs require support in their current location in parallel to building conducive environments for return.

Protracted displacement of high numbers of people continues to be a major issue in Darfur. Estimates for 2020, assess that Darfur has 2.5 million internally displaced people and close to 400,000 Darfuris are refugees in neighbouring countries.<sup>1</sup> The Juba Peace Agreement's commitments on the rights of IDPs, the process of voluntary returns, and the restoration of housing, land and property rights for those displaced provide a critical opportunity to resolve Darfur's displacement crisis. Similarly, the National Strategy on Solutions for IDPs, Returnees, Refugees, and Host Communities that the Government of Sudan is planning to launch in 2021 will offer a critical strategic framework and operational roadmap towards solutions for displaced communities in the country.

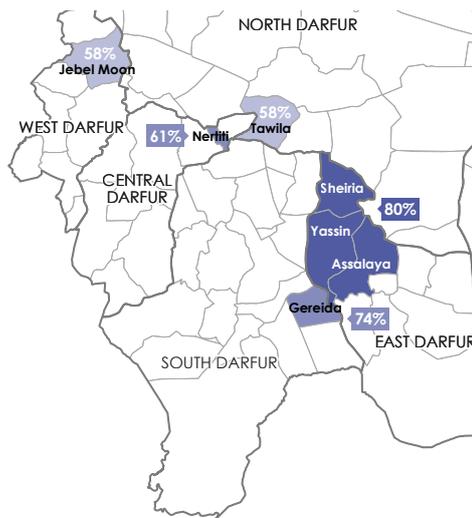
Just as durable solutions are integral to peacebuilding, lack of peace is often a key obstacle to achieving lasting solutions to displacement. Solutions to displacement need to be informed by the preferences of displaced populations and evidence identifying obstacles and opportunities. This brief is part of a series of five short thematic documents that present key insights and messages drawing upon the eight durable solution and peacebuilding studies carried out across Darfur by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

Prepared by:

## Local integration is the preferred option for many

IDPs should be able to make an informed and voluntary decision on what durable solution is right for them. Understanding IDPs' preferences is critical to the ability of actors to provide IDPs with the right support to pursue a solution — whether they want to stay, return, or relocate elsewhere. Findings show that a majority of the surveyed IDPs (67%) prefer to locally integrate rather than return to their place of origin. IDPs' preferences vary across the surveyed localities. Greater proportions of IDPs in Assalaya, Sheiria, Yassin (East Darfur) and Gereida locality in South Darfur (74–80%) prefer to stay in the area of displacement, whereas in the Nertiti (61%) and Tawila (58%) locality relatively fewer want to stay.

### IDPs who want to stay and integrate in the area of displacement



This high number of IDPs who prefer to remain in the place of displacement needs to be considered in the light of two key displacement characteristics. Firstly, the greater majority of IDPs (81%) are displaced within the same locality. This means households only need to travel relatively short distances to their home areas to cultivate land, check on property or visit relatives. Secondly, almost half (48%) were displaced more than 10 years ago. Hence, many IDPs have lived in displacement for a considerable period and are likely to have managed to integrate to some extent.

## How can actors assist local integration?

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs defines durable solutions as achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement and can live their lives without discrimination.<sup>2</sup> By benchmarking against the non-displaced population,<sup>3</sup> it is possible to pinpoint the areas where the displaced households still face displacement-linked vulnerabilities and need support.<sup>4</sup>

The results from the eight studies in Darfur identified three main areas where IDPs are facing particular barriers to reaching a durable solution:

- 1. Insecurity is the number one barrier for integration:** IDPs do not feel as safe as the non-displaced population, with IDPs living in camps and informal settlements feeling less safe (70%) compared to IDPs residing in villages and towns (50%).

Persons that feel safe walking alone in the area they live, during nighttime. SDG 16.4.1

### Non-displaced



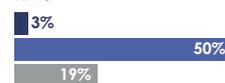
- 2. IDPs have less access to land and less tenure security:** IDP households have less access to land and lower tenure security. Only 3% of IDPs own farmland in their current location compared to 48% of non-displaced residents, and the great majority of IDPs are renting agricultural land. Additionally, 19% of IDP households do not have access to any farmland; this proportion is larger among IDPs in camps and female-headed households.

### Access to land and tenure security

#### Non-displaced



#### IDPs



Most camps and informal settlements are located on land belonging to other people. Identifying ways to provide tenure security for IDPs, who prefer to locally integrate, will be key. The regularization of IDP settlements/camps in the vicinity of urban centres is also important to allow IDPs, who prefer to stay, to obtain more formal and secure tenure arrangements.<sup>5</sup> However, the JPA does not clarify the housing, land and property rights of IDPs when it comes to the land they have been occupying over the past decades of displacement.<sup>6</sup>

3. **IDP households are more food insecure:** food insecurity is a challenge affecting all population groups, but comparatively more IDP households are affected in areas where food insecurity is widespread. For example, a significant proportion of the non-displaced population is food insecure in Nertiti (65%) and Tawila (52%), but food insecurity affects respectively 72% and 86% of IDPs in these two localities. Findings also show that a larger proportion of IDPs residing in camps (49%) are food insecure compared to IDPs living outside of camps (36%).

**IDPs living in camps and informal settlements are more vulnerable than those residing in villages or towns** when it comes to safety, food security and land access, and therefore require particular support. It will also be vital to address tenure security for housing plots to support IDPs who prefer to stay and locally integrate, particularly for those living in camps and informal settlements.

## How can actors assist IDPs who want to return?

The findings showed that less than a third (27%) of IDPs prefer to return to their place of origin, which is most often within the same locality. It is important to understand that preferences for the future may change as situations evolve and people amend their plans. Therefore, an understanding of the factors which shape IDPs' preferences and intentions is needed. Findings from the survey as well as the qualitative data highlight two main factors that influence the decision to return:

1. **Safety** in the place of origin was viewed as the decisive factor influencing IDPs' decision to return or stay in their current location.
2. **Access to agricultural land** in the place of origin is regarded as a precondition for return as livelihoods depend on land.

Access to **basic services** in return areas was a secondary consideration and not a key factor influencing the decision to return. Basic services are seen as relevant only when security allows for return and IDPs have re-accessed their land. Results highlight that access to water and policing in return areas are viewed as the most important services.

The Government's National Strategy on Solutions plans to establish a process to identify areas conducive to return and should pay attention to the criteria highlighted by the communities in this study. Once the process has been established, actors working in Sudan across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus need to align their programming and invest in service provision in prioritized return locations.

## Interim and hybrid solutions to displacement

The volatile security situation in Darfur has prevented large-scale and lasting returns. Seasonal commuting is commonplace as IDPs are mostly displaced to areas in close proximity to their place of origin and thus it involves relatively short travel distances.

A fifth of IDPs (19%) are still farming the land in their place of origin, moving seasonally between their place of displacement and their home village. Even though this group has access to land in their home areas, less than one-third prefer to return. In other words, access to land in the area of origin does not automatically mean that the households prefer to return. This again confirms that the security situation is the number one factor that influences whether IDPs stay or decide to return. In times of fluctuating levels of insecurity, many IDPs may adopt this hybrid approach to integration where they live in relative safety in the area of refuge, while household members seasonally travel back home to cultivate land.

**Supporting IDPs in their current location is aiding local integration, which is the preference of the majority of IDPs, while also reducing IDPs' specific displacement-linked vulnerabilities that need to be addressed in parallel.** Strengthening their resilience and livelihoods will enable IDPs to better pursue their preferred option in the future. Also, preconditions for return are closely linked to resolving inter-communal conflicts, which is likely to be a longer-term process. Thus, supporting solutions to displacement requires actors to adopt more flexible or hybrid solutions, while also providing support to IDPs in their current location in parallel to building conducive environments for return.

## ABOUT

This analysis builds on eight studies that took place across Darfur in 2020–2021 under the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). All displacement and conflict affected communities — IDPs, neighbouring non-displaced residents, nomads, IDP returnees and also return refugees — were included in the analysis in the targeted localities of Tawila, Assalaya, Yassin, Sheiria, Gereida, Jebel Moon plus Nertiti and Um Dukhun. The large-scale sample-based survey was combined with extensive in-depth qualitative data, which together form the evidence-base for the insights and recommendations presented here.

The studies were led by UNHCR and the other PBF agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UN-Habitat and FAO), with technical guidance from the Durable Solutions Working Group in Sudan (DSWG). IOM collected the survey data and the Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA) undertook the qualitative area-level data collection. JIPS led the design of methodology and tools and conducted the analysis and reporting. The locality reports and thematic briefs can be found on the [below web platform](#).



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## NOTES

- 1 OCHA (2020) Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021.
- 2 Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2010) IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, April 2010.
- 3 The socio-economic situation of the displaced populations is benchmarked against the non-displaced across the key criteria outlined in the IASC Framework.
- 4 UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, JIPS, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, DRC et al (2018) Durable Solutions Analysis Guide: A tool to measure progress towards Durable Solutions for IDPs.
- 5 UN-Habitat (2020) Darfur Land Administration Assessment: Analysis and Recommendations.
- 6 HLP Sub-sector, UN Sudan (24 June, 2021) Briefing note: HLP in the Republic of Sudan.