

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

DARFUR'S LONG-DISTANCE TRADE

The impact of war and Rapid Support Forces' trade embargo

SPARC

Motivation

Long-distance trade is crucial to Darfur's economy, particularly exports of Darfur's main agricultural and livestock products, as well as imports of processed food commodities and fuel. This in turn impacts the livelihoods of many. How Sudan's civil war has impacted long-distance trade is only partially understood; the wide-ranging consequences of the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) trade embargo even less so. Yet this is critical to understanding the humanitarian crisis.

Purpose

This brief aims to fill the knowledge gap in our understanding of the impact of Sudan's civil war on long-distance trade. It provides an overview of the effect of the war since April 2023 on long-distance trade, and of the embargo imposed by the RSF in October 2024 on trade into and out of the areas it controls, focusing particularly on Darfur.

Approach and methods

The data is based on first-hand observations and information collected by a network of experienced researchers within Darfur who are in regular contact with traders in each of the Darfur state capitals and in one rural area within North Darfur state. The analysis has been led by a team of Sudanese researchers and one international researcher, thus bridging the knowledge gap between national and international actors.

Findings

This brief demonstrates the impact on long-distance trade into and out of Darfur in terms of reduced trade flows, altered trade routes – which are now more likely to pass through neighbouring countries than central Sudan – and higher transport costs. The RSF has solidified its control over much of this long-distance trade, directly fuelling the war economy. Together, these trends have negative consequences for the livelihoods of many, from agricultural producers to civilian traders and truckers.

Policy implications

This study demonstrates how long-distance trade, the lifeblood of Darfur's economy, has been negatively affected by the war, especially by the RSF's *de facto* control of this trade, with implications for how humanitarians understand and

respond to the deepening crisis. It is based on analysis of three months of data; full policy recommendations will be developed after six months of data has been collected and analysed.

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