

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

THE IMPACT OF WAR ON TRADE AND MARKETS IN DARFUR

Destruction, resilience and adaptation

SPARC

Motivation

Much of the humanitarian response to the devastating crisis in Darfur is market oriented, such as cash-based transfers. However, the flow of information to humanitarian actors about the crisis, especially about the state of Darfur's trade and markets, is limited and often focused on quantitative price data. Channels of communication – between national actors with a presence on the ground, and international humanitarian actors with restricted access – are constrained.

Purpose

This brief deepens current understanding of how markets and trade within Darfur have been affected by the war that began in April 2023, and looks at how markets and trade have adapted, positively and negatively, including implications for food security.

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 explains how trade and markets have been disrupted by the war, including: how market infrastructure has been destroyed, how trade links within Darfur have been severed, how market integration has suffered, and how purchasing power has fallen. It provides evidence of how the costs of transport and trade have risen, which is partly related to how traders have had to adapt, and partly due to aspects of the war economy. Many traders, particularly large-scale traders, have left the business, if not the region, and the Rapid Support Forces have gained control of more profitable business opportunities.

Policy implications

This study demonstrates the dynamic, often fast-moving, impact of the war on markets and trade within Darfur, and the importance of tracking these dynamics in real time to ensure that market-based humanitarian interventions are sufficiently conflict sensitive. It is important to note that this policy brief is based on analysis of three months of data; full policy recommendations will be developed after six months of data have been collected and analysed.

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