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Darfur's long-distance trade: impact of war and Rapid Support Forces' trade embargo

This brief provides an overview of the effect of the war and the subsequent embargo imposed by the Rapid Support Forces on regular trade into and out of areas it controls, with a focus on Darfur.

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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 where the two belligerent parties would seek to maximise economic gains critical for achieving dominance.

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. 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. It complements the SPARC brief '[The impact of war on trade and markets in Darfur: Destruction, resilience and adaptation](#)'.

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.

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 humanitarian, development, food security sector and peace actors.

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Trucking goods over long distances and non-tarmac roads.
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