THEMATIC BRIEF

SUPPORTING IDPs POST RETURN

October 2021

KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

- **Actors should support returnees to re-establish their livelihoods post return,** as their physical return and re-access to land does not solve all displacement-linked vulnerabilities.
- **Actors need to pay particular attention to conflict resolution and security in return areas —** security is not only a precondition for returns, but also essential for the sustainability of returns.
- **Actors need to prioritize the provision of sanitation and water in areas of return,** as water is a basic livelihood resource and a challenge specifically for returnees. This is of particular relevance as water can also act as a conflict driver.
- **Actors should adopt an area-specific approach** when designing programming to tailor support and address specific vulnerabilities of returnees living in different areas.

Displaced persons should be able to make informed and voluntary decisions regarding what durable solution is right for them. IDPs who have returned have not automatically achieved a solution to their displacement. That is achieved when all displacement linked vulnerabilities and protection needs have been overcome. Results from the eight studies in Darfur conducted by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2020–2021 show that most returnees are accessing their previous agricultural and residential land, which strongly indicates that access to land is a precondition for return. In all eight localities, returnees face challenges accessing drinking water and sanitation. Results also show significant variations between localities: returnees are more food insecure in some localities, while they have less access to education in other areas. This requires actors to adopt area-specific approaches to programming in returnee locations.

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.[1] Roughly 69% of all displaced households from Darfur remain in displacement within Darfur, 12% are displaced to neighbouring countries, while 19% have returned to their place of origin.[2] In other words, less than a fifth of those displaced by the conflict have managed to return so far.

The Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) establishes durable solutions as a key priority with special attention to the situation in Darfur. The peace agreement also views solutions to displacement as an integral part of building peace. In 2021, the Government of Sudan also plans to launch the National Strategy on Solutions for IDPs, Returnees, Refugees, and Host Communities that will offer a critical strategic framework and operational roadmap towards solutions for displaced communities in the country.

IDPs have achieved a durable solution when they no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs as a result of their displacement.[3] This brief outlines the main barriers for sustainable returns.[4] It forms part of a series of five short thematic documents that present key insights and messages drawing upon the eight durable solutions and peacebuilding studies carried out across Darfur by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

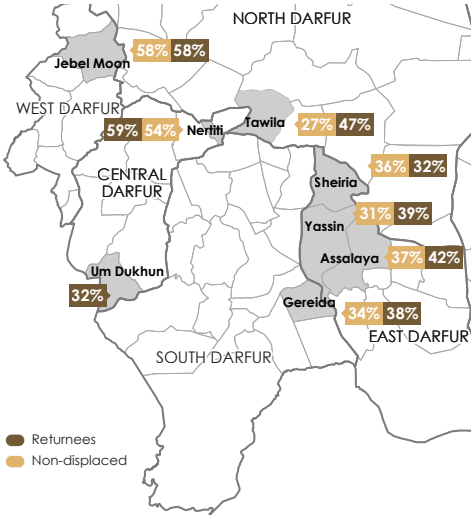
Prepared by:

JIPS informing solutions to internal displacement

How well have returnees managed to re-integrate?

Findings show that a majority of returnees (83%) are accessing the same agricultural land and residential plots as before displacement. In other words, the IDPs choosing to return are those who have managed to access their land. Findings confirm that IDPs' access to land is critical for returns to be sustainable, since crop farming is the main source of livelihood for the majority (85%) of returnees. Insecurity can be observed in most localities and results show that returnees experience only marginally more incidents compared to non-displaced (with the exception of Tawila, where the difference is more significant). **Attention to conflict resolution and security in return areas is key, as security is not only a precondition for returns but also essential for their sustainability.**

Households that have experienced a robbery at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey (Dec. 2020)



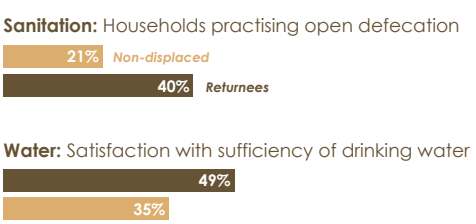
The findings highlight that a large proportion of returns are recent, as 46% have returned within the past five years. Results also show that the greater majority of returnees (87%) intend to remain and continue to re-integrate. Physical return and re-access to land does not solve all displacement-linked vulnerabilities, and support to re-establish livelihoods post-return is important. To support returnees, evidence is needed to identify the specific challenges that IDPs face post-return. By benchmarking against the non-displaced population,[5] it is possible to pinpoint what challenges are faced by all population groups, and what challenges are specific to returnees.[6]

Safe water and sanitation are specific challenges for returnees

The studies found two challenges specific to returnees. In all eight surveyed localities, the returnee populations have less access to water and sanitation than the non-displaced residents. The returnee population is less satisfied with the amount of water available to meet the household's needs, and a higher proportion of returnees practises 'open defecation', which indicates a critical lack of provision of basic sanitation.

The results also highlight that many water points in return areas were either destroyed during the conflict or have fallen into disrepair. Water is of particular importance because it is a natural resource that underpins lives and livelihoods and has the potential to act as a conflict driver. **To enable sustainable re-integration in areas of return and progress towards lasting solutions in Darfur, it is thus paramount that actors prioritize the provision of sanitation and especially water.**

Access to water and sanitation



Area-tailored support to return locations is needed

Some of the key challenges are shared by returnees and non-displaced residents in the eight surveyed localities of Darfur. These include lack of security, insufficient food and limited access to basic services, such as police, education, sanitation, safe water and health services – these are development challenges affecting all residents and thus call for area-based and longer-term development programming. However, findings show returnees are facing additional, specific challenges in some localities:

ABOUT

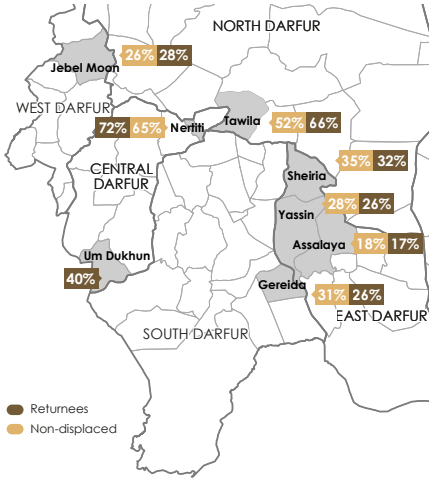
This analysis builds on eight studies that took place across Darfur in 2020–2021 under the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). All displacement and conflict affected communities — IDPs, neighbouring non-displaced residents, nomads, IDP returnees and also return refugees — were included in the analysis in the 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.

1. While **low levels of safety and crime** can be observed in several localities affecting all residents, in Tawila locality, returnees are particularly worse off. 47% of returnees report having been robbed during the previous year in contrast to 24% of non-displaced residents.

2. The prevalence of food insecurity varies considerably but in localities where food insecurity is high, **more returnee households are food insecure.** For example, in Nertiti locality, 75% of returnees are food insecure in contrast to 65% of the non-displaced population. In contrast, in Assalaya locality, food insecurity is less prevalent and equal proportions of non-displaced and returnees (20%) do not have enough food.

Households that did not have enough food or money to buy food the week prior to the survey (Dec. 2020)



3. **School attendance rates** vary greatly between localities. In Central Darfur, returnees have the lowest school attendance rates. In Nertiti locality, a third of returnee children aged 6–13 years attend school, and in Um Dukhun even fewer returnee children (12%) are in education. In Um Dukhun locality, state-run education is only available in towns, and therefore many return areas are left with no education provision. In contrast, returnee children in Tawila locality (77% of boys and 71% of girls) have better access to education compared to the non-displaced children (48% boys and 47% girls).

Given the significant variations in the challenges that returnees face in the different returnee areas, it is essential that actors adopt an area-specific approach to prioritize and tailor support.

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NOTES

1 OCHA (2020) Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan 2021.

2 Proportions are calculated based on HNO figures from Dec. 2020 on IDPs and returnees (since 2003), and UNHCR figures on refugees from Darfur from Nov. 2020.

3 The IASC Framework 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. Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2010) IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, April 2010.

4 The PBF studies targeted both IDP returnees as well as return refugees. In this brief, the two groups are merged and referred to as 'returnees', since the locality level analysis showed many similarities between the two returnee groups.

5 The socio-economic situation of the displaced populations is benchmarked against the non-displaced across the key criteria outlined in the IASC Framework.

6 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.