

Enabling the Sustainable and Safe Return and Reintegration of the Displaced in Darfur

Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, UK, 31 July-4 August 2005

This four-day meeting, organised by Concordis International, brought together 27 prominent members of Sudanese civil and political society, mostly from Darfur, together with international experts. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and represented a comprehensive range of key Sudanese political and geographical constituencies. Over the course of the four days, presentations were given by Sudanese participants and international experts on the constraints and practicalities of the safe and sustainable return and reintegration of the displaced in Darfur. The presentations were followed by group discussion that was vigorous, frank and informed, often resulting in the formulation of recommendations and practical proposals.

Security was highlighted as the major obstacle to sustainable and safe return and reintegration of IDPs; until the people of Darfur feel safe then return and reintegration are unlikely to occur. The proliferation of arms was argued to be a factor that needs to be dealt with effectively if security is to improve. Participants also noted that it is understandable that IDPs are unwilling to return given the climate of broken ceasefires. They saw an important role for the international community in implementing ceasefires and rebuilding trust in them. Besides security, participants highlighted that IDPs can often gain better services at IDP camps, and therefore **development and better service provision** in villages, particularly in education and health services, are also needed in order to encourage the return and reintegration of IDPs.

In terms of actually establishing security on the ground, participants identified **reform of security forces** as of central importance. They identified a great need to restore local confidence through a "reformed" police force made up of local police officers, in camps to include IDPs. Participants felt that the AU was ineffective, partly owing to an unclear understanding of its mandate by its own troops, by the government and by the population of Darfur, and partly because it is not trusted by international organisations or Darfurians. Participants agreed the need for a much more international force and for re-established trust in the government, security and peacekeeping forces.



Participants also agreed that **environmental security** was needed for the successful return and reintegration of IDPs. Water security was seen as being particularly important, and participants felt there was a need for creativity in **water management** as well as technological and institutional improvements. **Deforestation** was also highlighted. The planting of more trees was seen to have important benefits, such as helping to bind the soil together, reducing the threat of desertification and replenishing wood stocks.

The CPA was seen to be a positive agreement, which should lead to improvements in the situation in Sudan if implemented effectively. Participants felt that a model should be created for Darfur and Eastern Sudan based on the CPA models of Abyei, southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains, i.e. based on transparency, accountability and the rule of law. However, they recognised that Darfur has its own personality, its own structure and its own environment, and that although some elements of the CPA can be used constructively the CPA cannot simply be transferred to solve all Darfur's problems.

The participants also discussed the nature of the **Darfurian rebel groups**, commenting that they do not fully represent all the people in Darfur and that progress would be made if the different rebel groups worked together. Cultural and political confidence-building measures are especially important in the context of Darfur; all communities should be involved in this process, not just those who bear arms. The participants also felt that for those who do return to their villages there needs to be some form of compensation and that culprits in the conflict need to be brought to justice for peace alone, without justice, means nothing.

Overall, the participants recognised that there are numerous hurdles to the successful return and reintegration of IDPs, from security issues to environmental degradation. They were positive about the possibility of solving these problems but felt that key to this is achieving a Darfurian peace agreement that is comprehensive and visionary, incorporated into a federal system based on democracy, transparency and accountability, which is able to empower native administrations without undermining existing government structures.