



## Too Little for Too Few: Meeting the needs of youth in Darfur

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
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## Acronyms/Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programs
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GoS	Government of Sudan
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SLA/M	Sudan Liberation Army/Movement
SLA-AW	Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Abdel Wahid Mohammed Ahmed El-Nur
SPI	Sudan People's Initiative
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

## Definitions

**Apprenticeships:** A period of on-the-job training to learn a skill through practical experience; sometimes referred to as “industrial training.”

**Life skills:** The large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help youth make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. These skills can include communication and interpersonal skills; decision-making and critical thinking skills; and coping and self-management techniques.

**Livelihoods:** The means by which households obtain and maintain access to the resources necessary to ensure their immediate and long-term survival.

**Market analysis:** A systematic investigation of the factors, conditions and characteristics of a market; frequently used to determine trends in supply and demand that can inform product development, marketing strategy and economic intervention.

**Market assessment:** The data-gathering process of collecting information that will be used in a market analysis to determine the factors, conditions and characteristics of a market.

**Skills training:** See vocational training

**Vocational training:** Practical and theoretical instruction to prepare an individual for a particular skilled labor; the extent of the preparation varies by service provider.

## Executive Summary

From June to November 2008, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children conducted an assessment of educational and skills training opportunities available to displaced youth in Darfur. This report looks at the challenges and opportunities young people face; examines existing services targeting youth; identifies programming gaps; and provides recommendations on how donors, policymakers and field practitioners can more effectively support displaced youth in Darfur.

Almost six years into the current conflict in Darfur, there are very few education and skills building opportunities to meet the needs of a large and growing population of young people. The research found that the few programs that do exist are able to serve only a very small number of young women and men. According to available information, there are no secondary schools in the camps for displaced people and traveling to town to attend school is almost impossible due to school fees, travel distance and insecurity. Meaningful employment opportunities are sparse for young people as the conflict has disrupted traditional livelihoods and livelihood coping strategies across Darfur.

The study showed that while vocational and technical training programs do operate in Darfur, very few humanitarian agencies specifically target young women and men. Out of 124 local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), youth groups and UN agencies reviewed for this report, only 15 explicitly target youth (15-24 years old) and of those that did, 14 focus on education and/or livelihoods. Training programs that do exist face many programmatic challenges, including operating under increasingly insecure conditions and attempting to match longer-term education needs of young people with shorter-term donor funding cycles. Young women, rural youth and those with disabilities, in particular, have more difficulties accessing programs and services that do exist.

Within the UN humanitarian coordination system, no specific working group or sector is responsible for vocational training and/or youth. Reports indicated that attention to challenges facing young people and cross-organizational coordination is minimal.

Despite these challenges, information gathered highlighted how many young people continue to contribute to the welfare of their communities, such as volunteering to teach younger children and leading information campaigns.



While these Darfuri girls are attending school in refugee camps in Chad, few of those displaced within Darfur have similar opportunities.

With approximately 1.2 million young people in Darfur, a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to meeting their needs is required. Young women and men are a critical asset to the reconstruction and development of their country. If youth are not supported and do not see any opportunities for employment in their future, it can lead to negative coping strategies such as

violence, alcohol abuse, involvement in illegal activities or recruitment into armed groups. Providing young people with educational opportunities, appropriate skills training and safe conditions in which they can learn and develop these skills will help to ensure that they are well-equipped to be active participants and leaders in the rebuilding of Darfur.

#### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN, UN AGENCIES, NGOS AND DONORS:

- **Expand the scope and scale of education and skills building programs for young people.** Programs should be comprehensive, of sufficient length and include: basic education; life skills and civic education components; and provide quality instruction to build competence in a specific trade that responds to market demand. A strong monitoring and evaluation component should be included in all programs, including tracking graduates and making adjustments to courses as needed.
- **Tailor programs to meet the specific needs of different groups of young people, especially marginalized groups, such as young women, rural youth and those with disabilities.** Barriers for young people's participation should be identified and programs designed to address these obstacles, such as flexible schedules so young women can balance participation with other responsibilities.
- **Strengthen coordination and information-sharing mechanisms around youth issues.** A more systematic method should be identified for the humanitarian community in Darfur to discuss and respond to young people's needs.
- **Promote youth self-assessment in all skills building programs.** Young people should be given the tools to think critically about the selection of training programs and possible job opportunities that best match their skills and needs.

For the complete recommendations, see page 10.

## Introduction

From June to November 2008, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) conducted an assessment of educational and skills training programs for displaced youth (approximately ages 15-24) in Darfur as part of its Global Initiative on Displaced Youth. This three-year research and advocacy initiative aims to increase international attention and support for educational and vocational opportunities young people need to prepare them for constructive adulthoods while they are displaced as well as when it is safe to return home or be resettled elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Darfur assessment was to look at the challenges young people face and the opportunities available, examine existing services targeting displaced youth, identify programming gaps and use the findings to propose strategies to meet young people's needs. The report is intended to assist donors, policymakers and field practitioners to more effectively support displaced youth in Darfur.

The report is based on desk research and interviews with experts, donors and service providers currently working in Darfur. It draws from previous Women's Commission missions to Darfur in 2005 and 2006<sup>2</sup> and lessons learned from related field assessments to other conflict-affected areas. Due to insecurity and difficulties with access, the Women's Commission was unable to return to Darfur in 2008 to gather additional firsthand information. While the Women's Commission intended to focus on all of Darfur, the majority of information gathered was from internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps, as less information is available from rural and nomadic communities, where access is more limited.

## Background on the conflict

The current conflict in Darfur began in February 2003, when two loosely allied rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/SLA), took up arms against the Government of Sudan (GoS) for neglecting the impoverished region. The GoS responded by mounting an aerial bombardment campaign and supporting ground attacks by an Arab militia, the *Janjaweed*\*.<sup>3</sup> The *Janjaweed* militias are accused of committing numerous human rights violations, including mass killing, looting and systematic rape of the non-Arab population, as they burned and destroyed hundreds of

so-called rebel villages throughout the region.

In May 2006, the GoS and a faction of the SLA under the rebel leader Minni Minnawi agreed to implement a cease-fire and to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA); however, another faction of the SLA, led by Abdel Wahid Mohammed Ahmed El-Nur (SLA-AW), and the rebel group JEM refused to sign. JEM and SLA-AW argued that the DPA did not provide the people of Darfur with sufficient political representation.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the DPA failed, its scope too limited and its signatories too few. Opposition to the DPA exacerbated tribal divisions and sparked new waves of violence between various rebel factions that had split off, as well as newly formed groups. Currently there are an estimated 30 rebel groups in Darfur and their distinction from government forces has blurred, with government-supported Arab militias talking to rebels and rebel groups striking bargains with the GoS.<sup>5</sup> The brutal pattern of systemically targeting civilians by the government, its allied militias and rebels has continued as before the agreement.<sup>6</sup>

Hopes for the DPA were renewed, however, in November 2008 when, after hearing the final recommendations of the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI), Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir announced an immediate ceasefire in Darfur. The announcement and SPI recommendations are expected to lay the foundation for a peace conference in Qatar, the date of which has not yet been set. However, many question the authenticity of this commitment as there were reports in the days following the cease-fire of government bombings and clashes between armed groups.<sup>7</sup>

## Impact of the conflict

The impact of the conflict has been immense and widespread. Some analysts estimate that more than 300,000 civilians have been killed, mostly from the Fur, Zaghawa, Masaalit and other tribes.<sup>8</sup> An estimated 2.5 million people are internally displaced and an additional 250,000 have fled across the border into Chad.<sup>9</sup> The situation has grown worse in 2008, with more than 180,000 Darfurians newly displaced in the first six months of the year.

Given the escalating violence and insecurity, it seems unlikely that people will return home in the near future. Humanitarian agencies have advocated against the GoS forcibly resettling IDPs into unsafe areas.<sup>10</sup> An unforeseen outcome of the conflict has been the rapid urbanization in the region: as scholar Alex de Waal observes, "Five years

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\* Loosely translated to mean "Devil on horseback"

ago, Darfur was 18 percent urbanized. It's now 65 percent urbanized, and it's unlikely it will drop below 50 percent."<sup>11</sup>

## Humanitarian response

With 17,000 aid workers deployed,<sup>12</sup> the humanitarian operation in Darfur is the largest in the world today and is responsible for keeping thousands of people alive. However, over 4 million people in Darfur remain in need of humanitarian aid.<sup>13</sup> Agencies have had difficulties accessing displaced populations. Random targeted attacks on aid workers and their assets by government, militia and rebel forces alike are regular occurrences, forcing organizations to limit or suspend activities for extended periods or to close down operations altogether.<sup>14</sup> Humanitarian insecurity and lack of access have created desperate situations in some IDP camps and even more so in inaccessible rural communities.<sup>15</sup>

More than five years into the conflict, the security situation is steadily deteriorating. In May 2008, 1,000 JEM rebels reached Omdurman, a western suburb of Khartoum. The

attack marked the first time that fighting reached the capital city.<sup>16</sup> On July 8, 2008, an armed attack on a contingent of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) forces left seven African peacekeepers dead. The following week, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) requested a warrant for the arrest of President al-Bashir for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. On November 20, 2008, the ICC requested further arrest warrants for the Darfur rebels responsible for the attack on peacekeepers. In the wake of these attacks, on July 12, 2008, the United Nations moved to Phase IV, the second- highest UN security phase and the highest that permits humanitarian and security staff to remain in-country (Phase V is evacuation).<sup>17</sup> Phase IV permits only essential humanitarian and security personnel to continue working in the field, forcing agencies to operate with far fewer staff and reducing the quality and quantity of programming by an estimated 20 percent.<sup>18</sup> In September 2008, humanitarian agencies had access to only 65 percent of people in need of assistance, a level not seen since October 2006.<sup>19</sup> A return to Phase III is unlikely in the near future,

<b>Darfur Indicators</b> (all numbers are estimates)	
Total population in Darfur	6 million <sup>20</sup>
Total youth population in Darfur (ages 15-24)	1.2 million <sup>21</sup>
Total number of people affected by conflict	4.2 million <sup>22</sup>
Number killed since 2003	300,000 <sup>23</sup>
Number of IDPS	2.5 million <sup>24</sup>
Number of IDPs who are children under 18	1 million <sup>25</sup>
Number of refugees in Chad	250,000 <sup>26</sup>
Number of humanitarian agencies supporting Darfur population	85 NGOs, 16 UN agencies <sup>27</sup>
Number of people receiving food aid	2.3 million <sup>28</sup>
Global acute malnutrition <sup>29</sup>	16.1% <sup>30</sup>
Mortality	11 per 10,000 people per month <sup>31</sup>
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	116 for males and 96 for females; compared to the national average of 68 <sup>32</sup>
Under-5 mortality	20 per 10,000 children per month <sup>33</sup>
% school-age children enrolled in primary school (6-13 years old)	62% <sup>34</sup>



leaving many to worry about the fate of conflict-affected Darfurians across the region.

## Defining “youth” in Darfur

While the United Nations General Assembly defines youth as those individuals between the ages of 15 and 24,<sup>35</sup> this designation is more ambiguous within the Darfurian context. Though the term “child” is narrowly defined in Sudan as until puberty, the term *shabob* or “youth” can be quite broad; a Sudanese male may remain a youth up to age 45, regardless of marital status or employment. The definition for female youth or *shabat* is technically the same, but in reality, as one international aid worker stated, “Girls in Sudan go from being children to adults,” quickly shouldering more chores and responsibilities than their male peers.<sup>36</sup> For the purpose of this report, youth are considered to be 15 to 24 years old.

## Situation for youth in Darfur: Challenges and opportunities

Educational opportunities for young people are severely limited as information available reported that there are no secondary schools inside camps. Many donors and relief organizations consider secondary education a luxury when funding for primary school is already tight, so the only chance young people have to attend secondary school is if they are able to enroll in the nearest town.<sup>37</sup> Youth must first pay for and pass the basic education exam in order to progress to secondary school, and then face further challenges in securing transportation to nearby towns and sufficient funding to pay school fees.<sup>38</sup> There are only a limited number of secondary schools in town, meaning that young people who are able to afford the fees and secure transportation may still find themselves unable to further their studies.<sup>39</sup> As well, overcrowded secondary schools mean that many IDP youth must attend afternoon classes. This leaves girls more vulnerable to abuse, as they are frequently harassed when they return home from school in the evenings.<sup>40</sup> There is also a dearth of higher education opportunities for young people who complete secondary school.<sup>41</sup>

Meaningful employment opportunities are also sparse for young people in camps. Boys who live close to town in relatively safe areas can sometimes find work transporting heavy loads of goods, herding animals or assisting in the

markets, but many are unable to access these few opportunities due to distance and insecurity, such as attacks along the road.<sup>42</sup> Girls residing near towns sometimes work for low pay washing clothes or cleaning homes, though this leaves them vulnerable to abuse.<sup>43</sup> Other young people find menial labor activities like brick-making in the camps or occasional farm work. At a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) seminar on Youth and the Peace-building Process held in May 2008, many young people expressed feeling socially inferior within the highly hierarchical society in Darfur because they remain dependent upon others instead of providing for their families and adding to the economic wealth and development of their communities.<sup>44</sup>

“We’ve been dragged into these IDP camps, which is completely inhuman. As youths we are unable to move around. We are suffering from a lack of jobs. If women go outside, they are raped. If youth go outside they are killed,” said a 25-year-old volunteer English teacher in Kalma camp. “People are afraid. They are very sad because there is no work, no freedom and no skills to learn... People are angry and confused.”<sup>45</sup>

As a response to these challenges, young people form different types of youth groups inside the camps. Some groups provide valuable services to the community, such as leading sanitation information campaigns, teaching about HIV prevention and advocating for girls’ access to education.<sup>46</sup> Other groups purportedly provide security to IDPs who lack such protection from law enforcement or local authorities. Many of these patrolling (so-called vigilante) groups operate under the authority of rebel leaders who took control amidst a leadership vacuum inside the camps after Omdas and Sheiks\*\* had been either killed or discredited for collaborating with the government.<sup>47</sup> These youth groups have been accused of perpetrating abuses against civilians and in some cases aggravating tribal divisions.<sup>48</sup> It is unclear how many youth vigilante groups exist; several interviews and reports indicate widespread prevalence, while some people had never heard of them. While young people may at times be involved in illicit acts, one aid worker noted that they receive a disproportionate amount of blame and make easy scapegoats when issues of criminality or unrest arise.<sup>49</sup>

Despite these challenges, many young people contribute to the welfare of their communities and serve as positive role models for others. Some young people are valuable assets to their communities, taking sick people to clinics, conducting information campaigns in camps, teaching literacy

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\*\* Omdas and Sheiks are traditional leaders.

classes to other youth and finding casual labor to contribute to family incomes.<sup>50</sup> As one aid worker noted, “Youth are so helpful, ready to work as a team and implement projects voluntarily without looking at personal benefits... they show initiative and you can easily organize them to deliver messages to the communities.”<sup>51</sup> The director of a local NGO further explained that traditionally youth are looked upon as the backbone for community development and today’s young people need support to assume this role again.<sup>52</sup>

## Relations between youth and elders: Bridging the gap

Displacement, shifting communal structures and youth involvement in illicit activities have strained relations between the younger and older generations. Many older people feel that the youth have become aggressive and disrespectful towards elders.<sup>53</sup> Conversely, some young people report that traditional authorities comply too much with the Khartoum regime and are no longer responsive to the needs of the community.<sup>54</sup> While many IDPs feel that the traditional leadership has failed, this frustration tends to be strongest among young people who have spent several of their formative years confined to camps under fractured governance systems.<sup>55</sup> Many young people believe that the current circumstances will not change and this has been a major impetus for them to join armed groups.<sup>56</sup> “You have young people who are growing without hope,” UNAMID civil affairs chief Wariara Mbugua said, “and they are going to be susceptible to anything in the future, whether it’s criminal activity, whether it’s just picking up a gun.”<sup>57</sup> Others reported that youth are more employable than adults, often creating tension between the two groups.<sup>58</sup>

Intergenerational tension can place strain on youth programs, which must grapple with supporting disenfranchised young people without excluding or fueling resentment among authority figures and the older generation.<sup>59</sup> Some NGOs have attempted to bridge this gap by bolstering young people’s abilities to contribute to their communities so that the “community looks at youth as a resource rather than a threat.”<sup>60</sup> For example, youth groups might clean the camps or provide other valuable services for the community. One agency has taken steps toward bridging this gap in some of their programs by engaging elders as animators and storytellers in child-friendly spaces.<sup>61</sup>

## Marginalized youth: Young women, the disabled and rural youth

Young people in Darfur are not a homogenous group. Young women, rural youth and those with disabilities often have the least access to programs and services. Young women are responsible for many household chores and responsibilities, leaving few opportunities to attend to their own needs, such as education, vocational training and recreational activities. Low literacy and education levels, and early marriage further inhibit many young women from pursuing vocational training programs and participating in youth leadership structures.<sup>62</sup>

Young people living in rural areas outside of the camps not only face the same lack of opportunities as youth in the camps, but also live amidst greater insecurity and pressure to affiliate with rebel groups.<sup>63</sup> This insecurity of association with rebel groups has also greatly limited the number of organizations working with rural communities or with Arab tribes; as such, those organizations that do have access are overburdened and unable to provide many services.<sup>64</sup> The gender disparity is more pronounced in rural areas, where agencies have been unable to take active measures to close the gap; for example, at a rural school only 50 out of 300 students were girls<sup>65</sup> compared with an estimated 46 percent female enrollment at primary schools in IDP camps.<sup>66</sup>

There also appear to be very few services targeted at youth with disabilities despite the challenges they face. Those that do exist are insufficient; for example, the United



Girls often have the least access to services. Young people in camps and those who are disabled are especially likely to be overlooked.

Methodist Committee on Relief supports a classroom in Ed Daen for 30 deaf children and youth—the only program targeting youth with disabilities mentioned in interviews—which lacks basic furniture, instructors and appropriate learning materials due to lack of funds.<sup>67</sup>

## Education and vocational training opportunities for youth

Research conducted by the Women’s Commission found that, at the time of this report, of the 124 local and international NGOs, youth groups and UN agencies reviewed, only 15 explicitly target youth, with 14 focusing on education and/or livelihoods for youth. While it is difficult to assess the number of young people served by these programs, interview respondents all spoke of the large gaps in youth programming and the challenges in serving youth in Darfur. In short, there are far too few programs for young people. The following is an overview of available education and skills building programs.

### ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

For young people who have either dropped out of school or missed parts of their education due to displacement, a few agencies provide accelerated learning programs (ALP). ALP is designed to condense many years of traditional primary schooling into shorter modules, thus allowing older students to complete their education in a timely fashion. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing the curriculum for ALP and teacher training. While ALP assists students in catching up with their peers, it is not meant to be a substitute for primary school. However, due to the lack of available spots in primary schools, particularly in South Darfur, many children are enrolling in and continuing to progress through the ALP.<sup>68</sup>

According to the Ministry of Education, ALP should incorporate children ages 9 to 14, while youth over the age of 15 should attend adult education courses as they are too old to re-enroll in primary school education. Adult literacy courses are available in many IDP camps and consist of two different levels, basic and complementary, focused on developing reading and writing abilities.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Vocational training programs help both older and younger youth develop the skills to participate in income-generating activities. While many humanitarian agencies in Darfur run

livelihoods programs, only about 11 of these programs target youth. Some organizations operate formal vocational programs within the structured educational system provided by the state, while others conduct non-formal vocational training programs that are independent from the government.

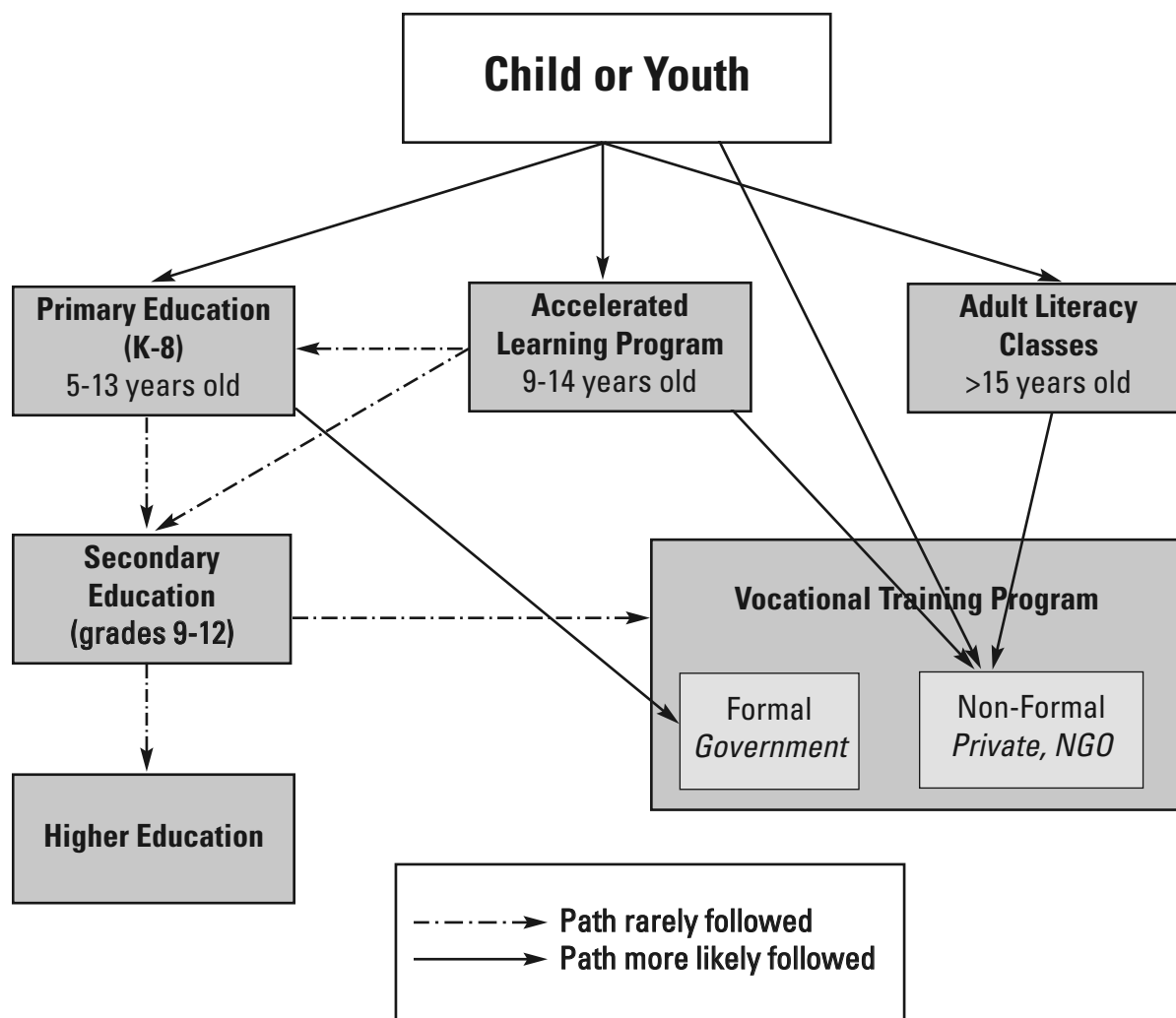
### Formal approach

The formal approach supports or operates through government-run vocational training centers and technical and industrial schools. Under the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Act of 2001, the Supreme Council for Vocational Training and Apprenticeship is the leading policymaking body for the formal vocational education system. The Ministry of Labour and Administration Reform is responsible for overseeing the operations of the vocational training centers and the Ministry of Education administers training in technical schools.<sup>69</sup> Although the framework and governing bodies indicate a national interest in promoting vocational and technical education, actual program development and implementation in Darfur has been limited.

The only two government-run vocational centers in the three Darfur states, the Vocational Institute of Mallit in North Darfur and the Mukjar Vocational Center in West Darfur, have not been operational since the onset of the war.<sup>70</sup> The technical and industrial schools, therefore, are currently the only providers of formal vocational training and education in Darfur. These institutions provide training in basic skills in construction, auto mechanics, woodwork, metalwork and electrical work but offer almost no training in agriculture and agro-business, the predominant industries in Darfur.<sup>71</sup> Nyala Technical College is the only institution to offer its own programs specifically directed towards IDPs<sup>72</sup> and was cited by one aid worker as having good equipment and well-trained staff.<sup>73</sup> At the time of this report, the following technical and industrial colleges were operational in Darfur, although assessments of their functionality varied according to interviews:

- *In South Darfur:* Nyala Technical College, Kass Technical School, Da’en Industrial School and Buram Industrial School
- *In North Darfur:* El Fasher Technical School, Um Kaddada Technical School and Kebkabiya Technical School
- *In West Darfur:* Geneina Technical School and Zalingei Agricultural School<sup>74</sup>

## Educational and vocational training opportunities for youth in Darfur



The quality of vocational training institutions in Darfur is generally poor. According to national policy, technical and industrial schools are under the financial responsibility of local authorities.<sup>75</sup> Under this decentralized system, the Darfur state governments have been unable to support maintenance upgrades for most of the technical workshops since 1985.<sup>76</sup> Many machines are in need of maintenance or replacement, schools lack toilets and water, and there are no practical exercises due to lack of funds. Most instructors are graduates from the same school and have received no further training. The closure of school lodging in the mid-1990s effectively denied access to people from rural communities.<sup>77</sup>

One NGO supports IDP students attending the vocational training centers by providing transportation from the camps and paying fees. This allows students to earn an accredited training certificate, minimizes duplication of services and

supports government programs. However, the quality of many of these institutions is low and in need of capacity building; over-stretched NGOs are unable to improve the schools, meaning that students at some facilities can access only mediocre vocational training. UNDP is currently exploring how it can play a role in improving the quality of the government system.

### Non-formal approach

Many agencies adopt a non-formal approach, operating independent skills training programs or utilizing private vocational training centers in Darfur. These programs are administered outside of the government system and have little coordination with the formal technical schools.<sup>78</sup> The advantage of non-formal courses is greater control over programming and beneficiaries. Administering non-formal programs allows agencies to determine which types of

courses to offer, what curriculum to use and who to hire as trainers. Moreover, non-formal education programs tend to charge little or no tuition and can be more accessible to young women and other groups that may not be permitted or have time to travel outside of the camps, especially given that dormitory accommodations are no longer available for students at vocational training centers.<sup>79</sup>

There are also disadvantages to non-formal education programs. They create parallel training systems rather than bolstering what already exists. This may engender dependency on the humanitarian community for support after the conflict ends. One international aid worker reported that the internal security situation in Darfur prevents donor agencies from visiting program sites, making it difficult to gain funding.<sup>80</sup> Non-formal programs also have a difficult time balancing the need for medium- and long-term training interventions with the short-term donor funding cycles.<sup>81</sup> It is difficult to build a solid skill set within a one- to three-month period, so the funding services mismatch has created problems with the effectiveness of programs.

## Challenges with vocational training

### **Selection of beneficiaries**

In both the formal and non-formal programs there are more interested participants than spots available, making the selection of vocational training beneficiaries a challenge.<sup>82</sup> Some agencies grant the Sheiks and Omdas control over identifying participants, in order to respect the traditional decision-making structure and minimize the perception that humanitarian groups create parallel governance systems.<sup>83</sup> Other NGOs, however, are concerned about the excessive control Sheiks sometimes exhibit in the distribution of humanitarian goods and services.<sup>84</sup> Their influence over the registration and determination of beneficiaries and reported nepotism has led some to question whether utilizing the traditional leadership may exclude the most vulnerable populations.<sup>85</sup> One international aid worker reported that sheiks in Darfur have requested that aid agencies consider sponsoring the children of the *Janjaweed*.<sup>86</sup> Another selection approach that was mentioned in interviews but does not appear to be currently used by any organizations is to support youth who have already organized themselves and have actively sought training.

### **Course offerings**

A further challenge is determining which vocational training programs to offer. Several agencies allow youth to fully dictate which programs will be provided so that they pursue personally interesting work; however, this approach does

not necessarily prepare young people for available job opportunities. Youth may choose to train for jobs held by their parents or other adults in the past, even though the markets have changed substantially since the conflict began.<sup>87</sup> Many of the youth also select positions that would make them eligible for jobs in urban areas, such as computer courses or English. This raises the question from the host community and government whether these courses actually prevent or discourage return to rural areas. Other agencies offer programs based on popular existing courses, but again these do not usually match the jobs that exist. Many agencies mentioned the importance of linking training programs directly to information from market assessments, though they found it difficult to translate this information into improved programming.<sup>88</sup>

### **Follow-up support**

A great concern to practitioners is how to support young people after they have completed training programs. Some organizations provide youth with start-up toolkits. But, as one aid worker noted, it can be difficult to provide the necessary supplies to help youth start new businesses without creating further dependency. This is particularly challenging given that some of the more profitable enterprises, such as welding, have steep start-up costs that require the purchase of expensive equipment.<sup>89</sup> In light of this problem, agencies often supply graduates with a few key items or help them form cooperatives to jointly purchase more costly supplies. For example, a sewing cooperative will purchase one machine together and a portion of each person's earnings will go towards paying for the equipment. Other graduates participate in apprenticeships so that they can access proper equipment, though they do not actually have their own businesses.<sup>90</sup> In other development and conflict settings micro-credit schemes have become popular. But while a few NGOs, like Practical Action, have supported revolving funds in rural areas of Darfur, they do not exist in the IDP camps.<sup>91</sup> Even if IDPs had access to revolving funds, one aid worker suggested that they would not be extended to youth due to concerns over inappropriate use of money, such as for personal consumption.<sup>92</sup>

Monitoring and evaluation of programs are generally absent. This is partly the result of insufficient funding to support adequate monitoring and evaluation. Lack of follow-up mechanisms impedes the development of an evidence base about program impact. As such, it is not known how existing programs benefit youth in the medium to long term and whether vocational training programs actually lead to employment and income generation.

### **Gender disparities**

Many agencies indicated that encouraging female participation in vocational training programs has been difficult. One NGO noted that it is particularly difficult to recruit women ages 20-25, who are more likely to be married and shouldering many other responsibilities, such as keeping house and raising children. However, the conflict has led to more female-headed households than in the past, so many women must also earn money for their families. Agencies have tried to address this problem by providing separate classes for women and working closely with female youth groups to identify interests. Female youth who enroll in skills-building programs gravitate towards activities such as handicraft-making and food processing that generate little money or are done only for psychosocial support or family events. In order to make these activities more profitable, some agencies have tracked down larger markets for women's crafts, such as distribution to wholesalers in the United States.<sup>93</sup> This approach, however, raises the question of how to sustain such income-generating activities if agencies pull out of the region when the conflict ends.

### **Coordination**

Within the UN humanitarian coordination system, no specific working group or sector is responsible for vocational training and/or youth.<sup>94</sup> Instead, youth issues are often raised in protection and child protection working group meetings when discussion time has been requested. One international aid worker observed that these discussions often tend to focus on tensions caused by youth, rather than on proactive solutions to support them.<sup>95</sup> Many aid workers said they were overwhelmed by the number of working groups and coordinating bodies in Darfur and therefore prefer to incorporate vocational training and youth into existing working groups rather than create a new one.<sup>96</sup> However, no single group has taken on the responsibility for youth and vocational training issues and many of those interviewed indicated that attention to challenges facing young people and cross-organizational coordination is minimal.



Market assessments are important to ensure that training opportunities lead to jobs.

## Market realities

The conflict has severely disrupted livelihoods and livelihood coping strategies in Darfur. Many IDPs lost financial assets, such as livestock; physical assets, such as farms and household possessions; natural resources, such as fruit trees and water resources; human capital due to deaths and attacks; and social capital, undermined by attacks on and displacement of groups, villages and families.<sup>97</sup> Trade networks and markets have also changed dramatically as a result of the conflict. The supply chain is fractured: the displacement of producers and traders has disrupted the supply and distribution of goods, insecurity has stopped or altered trade routes and the closure and decline of markets—particularly smaller rural markets—have limited demand for goods and services.<sup>98</sup> Formal and informal taxation policies, for example, government taxation on top of fees to rebel groups, have increased transportation costs dramatically. An estimated 20-30 percent of urban traders went bankrupt during the earliest days of the conflict and many more have been squeezed out of business in subsequent years.<sup>99</sup> The shrinkage of previous markets and livelihood opportunities severely restricts the opportunities youth have to earn income—irrespective of the training programs they participate in.

Some traders, however, have stayed in business by switching commodities, relying on protection from tribal networks and shifting markets out to IDP camps where new markets have emerged.<sup>100</sup> The market in Kalma camp in South Darfur, for example, is a classic shadow economy. With no taxation, IDPs and locals alike buy goods and services in the marketplace. As one worker noted, "Everything is available in this camp," including flip flops, bolts of fabric, soccer balls, kettles, dried fish, limes, cosmetics and used washcloths. A thorough understanding of shifting market realities in Darfur is an essential first step in identifying livelihood opportunities for youth and the types of educational and vocational training programs needed to prepare them for these opportunities.

## Recommendations for the Government of Sudan, UN agencies, NGOs and donors

- **Increase support for education and skills-building programs for youth.** With 15 programs targeting youth and 14 focusing on education and/or livelihoods for

youth, young people in Darfur are grossly underserved. Targeted, effective programming will help young people earn income for their families, support community development and contribute to peace-building efforts. Such programming is vital for their eventual participation in post-conflict community rebuilding efforts.

- **Ensure that training programs are comprehensive**, of sufficient length and include basic education and catch-up classes for those who have missed out on years of school. They must have quality instruction to build both competence in a specific trade and general business skills that can be transferred across vocations for adaptability to future market changes. Programs should also include life skills and civic education components so that young people develop positive leadership and social strategies, as well as an awareness of their civic rights. Provision of capital through, for example, revolving funds or cooperatives, enables youth to start and run their own businesses upon graduation.
  - **Ensure that vocational training programs are driven by market demand**, based on an assessment of opportunities, costs, competition and constraints.<sup>101</sup> Young people should be prepared for jobs that actually exist. Market assessments should include specific recommendations on how to use findings to plan and design vocational training programs. Market assessments should also examine new and emerging markets so as to not saturate existing ones and to inform future planning. A strong monitoring and evaluation component must be included in all programs, including tracking graduates and making adjustments to courses as needed.
  - **Promote youth self-assessment in all vocational training programs.** Young people should be given the tools to think critically about the selection of training programs and possible job opportunities that best match their skills and needs.<sup>102</sup> In every camp, one central location should be established where information is available on course offerings, requisite skills, resource and time commitment and possible job opportunities after training.
  - **Tailor programs to meet the specific needs of different groups of young people, especially marginalized groups** including young women, rural youth and those with disabilities. Programs should also target and build the capacities of existing youth groups. Agencies should
- explore expanding services to youth in rural areas by identifying pockets of stability where they can work securely, as well as provide transportation to and from schools for young people in rural communities. Courses should also be considered for rural markets that displaced youth may be able to access upon their return or resettlement. Separate courses should be available for women, with flexible schedules so that they can balance training with other responsibilities. Whenever possible, young women should be encouraged to participate in skills training initiatives that generate higher incomes.
- **Support existing schools and training centers** rather than start up new projects. Agencies with greater technical capabilities should build the capacity of existing vocational training centers, through teacher training, curriculum development, facilities construction and the provision of necessary equipment. This support is also required to reinvigorate Darfur's Ministry of Education. Developing the existing infrastructure avoids duplication of efforts and paves the way for better vocational training programs in the post-conflict and early recovery phases.
  - **Strengthen coordination and information-sharing mechanisms around youth issues.** A more systematic method should be identified for the humanitarian community in Darfur to discuss and respond to young people's needs. Information should be housed in a centralized repository so that it is easily accessible to all parties working with or interested in working with youth in Darfur. For example, existing and now-defunct training facilities should be identified and their strengths and weaknesses should be assessed.
  - **Involve community elders and leaders in the program planning process** as a way to mitigate intergenerational conflict and help repair the broken social structure. The selection of program beneficiaries should be a hybrid of community involvement and input from the traditional leadership. Outreach to communities should include community meetings, in order to ensure accountability and transparency, as well as respect for the decision-making authority of Sheikhs and Omdas. Agencies should have clear, and transparent, criteria for participant selection.

# Notes

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<sup>2</sup> See: Education in Darfur: A Critical Response.

<http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/dfeducrit.pdf>.

INEE Minimum Standards: Darfur Case Study.

[www.womenscommission.org/pdf/INEE\\_df1.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/INEE_df1.pdf).

Finding Trees in the Desert: Firewood collection and alternatives in Darfur [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/df\\_fuel.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/df_fuel.pdf).

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<sup>10</sup> Fabrice Weissman. *Humanitarian Dilemmas in Darfur*. Médecins Sans Frontières. July 2008.

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<sup>11</sup> Jim Lewis. "The Exigent City." *New York Times*. June 8, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Stephanie Nebehay. "Aid agencies, Darfur rebels hold talks in Geneva." *Reuters*. July 10, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch et al. *Rhetoric vs. Reality: The Situation in Darfur*. December 2, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, Office of UN Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. *Darfur Humanitarian Needs Profile* no. 30 January 2008.

<sup>15</sup> USAID. *The Humanitarian Situation in Darfur*, 2008.

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[million-65.html](http://sudanwatch.blogspot.com/2004/11/darfur-population-figures-6-million-65.html).

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations, Office of UN Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. Darfur Humanitarian Profile no. 26. January 2007.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Local and international aid worker, telephone conversation with author. July 30, 2008.

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# Questionnaire

This questionnaire was used as the basis for interviews with individuals working in Darfur.

Does your organization work with young women and/or young men (approximately 15-24 years old) in Darfur? If not, why not? If yes, please answer the following questions:

1. What programs are you currently implementing or supporting that serve youth?
2. What groups of young people are targeted? What groups participate and how do you recruit them? Do young women participate on an equal basis to young men? What groups are most difficult to reach?
3. [VT/livelihoods only]: How does your [NGO] determine which types of skills or vocational training programs to offer youth? How do participants select which course to take? Are there particular skills or training that you think should be offered? If any market surveys or assessments exist, is it possible to share them?
4. What lessons have been learned from working with youth? (Consider positive and negative).
5. What has been the impact of your [education / livelihood] program and how are you measuring impact?
6. What issues affecting youth are not adequately addressed? What additional programs or support is needed?
7. What recommendations would you make to the international aid community to more effectively support youth in Darfur?
8. If appropriate: Which organizations (local, INGO, IO) do you work closely with? Are there other individuals or organizations that you suggest we contact (please share contact details if possible)?





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