

*Darfurian Livelihoods and Libya: Trade, Migration, and Remittance Flows in Times of Conflict and Crisis*¹

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Labor migration and commerce between Sudan and Libya have long been features of livelihoods in Darfur. This paper describes the importance of historical trade and migration links between Darfur and Libya, and provides a background to the political and economic situation in Libya which has influenced opportunities for Sudanese migrant workers. A case study of the situation of the Darfurian migrants in Kufra (an oasis and transnational trade hub in southern Libya) illustrates how the recent Darfur conflict has affected migration patterns from Darfur and remittance flows in the opposite direction. Official estimates of Darfurian migrant workers in Libya were unavailable but were estimated to be between 150,000 and 250,000. The closure of the national border between Sudan and Libya in May 2003, largely a result of insecurity in Darfur, stopped the traffic of migrant workers between northern Darfur and southern Libya (which prevented the onward travel to Sudan of several thousand migrants in Kufra), and curtailed the well-established trade routes, communications, and remittance flows. The current limited economic prospects for migrant workers in Libya, combined with the threat of detention, difficulties of return to Sudan, and loss of contact with and uncertainty about the fate of their families in Darfur, have created a sense of despair among many Darfurians. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations to improve the conditions of the Darfurian migrants in Libya, including an amnesty for illegal migrants, and also to ease the travel of migrants, promote communications between Libya and Darfur, and support the flow of remittances.

¹This study was funded by the United States Agency for International Development/Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance as part of a larger livelihoods research initiative at Tufts University. In Libya, the fieldwork was made possible through the support of the Libyan Red Crescent, to whom the authors are extremely grateful.

INTRODUCTION

Libya is Darfur's closest neighbor that offers significant labor opportunities to migrants. Although separated by more than 1,000 miles of the Sahara, there have been close economic, social, and political links between Libya and Darfur for at least two hundred years. Labor migration from Darfur to central and eastern Sudan, and across national borders to Libya, Egypt, and beyond, and the return flows of remittances have long been a feature of people's livelihoods in Darfur. Studies have remarked on the scale of labor migration from Darfur to Libya and the significance of the remittances sent back to the region. The Food Economy profiles developed by Save the Children UK (SCUK) indicate the importance of labor migration as a livelihood strategy in all geographic "food economy zones" in Darfur (SCUK DFIS, 2004). Apart from these passing references, little is known about the situation of Darfurian migrants in Libya, nor how they have fared as a result of the recent ongoing conflict in Darfur. Libya's dependence on its foreign workforce is well established, although again there is virtually no information about the situation of migrants other than rough estimates of its numbers and the fact that Libya appears to be one of the main migration routes from Africa to Europe, via Malta (Anon., 2004; Baldwin-Edwards, 2006).

In contrast, the Darfur conflict and crisis has a high international profile. Although the current conflict has been brewing for a decade or more, the most recent insurgency started in early 2003 when the newly formed rebel opposition groups (the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)) initiated a series of successful attacks on government property and installations in Darfur. The Government of Sudan's response to the rebel attacks on government infrastructure was to use the tribal leadership (those that were willing) to mobilize their members to join additional armed forces (the Janjaweed) in putting down the insurgency. The result was the systematic attacks on villages throughout Darfur by the Janjaweed with military air and land support. The consequences of this have been well documented, including scorched-earth tactics, looting, sexual violence, maiming, and killing civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2004a, 2004b; ICG, 2004; de Waal, 2004). As of July 2004 there were 1.1 million displaced people seeking safety in the larger towns of Darfur, with more than 100,000 refugees seeking sanctuary in the refugee camps in neighboring Chad (UNRes HC Sudan, 2004). There were also reports of displaced people traveling to Khartoum seeking safety as opposed to the normal migration patterns. How this affected traffic of migrants to Libya or the situation of Darfurians in Libya was unknown.

The research described in this paper investigated the changing patterns of migration and livelihoods of Darfurian migrants in Libya over the past 20 years, with a view to establishing how they had been affected by the recent Darfur conflict. This research is drawn from a wider study of the impact of the Darfur conflict and crisis on livelihoods in Darfur with a view to refining strategic humanitarian interventions related to the Darfur crisis (Young *et al.*, 2005). The first stage of this research was conducted in Libya in June 2004 for two weeks by the authors, who include a Sudanese national.

METHODS

The broader investigation into the impact of the crisis and conflict in Darfur on livelihoods was based on a livelihoods conceptual framework used by the Feinstein International Center (adapted from the DFID sustainable livelihoods framework (DFID, 1999) and the Collinson framework (Collinson, 2003). This framework is a tool for examining the totality of people's livelihoods, including the livelihood goals and outcomes that households pursue, and their access to a range of resources and assets that enable them to pursue their chosen livelihood strategies or occupations. At a local level, people's own preferences and priorities drive their livelihood strategies, but they are also influenced by the policies, processes, and institutions that shape their vulnerability and influence livelihood outcomes. For example, government migration policies or taxation or delivery of basic services for migrants would clearly affect their livelihoods. Wider economic pressures such as inflation or fluctuations in exchange rates, or political developments associated with conflict or international terrorism, would also be expected to have an impact on the livelihoods of migrants. Within the broader context of this livelihoods conceptual framework, the specific research questions addressed in this paper included the following:

- i. What are the trends in numbers of Darfurian migrants seeking work in Libya and how has this been affected by wider political or economic processes and policies?
- ii. What is the socioeconomic situation of Darfurian migrants, including approximate age distribution, gender and skills profile, and their occupations and levels of remuneration (livelihood strategies and assets). How has this changed since the start of the conflict in 2003?
- iii. What mechanisms are used for transferring remittances; and in selected locations and waged labor sectors, what remittances are sent?

- iv. Through what mechanism and how often did the Darfurian diaspora in Libya communicate with relatives in Darfur?
- v. What were the overarching policies, institutions, and processes influencing these migration trends and the livelihood goals, assets, and strategies of Darfurian migrant workers?

These questions were used to develop checklists for semistructured interviews with key informants, for focus group discussions, and for designing a range of Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques, for example, participatory mapping to trace migration and trade routes, proportional piling to investigate occupations (livelihood strategies) among migrants, and historical timelines to review migration trends and related developments. The results of these exercises were photographed as a record.

A literature review covered a timeline of the relevant history of Darfur and Libya including regional conflicts, food security and livelihoods of Darfurian ethnic groups, and links with Libya.

The field research was focused in two areas: the city of Benghazi on the coast, and the Oases of Kufra, an important international transit hub in south-east Libya a few hundred miles from the national Sudan border and Darfur. Coastal Libya is more densely populated than the desert interior, and there are known established communities of Sudanese in Benghazi and also in Tripoli and other coastal towns.

The research visit was hosted and facilitated by the Libyan Red Crescent, which is a long-established Red Crescent society affiliated to the International Federation of the Red Cross. They have a long history of supporting healthcare, providing blood transfusion services, and supporting a wide range of national and international humanitarian emergencies (including drought relief in Darfur, and assistance to Darfurian migrants in Kufra earlier in 2003). The team's visit and this research would not have been possible without their support, as this was the first independent academic research to be undertaken in Libya since the lifting of US sanctions in April 2004.

Key informant interviews were held with relevant government officials (customs, immigration, veterinary services); professors of the University of Benghazi and the University of El Kufra; Libyan employers including the Kufra Agricultural Project; and Sudanese groups, including the Sudan Embassy officials in Benghazi and Kufra; the Sudan Popular Congress (SPC) in Kufra; and unregistered Sudanese support groups in Benghazi and Kufra.

These initial meetings represented the first stage of purposive sampling. Through these contacts new contacts within the migrant community were

made and followed up. This process was repeated until a wide network of Sudanese and Darfurian contacts had been made. Additional contacts were made during “walkabouts” in local markets where migrants were known to congregate (Ouagadougou market in Benghazi, Jincia in Kufra) and wherever Sudanese nationals were encountered (taxi drivers, shop and stall-keepers).

Further key informant and focus group interviews were organized with Darfurian migrants representing different interests and perspectives, specifically including different migrant livelihoods; recently arrived migrants; more long-term established workers; traders operating between Darfur and Libya; *hawaldars* (financial intermediaries); a range of tribal groups from Darfur; and Darfurian women migrants.

A team of four professors from the University of El Kufra conducted a rapid assessment survey on the social and economic status of Sudanese migrants living in Kufra. A nonrandom sample of 385 Sudanese were interviewed at a range of locations in the Kufra area. The questionnaire included 24 questions, of which data from eight were analyzed by the Kufra team for inclusion in this study. No further analysis of this data has been possible, as the data were stolen shortly after this initial stage of analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Despite a well-developed conceptual framework and research questions, the nature of this investigation was essentially exploratory, given the previous lack of research by international groups on labor migrants in Libya, the relatively short duration of fieldwork, and that this was our first visit to the country. The choice of methods, in particular purposive sampling and a range of participatory appraisal techniques, were deemed suitable for this purpose, but the results cannot be expected to represent the entire Sudanese or even Darfurian population in Libya. The in-depth case study of migrants in Kufra does, however, illustrate the significance of Darfurian earnings in the recent past and the impact the Darfur conflict has had on the transfer of remittances to Darfur and the flow of migrants. A further potential limitation is that Sudanese sources and informal organizations cannot be named.

DARFUR: A REGION SHAPED BY MIGRATION AND TRADE

Historically, migration and trade have been critical factors shaping Darfur since the 17th century, with a crisscrossing of routes from west to east and north to south that resulted in the settlement in Darfur of a wide array of tribal

groups, who were granted land by the original independent Fur Sultanate (O'Fahey, 1980). Salt from Darfur was traded with Egypt, and the same routes allowed traffic of slaves from southern Sudan. The religious center of the Sanusiyya in Kufra, southeastern Libya, supported pilgrims, travelers, and trade between Darfur and the coast. From the east came religious teachers bringing Islam from western Africa (Tijaniyya sect) and pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Trade attracted the network of Arab *jellaba* (merchants and traders) who arrived and many of whom subsequently settled (Burr and Collins, 1999).

The journey from Darfur to Libya on foot and by camel traditionally took around thirty to thirty-five days. The caravans, each led by a desert expert, traveled by night and rested during the day. The introduction of trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles greatly accelerated the processes of migration and trade (Burr and Collins, 1999).

While these routes traditionally supported religious teachers, pilgrims, and traders, by the second half of the 20th century, they were joined by large numbers of economic labor migrants.

The economic opportunities for Sudanese in Libya have been influenced by the upturns and downturns in the Libyan economy, principally caused by the discovery of oil and subsequent changes in world oil prices and OPEC quotas, and also the effects of Libyan foreign relations and the imposition of US, UN, and EU sanctions. These factors are explained in more detail in Box 1 and Box 2.

BOX 1. OIL AND THE ECONOMY OF LIBYA

Libya's economy is bound up with the price of crude petroleum and the OPEC export quotas. The discovery of oil in the 1950s and the subsequent economic boom of the 1970s and 1980s intensified existing patterns of migration to Libya and cemented their place in the regional economy.

The Libyan economy depends on oil exports for 95 percent of its hard currency. Libya is said to have about 36 million barrels of known oil reserves (3 percent of the world total), but only 25 percent of its reserves have been explored. The country also has plentiful reserves of natural gas (Romero, 2004).

Many multinational oil companies have shifted their focus from Iraq to Libya since the lifting of sanctions, driven also by growing security fears and uncertainty over the investment climate in Iraq. Libya has large reserves and little acreage has been explored using modern techniques (Anon, 2005). Another reason for the interest in Libya is that the crude oil produced there is low in sulphur, and thus is relatively easy and cheap to refine for consumption in the US and Europe. In addition, Libya's location on the Mediterranean provides relatively easy access to southern Europe and to the United States. In January 2005 the Libyan National Oil Corporation granted 15 new oil and gas exploration concessions to American and Australian oil companies.

BOX 2. HISTORY OF SANCTIONS

There have been long periods of hostility between the US and Libya since the seventies over what the Americans termed Libya's radicalism, links to the Soviet Union, and most importantly sponsorship of terrorism. This has led to the imposition of US, EU, and UN sanctions, which have subsequently been lifted.

In 1981 the US government alleged that the Libyan regime was supporting international terrorism, subverting African governments (especially that of Chad), and operating a hit squad to assassinate Libyan opposition figures in the US. The US subsequently closed the Libyan People's Bureau in Washington and urged US companies to begin an orderly withdrawal from Libya. In March 1982 the US banned all future imports of Libyan oil, and expanded controls on most US exports to Libya such that all exports except for food and agricultural and medical supplies would require licenses.

A string of terrorist incidents in the 1980s were linked with Libya including the shooting of a police constable in London, bomb attacks on Rome and Vienna airports, the bomb explosion on Pan Am flight 103 over Scotland with a loss of 270 lives in 1988, and a second bomb explosion on UTA flight 772 in Niger with the loss of 172 lives in 1989. These suspicions prompted both military retaliation, including US air strikes, and a series of diplomatic and economic sanctions by the US in 1987, and later by the EU and the UN in 1992.

In 1993 UN Security Council Resolution 883 provided for the freezing of Libyan financial assets abroad and banned the export to Libya of selected equipment for downstream operations in the hydrocarbon sector. Libya was still able to export its oil without restriction, but the ban covered all equipment that was needed for the extraction of oil and its transport to exporting terminals. The 1996 US Iran and Libya Sanctions Act imposed punishment on non-US companies that invested more than \$40 million in any one year in the oil and gas sectors of Libya or Iran.

The resolution of the Lockerbie bombing in 2001 combined with the post-9/11 environment resulted in resumption of relations with the US in 2002 and lifting of sanctions by the UN in 2003 and by the US in 1996 with the D'Amato Act. This opened up doors for a significant increase in foreign investment and, combined with the increase in export quotas of crude petroleum (as compared with the 1990s) and increases in the price of petroleum, bodes well for Libya's economy (Mouawad, 2005). However, this hinges on continued political stability and continued improvement in Libya-US relations.

LIBYA AND ITS FOREIGN WORKFORCE: A TIMELINE OF MIGRATION TRENDS

As a result of Gaddafi's ideals of African Unity and Pan-Arabism, Libya pursued a relatively open-door policy toward most other African nations in the 1970s and 1980s. As an immediate neighbor, Libya was an attractive destination for Darfurians, whose livelihoods had come under increasing pressure from periods of drought and famine in the 1970s and 1980s, and a longer-term process of economic and social marginalization by the central Government of Sudan of peripheral areas like Darfur. Until 1993, the main transit route from Darfur started from Mellit in North Darfur (Mellit, Kutum, Tina, and Kornoi) to Kufra by truck, via the Libyan border town of Aweinat, taking about seven days in total. In 1993 a new customs point opened in Dongola, north of Khartoum on the Nile, requiring Sudanese travelers to pass that way, though they still transited

through North Darfur. At the same time, a new bus service started operating, which opened Libya up to many Sudanese living in central and eastern parts of the country. The 1993–94 period was associated with a “rush” of Sudanese migrants.

By the mid-1990s, however, Gaddafi’s open-door policy was changing as the number of migrants increased, inflation at home reached a record high, and the economy contracted, in large part a result of economic sanctions. A once welcoming environment started to become increasingly hostile.

In 1995, Libya announced that it was ending its dependence on foreign workers in order to open up jobs for Libyans (among whom rates of unemployment were running at 30 percent) and to reduce illegal immigration. As a result, over 335,000 foreigners were reportedly sent home in 1995: 200,000 were deported and the remainder left voluntarily (Anon., 1996). The crackdown by the authorities included intensive raids (known as *kasha*) and forced repatriation.

The *kasha* were also prompted by the increasing security concerns of the Libyan government over the infiltration into the country of fundamentalist Islamic groups, who were thought to have been trained as *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan. It was claimed that the infiltration of these groups into Libya was facilitated by the Sudanese government.

In 1996, an estimated 4,000 Sudanese migrants broke out of a detention center in Hawza Elenab and marched to the Sudanese embassy. Interviewees claimed that around 300 to 400 of them were shot and killed. Mounting international pressure and criticism of the Libyan authorities over this incident prompted the Libyan government to relax its clampdown, especially on the Sudanese. New waves of migrants quickly followed, smuggled by truck from Tina, Mellit, and Kornoï in North Darfur to Kufra, or from Chad to Sebha in Libya.

By 2000 the number of immigrants in Libya was estimated to be more than 2.5 million – one immigrant for every two Libyans. In Libya’s closed society, where it is unusual to openly discuss issues such as democracy and economic policy, the open-door policy and the increased number of migrants provided a vent for complaints from Libyans, which quickly spilled over into expressions of general dissatisfaction. Immigrants were blamed for threatening the social fabric of Libya and for a wide variety of social problems, such as crime, prostitution, and drugs.

The withdrawal of both the official and unofficial welcome for immigrants in Libya led to an increase in the number of migrants expanding their horizons to Europe, a short sea crossing away. However, the trip to Europe is expensive as well as illegal, costing between \$1,000 and \$1,800. The financing for such a trip is usually provided by relatives already in Europe or in the US. Money from these sources has to be transferred between Europe and Libya via the *hawala* system, for both Sudanese and non-Sudanese migrants.

Press reports describe an order by the Libyan authorities to crack down on the employment of foreign workers, with the aim of “the Libyanisation of employment.” By August/September 2000 simmering resentment and tensions boiled over into violence in Zawiya, Zahrah, and other locations in Libya. Press reports of the number of people killed ranged from 50 to 500, among them many Sudanese.

In February 2004 the Libyan General People’s Congress approved laws to further restrict immigration and to expatriate Africans and other migrants who lived in Libya but who had no steady jobs. Proper identity papers were now required of every migrant worker. In addition, foreign workers – including Sudanese – were required to obtain a health certificate, showing that they had successfully passed a series of clinical health tests, including one for HIV. The certificate must be renewed every six months for restaurant workers and every year for other workers. However, the health tests are available only to legal immigrants, *i.e.*, those with identity papers, and those who can pay the fee of Libyan dinar (LD) 70 (\$50). Failing a test risks the forfeiture of identity papers, imprisonment, and deportation. Interviewees estimated that the proportion of Sudanese with legal papers and health certificates was approximately three in every ten. Clearly there is a huge difference between the legal and illegal migrant workers; as one respondent described, “the authorities are very strict – people cannot work without certificates.” According to one woman, the wife of a trader, “Even if you have money, you are under pressure to go [back to Sudan].”

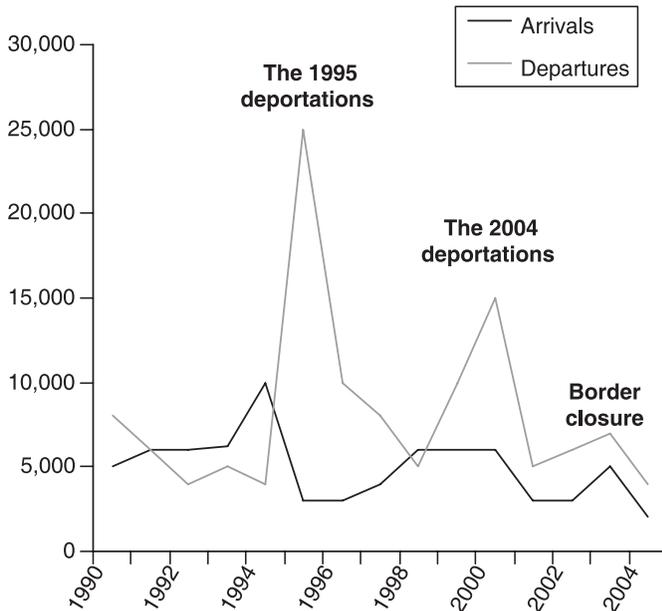
In mid-2004, the flow of Sudanese migrants into Libya from Darfur had almost ceased, for three reasons: first, insecurity in Darfur made travel more hazardous, especially on the routes through the desert in North Darfur; second, the national border between Sudan and Libya had been closed since May 2003; and third, many groups of prospective young labor migrants were absorbed instead into the different tribal militia and warring factions in Darfur.

Focus groups from Kufra were asked to map these recent trends in labor migration and the results are shown in Figure I. The graph reflects the major trends in Sudanese labor migration, including

- the 1995 deportations, and the subsequent fall in numbers arriving;
- the 2000 deportations, and the further fall in numbers;
- the impact of the border closure in 2004 and, indirectly, the loss of trade.

When asked why they came to Libya, a women’s focus group, most of whom had arrived between 1988 and 1999, responded, “the situation is better here, there is more chance for work”; “development in Darfur has not progressed”; “there is a chance for education and healthcare”; “we came to join our husbands, who found work first.” This older group of migrants expressed concerns about

Figure I. Annual Number of Sudanese Arriving at and Departing from Kufra, Southeastern Libya



the impact of the border closure and the effect that has had on their lives and livelihoods, without talking directly about the conflict in Darfur.

Since the Government of Sudan closed the national border between Libya and Darfur (almost certainly as a result of the Darfur conflict), there have been four options for Darfurians traveling to and from Libya:

1. from Tina on the Darfur/Chad border, through Chad and north to Kufra (15 days by truck);
2. from Tina on the Darfur/Chad border, through Chad and north to Sebha;
3. smuggled illegally through the desert of North Darfur;
4. biweekly flights from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Kufra. These cost LD 250 (\$188) one way and LD 350 (\$263) return, and are only really an option for the rich and for those with legal identity papers. However, this option is not commonly used even by rich Darfurians, and many of the flights are cancelled because there are not enough travelers. Sudanese are concerned that they might be interrogated by security forces when they arrive and also that they may not be able to leave El Fasher.

Tina straddles either side of the Sudan/Chad national border and is an important hub for migrants. The journey is long and hazardous as a result of banditry and the risks of unexploded ordinance (left from the bombing of the area around Tina by the Government of Sudan counterinsurgency). Water supplies are carefully rationed out to three cups of water per person per day. The return journey from Kufra to Tina incurs high taxation fees amounting to approximately Sudan pound (SP) 400,000 (\$156) in taxes on top of the fare of between SP 250,000 and SP 750,000 (about \$100–\$300). In contrast, a single passage through the North Darfur desert including all taxes previously cost about LD 80–90 (\$60–\$70).

The third option of traveling illegally – being smuggled through the desert – is extremely arduous and risky, both because of the insecurity on the Darfurian side of the border and because vehicles cannot stop for provisions at the border checkpoints. Fatalities are common; the week before the team's visit a Sudanese land cruiser was picked up by police patrols inside Libya's borders with 35 passengers, of whom 28 had died. Between 1997 and 2004, the SPC recorded the deaths of 486 travelers after crossing the Libyan border, and who were buried inside Libya. The most hazardous part of the journey is the stretch through the desert in North Darfur, for which there is no record of deaths. Several sources confirmed that it was not uncommon for land cruisers to carry up to 40 passengers.

The onward journey from either Kufra or Sebha in southern Libya depends on whether or not migrants have the appropriate identity papers (passport or travel documents), including a Libyan health certificate. If they have papers, they may take a normal Libyan bus to the coast, which costs LD 13 (\$9.75). Without a passport or health certificate, they must pay to be smuggled from Kufra to Benghazi on routes that bypass the security points. This costs more than LD 100 (\$75).

Onward Travel to Europe

Onward travel to Europe is the goal of many Sudanese, including Darfurians, albeit illegal. In Europe, especially Italy, concerns about the smuggling of illegal immigrants to Europe from Libya have long been raised. The summer months of June to September are the main season for smuggling activity. The smugglers are reportedly Libyan, but there are also many Sudanese involved. According to one source working for an informal organization supporting migrants, of the 20–30 boats leaving northern Libya for Italy, only two or three actually reach their destination. The others are either caught by the Libyan authorities, carried off course by currents to Tunisia or Malta, or capsize. There are many stories of drowning among the Sudanese. The source estimated the number of people who

have died on their way to Europe after leaving from the Benghazi area to be 100 since 2002. Tripoli is the main point of departure for trafficking, and not Benghazi.

The *New York Times* reported in July 2004 that more than 400 illegal immigrants trying to reach Italy by sea from Libya had arrived on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa over a period of three days (Horowitz, 2004). In late July 2004, the Italian interior minister, Giuseppe Pisanu, warned parliament that two million people were waiting to depart Libya for Italy (Horowitz, 2004).

Estimates of Numbers of Sudanese in Libya in 2004

The team found no official estimates of the numbers of Sudanese in Libya, let alone estimates of numbers of Darfurians. The International Labour Organisation's International Labour Migration Database has no statistics for either Sudan or Libya. In 1995, reports estimated the total population of Sudanese in Libya to be 500,000, of whom 70,000 have subsequently left as a result of the deportations (Anon., 1996). Sudanese interviewees quoted the Sudanese Embassy's official estimate of 250,000 registered legal Darfurian workers in Libya, but the original source of this estimate could not be traced. The embassy is also reported to estimate that there are 70,000 Darfurians in Libya illegally, who have crossed through the desert. This would make a total of 320,000 – or 5 percent of Darfur's total population of 6.26 million. As a result of this research a more realistic estimate is considered to be in the range of 150,000 to 250,000 Darfurians, which includes both legal and illegal immigrants.²

A CASE STUDY OF DARFURIAN LIVELIHOODS IN KUFRA

Background

Kufra in southeastern Libya is the main transit point for Sudanese coming to Libya either from Darfur or other parts of the Sudan. As an important transit point for migrant workers, Kufra has a fluid population of migrants. The majority of Sudanese in Kufra are Darfurians – up to 80 percent, according to one source. Most Sudanese in Kufra live in Jincia – an outlying village populated by migrants about 10 km from the main town. The name “Jincia” means “nationalities,” and the village is home to people from Chad, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Morocco, Egypt, and Syria, as well as Palestinians.

²A top estimate of 250,000 would indicate that approximately 20% of households in Darfur have a family member in Libya. This was supported by research undertaken later in Darfur (Young *et al.*, 2005).

TABLE 1
PROFILE OF SUDANESE LABOR MIGRANTS IN KUFRA, SOUTHEASTERN LIBYA (JULY 2004)

Age	15–30 years	42.5%
	31–50 years	48.5%
	> 50 years of age	9%
Marital Status	Married	75.5%
	Unmarried	24.5%
Level of Education	Primary and secondary	71.3%
	Illiterate	26.4%
	University graduate	2.3%
Date of Arrival in Kufra	After 2000	70.0%
	1990–2000	23.2%
	Before 1990	6.8%

Note: Total sample of 385 Sudanese men, of whom 300 (78 percent) came from Darfur.
 Source: Rapid assessment survey by El Kufra University.

Jinca is remarkable for its well-developed and extensive marketplace, which serves migrants who wish to buy goods to take or send back home. Sudanese and Chadians are the largest groups. Concentrations of Sudanese are also found elsewhere in Kufra – on the town's large agricultural project, in the livestock market, on private farms, or working in the main town as traders or for organizations. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the characteristics of Sudanese migrant workers living in Kufra, based on a survey undertaken by the University of Kufra. All of those in the sample were men. A small number of Sudanese women are found in Kufra, most of them the wives of established workers or tradesmen. It is rare for women to come to Libya unless it is to join their husbands, although households were found where the man is no longer able to work and therefore the woman is the main provider. In Benghazi, for example, there are a few women working as teachers and nursing assistants.

It might be expected that labor migrants would be predominantly young, unmarried men seeking their fortunes, but in fact in Kufra most were married and a high proportion of them were aged thirty and above. This profile suggests a relatively mature and skilled labor force, with relatively high rates of education and literacy. Data from 2001 indicated that adult literacy rates in Darfur and Kordofan were around 38 percent of the population over the age of fifteen (Cobham, 2005); at 71 percent, the rate among male migrants to Libya is nearly twice as high. (How this profile has been influenced by the recruitment of young men to fight on either side in the conflict is unclear.)

Social Organization

There is a Sudanese consulate in Benghazi, with a new suboffice opened in Kufra in July/August 2004. A number of Sudanese associations are recognized

by the Libyan authorities and are therefore permitted to operate openly, in collaboration with groups such as the Libyan Red Crescent. The Sudanese Popular Congress in Kufra is one such group; the SPC stresses the strong social and economic linkages between Kufra and Darfur and North Kordofan, in times both of stability and of crisis. Some Libyans also have strong contacts with Sudan – for example, members of the Libyan Red Crescent worked with their Sudanese counterparts in Darfur during the 1985 famine.

The SPC was established in 1981, essentially for purposes of political and military coordination by followers of Sadiq al-Mahdi, who left Sudan and regrouped in southeastern Libya during the regime of Colonel Numayri. Among its roles were assisting newly arrived migrants from Sudan, including raising contributions from other Sudanese, and organizing the burials of those who perished on the journey.

In addition, there are a number of informal groups (*i.e.*, without official recognition from the Libyan authorities or the Sudanese consulate) who organize support for Sudanese communities in Libya, including supporting new arrivals by giving advice and information, helping with accommodation, finding work, and sometimes providing credit and skills-based training.

There are well-developed and strong tribal and family networks, through which established migrants assist new arrivals, particularly during their first two months in the country. Many Sudanese small businessmen, including tailors, shoe cleaners, and cobblers, described how their contacts had supported them initially in helping them to set up their businesses, providing them with both capital and skills training (*i.e.*, working with other Sudanese).

Loans are available from friends and family when migrant workers first arrive – usually up to about LD 50 (\$38). Loans can also be organized through travel agents (run by migrants) who are prepared to help with travel to other parts of Libya. A Sudanese women's focus group in Benghazi explained that they faced particular difficulties in paying school fees for their children. To help with this, they have set up a savings scheme known as the “*Sondook* system,” in which each woman in a group contributes a small sum, and the total collected is given to one of the members.

The informal networks are coming under increasing strain with the decline in economic opportunities in Libya, combined with the polarizing effects of the conflict in Darfur. There is increasing anxiety among migrants as news comes through of atrocities or personal losses, or contact is lost altogether. Although the Darfur conflict is widely understood by Darfurians in Libya not to be tribal in nature, it has sharpened the division between tribes and caused ethnic groups to band together more closely. There have

been tensions, and a limited amount of conflict, between Zaghawa and Arab Darfurians in Benghazi.

Employment

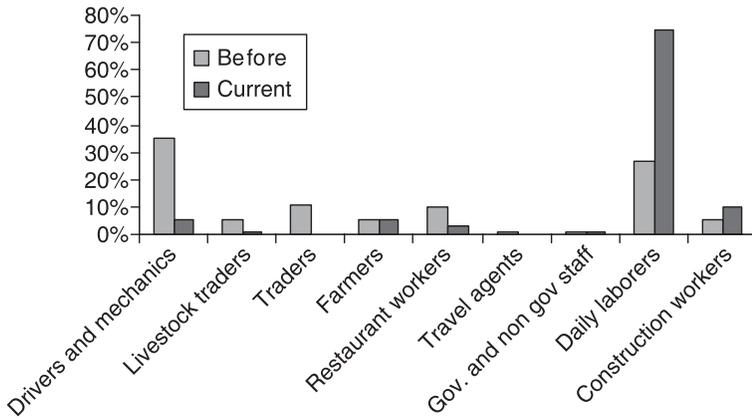
Sudanese who had lived and worked in Libya through the 1990s commented on the difficulties experienced after 1995, due to the government restrictions and deportations. Combined with the economic decline in Libya, these restrictions have affected work opportunities for Sudanese migrant workers. The work available in Kufra ranges from unskilled labor on farms, construction sites, loading trucks, etc., to the often highly skilled, including government workers, technicians, artisans (*e.g.*, self-employed tailors), restaurant owners, transborder truck drivers, caravan guides, traders, and middlemen. Truck drivers and mechanics must be experienced in order to make the extremely arduous journey between Sudan and Libya, and possibly onward to Alexandria, and they command high fees (*see* Table 2). The temporary opening of a food aid corridor from Kufra taking food aid to refugee camps in Chad planned for late 2004 was dependent on Sudanese drivers and mechanics.

A variety of merchants specialize in particular trades, including livestock (camels and sheep), goods (household items and food), vehicle spare parts, and agricultural seeds. The livestock trade is a major employer and source of livelihood for Darfurians, both in Darfur itself and in Kufra. Those in Libya include the livestock traders themselves, herders, and drovers (usually young men aged 20–30) and the *habir*, guides, and lead herders, who are usually older and very experienced.

There are two types of camel herders: those who work within Sudan and who travel as far as Mellit, and those who take over the herding from Mellit to Kufra. The former are paid on a daily rate, while the latter are paid a sum of LD 250 (\$188) for the journey, plus their food, which amounts to around LD 60 (\$45). The journey takes approximately 30–35 days to complete. A herd of 500–600 camels requires around 16 herders, at a ratio of 3–4 herders per 100 camels, with just one *habir* for the group. Herding camels to Libya provides young men with a good opportunity to migrate, and some might stay on and work in Libya.

Figure II shows the distribution of the occupations of Sudanese migrants in Kufra before the border closure (May 2003) and during fieldwork in July 2004. The closure of the border has had a strongly negative impact on drivers and mechanics, livestock traders, other traders, and restaurant workers – all those whose work depends on border trade and the traffic of migrants. Conversely, it has led to an increase in those describing themselves as daily laborers, who have no fixed work and will take whatever jobs they can. Sudanese

Figure II. Occupations of Sudanese Migrants in Kufra before the Border Closure in May 2003 and during the Fieldwork in July 2004 (Excludes Those in Transit)



in Libya do not admit to being unemployed, as this might risk their being detained, and daily laboring work is relatively easy to come by.

Workers at the Kufra Agricultural Project and Flour Mill. The Kufra Agricultural Project is a large mechanized and irrigated farm that was established with US assistance before the sanctions era. The project's foreign workforce is dominated by Sudanese: 54 out of 140 foreign workers (39 percent) (*see* Table 3). Seasonal workers are employed for 3 to 4 months, depending on the needs of the project. Of the skilled workers who are employed year-round, 39 percent are Sudanese. These employees tend to be long-term, and one man had worked there for 24 years and another for 26.

The manager of the project explained that 5 years previously it had employed up to 150 Sudanese workers, but the numbers had declined partly because of the government's drive to "Libyanise" skilled jobs and partly because production had fallen by an estimated 50 percent, due to the lack of spare parts for US-made machinery. However, the manager was hopeful that the lifting of sanctions would mean renewed access to spare parts and to foreign investment.

Rates of Pay. In Kufra, camel caravan leaders command the highest wage rates, even higher than professional technicians (Table 3). They are followed closely by experienced lorry drivers – which illustrates the importance of the camel caravans and trade traffic between Libya and Sudan. Professional workers

TABLE 2
EXAMPLES OF WAGE RATES FOR FOREIGN WORKERS IN KUFRA AND BENGHAZI

Occupation	Kufra	Benghazi
Experienced Lorry Driver	LD 600 per journey to Darfur (\$450)	
Experienced Cook	LD 600 per month (\$450)	
Less Experienced Cook	LD 300 per month (\$226)	
Grocery Shop Worker	LD 150–200 per month (\$113–\$150)	LD 150 (\$113)
Unskilled Agricultural Worker	Up to LD 120 per month (\$90)	LD 120–150 per month (\$90–\$113)
Skilled Worker (e.g., Tailor)	LD 250–500 per month (\$188–\$376)	LD 500–600 per month (\$376–\$450)
Caravan Leader/Guide	LD 1,500 (\$1,128) per journey, plus food	
Caravan Herder, Mellit to Kufra	LD 250 (\$188) per journey	
Daily Laborer	LD 2–3 per day (\$2)	LD 3–5 per day (\$4)
Government and Private Sector	LD 200–250 per month (\$150–\$188)	
Kufra Agricultural Project		
Technician	LD 700 per month (\$526)	
Seasonal Laborer	LD 150–190 per month (\$113–\$143)	
Unskilled Contract Worker – Local Contract	LD 190–300 per month (\$143–\$226)	
Unskilled Contract Worker – Foreign Contract	LD 450–500 per month (\$338–\$376)	
Daily Laborer (No Contract)	Varies according to work done	LD 3–5 per day (\$4)

Note: LD = Libyan dinar.

TABLE 3
FOREIGN WORKERS EMPLOYED BY THE KUFRA AGRICULTURAL PROJECT AND FLOUR MILL

	Sudanese		Other Foreign Workers		All	
Skilled	22	39%	34	61%	56	100%
Unskilled Seasonal Workers	32	38%	52	62%	84	100%
Total	54	39%	86	61%	140	100%

(technicians) are usually employed on a ns“foreign contract,” which means that a proportion of their earnings is transferred through the banking system.

Costs of Living for Sudanese Migrant Workers in Kufra. Basic foodstuffs, including wheat flour, oil, and sugar, are subsidized by the Libyan government, but are only available to Libyan citizens while migrant workers have to pay full market prices. Wheat flour, for example, costs the Kufra Agricultural Project LD 385 (\$289) per tonne to produce, and is sold to Libyan consumers for LD

50 (\$38) per tonne. These food subsidies were designed to lessen the impact of high inflation on Libyan consumers, and to guarantee their basic food needs.

Remittances Sent from Libya

The majority of Darfurian labor migrants have left Darfur for economic reasons – to support both their immediate and more extended families. More than 70 percent of those surveyed in the rapid assessment were married, with their families in Darfur, thus requiring substantial financial support.

Sudanese migrant workers in Libya remit money and/or goods back to their families using the following mechanisms:

- hand-carried, either personally or sent with a close friend or relative traveling by truck, land cruiser, or plane (planes are only used by the better-off and are suited only to small items and messages);
- through the *hawala* system; this is used mainly by Darfurians in the coastal towns, which are geographically more remote from Darfur.

However, since the closure of the national border between Sudan and Libya, remittances from Libya to Darfur have almost ceased.

The Hawala System. The *hawala* system is based on a network of *hawaldar*, or local financial intermediaries. It is available to those who want to send remittances to people living in the main towns in Darfur (or who have contacts there) including, for example, El Fasher, Mellit, Kutum, Geneina, and Nyala. One Darfurian migrant said that the *hawala* system was only used in an emergency, as it had the advantage of speed. *Hawaldar* are now making use of satellite phones, which greatly improve communications.

When sending a *hawala* (which can be either a money or a goods transfer), the worker in Libya approaches a local *hawaldar*, who phones a *hawaldar* in the destination town in Sudan. He then contacts the recipient and asks the recipient to come to the phone to speak with the sender. The sender confirms to the *hawaldar* in Sudan that the recipient is indeed the right person, and the *hawaldar* hands over the agreed sum. Only then is the *hawaldar* in Libya paid by the sender.

Sending a *hawala* incurs costs, which is why Darfurians try to hand-carry their remittances whenever possible. In Kufra, the *hawala* system is less commonly used by Darfurian migrants than by Sudanese from other parts of Sudan. The *hawaldar* make their money from the differential in exchange rates between the two currencies. For example, a cobbler described how he sends his wife in Gezira money every six months – currently, for every LD 60

(\$45) he gives the *hawaldar*, his wife receives SP 100,000 (\$39). The difference (\$6) is the profit for the *hawaldar*.

Darfurian traders and *hawaldar* in Benghazi explained that the *hawala* system functions across the Gulf and as far afield as Europe, serving all nationalities. This means that people in other parts of the world have been able to support their relatives and friends in Libya, especially those using Libya as a transit point to other countries. Traders unable to use the banking system in Benghazi use the *hawala* system to transfer sums of about SP 2 million (\$800) at a time to the Gulf and to Saudi Arabia to buy goods. These goods are then sent from Saudi Arabia directly to Sudan.

One *hawaldar* in Benghazi explained that he served around 300 people of all nationalities, sending monthly *hawala* worldwide. Around 48 of these (16 percent) were thought to be from Darfur. The amounts sent varied from LD 60 to LD 240 per person (\$45–\$180), with an average of LD 150 (\$113).

Size of Cash Remittances. Focus groups estimated how much cash migrant workers used to remit to Darfur before the crisis. The value and type of the remittance (cash or kind) depended on many factors: the income of the worker; family ties and responsibilities at home in Darfur; the system of transferring the remittance; the planned duration of the worker's stay in Libya; and the proximity of the recipients in Darfur to urban centers.

Incomes obviously determined how much was available to send back; higher-paid workers were able to send more (approximately \$950 per annum as compared to about \$300 per annum), and were also able to send a higher proportion of their salary (30% to 42% compared with 14% to 24%). This is presumably because basic living expenses in Libya fall within a limited range, which thus leaves a higher proportion of disposable income.

Focus groups' estimates of remittances were remarkably similar (between \$271 and \$319 per annum for unskilled workers, and \$812–\$958 per annum for skilled workers), and were supported by data from other interviewees. The most commonly cited amounts to be sent at any one time ranged between LD 30 and LD 90 (\$23–\$68).

The amounts remitted also depended on the nature and strength of the family ties back in Darfur. Married men whose wives and children were in Darfur naturally sent back a higher proportion of their earnings than single men with fewer dependents. One focus group in Darfur estimated that married men sent back between SP 300,000 and SP 400,000 every six months (\$230–\$312 per annum), while single men sent about SP 100,000–200,000 every year (\$39–\$78 per annum).

Remittances in Kind. Apart from money, it was very common for Darfurians to send back goods, including clothes, rice, sugar, infant formula, and oil, all of which are more expensive in Darfur. For example, one young man described how every month he sent one sack of sugar and one sack of flour to his parents in Mellit. The amount sent also depended partly on whether friends and family were traveling back home, and if they were able to carry goods or cash. Mellit, in North Darfur, was particularly well-served in this respect, as many Sudanese truck drivers came from there and would willingly carry cash and goods.

The remittance of goods had all but stopped during the research team's visit because of the border closure, but there were examples of men still trying to send. However, there were problems associated with sending cash rather than goods: first, the very high rate of inflation in Darfur and shortages of some commodities as a result of the crisis (before the conflict and the closure of the border, prices in Darfur were lower than in other parts of Sudan, but they are now much higher); second, the state of insecurity and the risk of being robbed, or worse; and third, poor communications.

There is an entire trade industry in Jincia (Kufra) that supplies goods to individual migrant workers for sending back to Darfur. Many of the shops in the souk are run by Darfurians of a particular ethnic group or geographic origin. Traders in general goods reported that, since the border closure, demand has dropped significantly. When individuals did travel with their own goods, they took a much wider range of household items.

Impact of Border Closure on Trade and on Darfurian Livelihoods. The border closure has also had a devastating effect on local and transnational trade (between Sudan, Libya, and other Arab countries) and on the livelihoods of those engaged in livestock and other trade, and in travel and other services for migrant workers. The trade of livestock and other commodities between Darfur and Libya has all but stopped, and this has severely affected the livelihoods of all those connected with this trade, including producers, middlemen, herders, and guides. The dwindling supply of camels is causing prices in Kufra to rise, while prices of camels in Darfur have fallen. The prices of basic foodstuffs, usually imported from Libya, have also risen in Darfur.

Communications

For people living in Kufra, communications with Darfur have become more difficult since the May 2003 closure of the border. Before that, they could send

hand-carried messages, recorded cassettes, and letters. According to one interviewee, "Before June 2003 contact was good, letters were hand-carried by relatives, but there has been no news since then." Many others report no direct news since that time, but have learned indirectly (in part through television reports) that their villages have been attacked and the inhabitants moved to IDP camps. No one, without exception, had had any contact with relatives or friends in the camps.

It is possible to make phone calls to family and friends living in the main towns in Sudan; the traders' wives, for example, reported phoning relatives in Mellit. The better-off can also send messages and money by plane, hand-carried by people they know. However, for most Darfurians phone calls are generally considered prohibitively expensive. Phone calls between Benghazi and Darfur cost LD 1.5 (\$1) per minute.

The current limited prospects for Sudanese migrant workers, combined with the threat of detention and the difficulties involved in returning to Sudan, mean that many migrant workers expressed an increasing sense of desperation. There were reportedly six suicides among the Sudanese living in Jincia in the first half of 2004. The Sudanese Popular Congress said this was unprecedented.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Effects of the Darfur Conflict on Migration to Libya

The Darfur conflict has dramatically affected labor migration to Libya and the situation of Darfurians in Libya. First, the insecurity in North Darfur, which borders southern Libya, principally as a result of rebel activity, has rendered the trade and migration routes unsafe. Second, the closure of the border by the Government of Sudan has stopped all transborder trade and labor migration and has cut off the usual channels of communication (hand-carried messages and remittances). For many poorer Darfurians (especially those in the Kufra area), this effectively prevents them from returning to Darfur and has created very specific problems among the large numbers of stranded migrant workers. It also meant that migration to Libya from Darfur was at all time low and that this was not a route for people to escape the conflict. However, before the border closure it appeared some younger men had come to Libya specifically to avoid becoming either a combatant or displaced to urban areas.

Many of the stranded migrant workers decide to wait in Kufra rather than return to the coast, in the hope of finding a passage back to Darfur, via Chad. But with little opportunity for employment, this long wait erodes their assets and savings, puts pressure on their food supplies, and stretches social

support networks to the limit. Overcrowded housing and deteriorating conditions have contributed to health problems which prompted a distribution of medicines to the Sudanese community in May 2003 by the Libyan Red Crescent. Some Darfurians have reportedly put their belongings (which in large part are the goods they wish to take back to Sudan) into commercial storage, and gone back to look for work in other parts of Libya.

Pressure on Migrants as a Result of Conditions in Libya

Darfurian migrants have been affected both directly and indirectly by the US/UN sanctions, suffering the effects of inflation (without the protection of the subsidies that are available to Libyans) and the contraction of the economy and the labor market. The shrinking economy was a major factor in the crackdown by the Libyan authorities on migrant labor, which started in 1995 and continues intermittently to this day. In addition, declining exchange rates in the mid- to late 1990s seriously affected the value of the cash remittances flowing back to Sudan. In 1996, LD 100 was equivalent to \$350, while in 2004 it bought only \$133.

Migrants are also suffering from the more recent imposition of requirements for costly health examinations and associated health certification. This will inevitably lead to increasing numbers of illegal immigrants and to more detentions of foreign workers. This situation, combined with the insecurity and lack of opportunity in Darfur, puts pressure on workers to seek opportunities to reach Europe, hence the increase in illegal boat traffic to Italy in mid-2004.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the longer term, the economic situation in Libya is expected to improve as the lifting of sanctions and new investment begin to take effect. Libya relies heavily on the foreign migrant workforce, with the Sudanese being a particularly skilled and therefore welcome group, and they will be needed more than ever. The question is, however, how long it will take for these positive developments to trickle down and have an effect on the situation of foreign workers?

In the short term there are a number of policy and programmatic measures that should be taken to ease the situation of the Darfurians in Libya. First, and most importantly, it is vital that the border be reopened. However, given the length of the closure, the buildup of migrants on both sides of the border, and the state of insecurity in North Darfur, this must be done in a careful and controlled manner. Negotiations and agreements on the opening of the border and the protection of trade routes will require commitments and

actions by the opposition parties as well as by the Government of Sudan. This should be supported by the African Union, which has been responsible for mediating peace talks as well as overseeing security in Darfur. An information campaign is needed to inform Darfurians in Darfur of the hardships they are likely to face in Libya. However, until there is peace in Darfur, Libya will remain an attractive option to Darfurians if they can get there.

Given the conflict in Darfur, every consideration should be given to granting amnesty for all Sudanese currently in Libya without identity papers or health certificates, which (assuming the conflict in Darfur is resolved) would allow them the options of either returning to Sudan or taking the health test and applying for identity papers so that they could work legally in Libya.

Finally, immediate steps should be taken to improve communications between Darfurian migrant workers and their families in Darfur, and to provide mechanisms for family tracing. This will automatically contribute to improving the flow of remittances back to Darfur. At the same time, the security of routes and public transport, including bus routes to and from Darfur, must be secured.

The focus of this paper has been the situation of the Darfurian migrants in Libya and how the Darfur conflict has affected them and their remittance flows. These remittances are a central livelihood strategy and source of income for Darfurians in Darfur, a topic which is considered in detail elsewhere (Young *et al.*, 2005). Of importance to note here is that international response to crisis and displacement requires understanding and taking into account the level, pattern, and mechanisms of migration and remittance flows to the affected population. Similarly, any strategy for longer-term recovery needs to look beyond the area itself to the diasporas in first, second, and even third destination countries and consider the role of economic migration and remittances and how to facilitate this. Any response should consider how to support the economic migrants who send back remittances as well as supporting conditions that allow for restarting of remittance flows.

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