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‘INVISIBLE CITIZENS’: REFUGEES, EXPATRIATES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Sudan has an extremely high proportion of citizens displaced inside and outside the country. Ensuring the full participation of these citizens in the social, economic and political life of the country will be a major challenge. Exclusion of substantial sections of these communities is a recipe for disaster.

This paper is not concerned with the current plight of Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), except insofar as this is relevant to the challenge of future policies. It is not concerned with the struggles of Sudanese asylum seekers to obtain their basic social, economic and political rights in countries of exile. Rather, it focuses on what a future transitional government should do to ensure that the Sudanese displaced can be reintegrated into Sudanese social, economic and political life.

There is a global Sudanese diaspora, including refugees, expatriates and exiles. Sudanese are found in almost every country in the world. Many are highly qualified, some are extremely wealthy. Most are struggling for survival. A new internationalised, culturally diverse generation of Sudanese children is growing up in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, America and Asia. How are these Sudanese to be fully part of Sudan’s social, cultural, economic and political community?

There are no reliable figures for the numbers of Sudanese displaced people and refugees. The following are the most accurate figures available, provided by the United States Committee for Refugees for the end of 1997:

More than 350,000 Sudanese were refugees in six countries at the end of 1997: an estimated 160,000 in Uganda, about 60,000 in Congo/Zaire, 60,000 in Ethiopia, 40,000 in Kenya, 32,000 in Central African Republic, and about 1,000 in Egypt [the last figure is certainly inaccurate]. Up to 4 million Sudanese were internally displaced, although some estimates put the number much lower. Large additional numbers of Sudanese were outside Sudan without formal refugee status.

Years of warfare have left up to 1.5 million Sudanese internally displaced in the south, according to some estimates. In addition, as many as 1.8 million Sudanese—many of them southerners uprooted by the war during the 1980s—have migrated to Khartoum, the capital. Hundreds of thousands more were internally displaced in central Sudan, in the Nuba Mountains region.¹

¹ U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), *World Refugee Survey 1998*, (Washington, D.C., 1998), pp. 95, 96

These numbers are probably underestimates. The displaced are Sudan's 'invisible citizens', and many have not been counted. As any Sudanese who has visited Egypt can testify, the figure of 'about one thousand' Sudanese refugees in Egypt is a huge underestimate of the true number of Sudanese political exiles in that country.

The US Committee for Refugees also estimates that about 80 per cent of Sudan's five million displaced people have been displaced at least once during the last fifteen years. The reasons for flight include war, political persecution, economic collapse and natural calamity—or all of the above. In addition we must notice that one of the Sudan Government's war *aims* has been displacement. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by force into 'peace camps' where they can be controlled and subjected to government programmes of social, cultural and religious change.

Many displaced hungry; many are illiterate and deprived of their traditional cultures and the values that their parents and grandparents cherished. Overall, Sudan's displaced millions are a lost generation of Sudanese: invisible citizens who are among the poorest, most vulnerable and most demoralised people in the world.

Many have been forced to flee not once but several times. The case of the Uduk people, who live in the Chali el Fil area of Southern Blue Nile, is a tragic instance of this. The Uduk were first displaced by war in 1986-7. Some fled to Khartoum. Many fled across the border to Ethiopia, to a refugee camp near Asosa. They were driven from Asosa in 1990 by war in both Sudan and Ethiopia, and fled through Sudan to camps in Gambela region of Ethiopia. In 1991 they were forced to flee again, this time to Nasir in Southern Sudan. But this area was soon overrun by fighting and they were dispersed again; some to Ethiopia, some to other parts of Southern Sudan, and some back to Blue Nile—which by then was no longer a war zone. But when the civil war erupted again in Blue Nile in 1996-7, they were displaced again—some to Damazin and Khartoum, others within Blue Nile.

There have been programmes for refugees by the Sudan Government, the opposition forces and associated humanitarian agencies, the United Nations, and national and international NGOs. These have varied from providing real assistance and protection, to abuse and exploitation. There is a pressing need for a future democratic government in Sudan to develop a comprehensive plan for how to respond to the huge demands of Sudan's refugees, expatriates and IDPs.

Refugees

Sudan has a long history of receiving refugees. The last decade has been the first time that Sudan has become one of the world's largest countries generating refugees. There are at least 350,000 Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries and perhaps 100,000 more further afield in Europe and America. If we include unregistered refugees, especially in Egypt, the number will certainly top one million.

Refugees in East Africa

Many Southern Sudanese experienced flight and exile during the 1960s and early 1970s. After the first civil war the majority of Sudanese refugees in East Africa returned to the country under

the auspices of a major return and resettlement programme organised by the Sudan Government, UNHCR and international NGOs. The rehabilitation period saw significant social and political differences between those who had remained inside Sudan during the conflict, and those who had fled to east Africa. Many Southerners who had been refugees in Uganda had acquired an excellent education, and a more East African outlook.

The experiences of today's refugees have been less positive in many respects. Sudanese refugees in camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda have led insecure and poor lives. There have been constant problems of basic supplies, leading to disease and hunger. Education has been poor. Refugees who have been able to travel as far as cities such as Nairobi have also found life difficult. A minority have succeeded in obtaining jobs, houses and schools for their children, but many others live on the margins of their host society.

Refugees in East Africa have inevitably developed a more 'Africanised' orientation. This is especially true of the younger generation. Students have attended schools in which the East African curriculum is taught, and they have had no exposure to Arabic or Northern Sudanese culture.

While major differences of experience exist between those outside and those remaining in Southern Sudan, the international assistance programmes to Southern Sudan mean that contacts between refugees and home communities have been maintained, and there has been a steady flow of visits from refugees and exiles to their home communities in SPLA-held areas. Some Southern Sudanese work with the UN and international NGOs, and many more work with indigenous NGOs and the churches. As a result there is a high level of awareness about the challenges that will arise at the end of the war in terms of rehabilitation, development, education, etc. However, contacts between refugees and government-controlled towns and cities have been much fewer, thereby increasing the cultural gap, especially among young people, between those exposed to the East African education system and culture, and those exposed to the Da'awa-ist programmes in cities such as Juba.

Several aspects of the refugee phenomenon will need attention:

1. There will be a big need for programmes of return, resettlement and rehabilitation. This will not be quick nor cheap. Experience of such programmes (in Southern Sudan after 1972, in Eritrea after 1991, in Mozambique after 1992, etc), shows that they are always more complicated than initially thought. Refugees have developed roots in their host societies. The land they once occupied may have been taken by others. Refugees have often become urbanised, or at least cut off from traditional occupations such as farming and herding animals. Assistance programmes may create resentment among people who have remained behind, that returning refugees are getting more generous treatment than the needy people who stayed at home.
2. A particular challenge will be the need for coordination of education policies. Citizens who remained in rural (SPLA-held) areas, those who remained in (government-held) towns, those who went to Northern Sudan, those who were refugees, and those who served in the army, will all have different experiences, qualifications, and aptitudes for education. Coordinating among the different certificates, languages, curricula, and priorities will be a complicated task. Those who are committed to a united Sudan will have a responsibility for providing educational and cultural orientation for returning refugees, so that they can learn about the true diversity of the country.

3. Many refugees will choose to remain in East Africa, at least for the time being. They may have jobs, school places, and houses, or they may feel uncertain about returning at once. But there may be pressure from their hosts to leave, as soon as Southern Sudan is at peace. Sudan will need to negotiate arrangements with refugee-hosting countries, UNHCR and assistance agencies to ensure that refugees are still able to enjoy basic rights in their host countries, while also having the option to return home.

Refugees and exiles in Arab Countries

Most Sudanese in the Arab world do not have formal recognition of their status as refugees. They do not live in camps and relatively few are assisted by UNHCR. But this does not make them any less in need of assistance and protection. Sudanese refugees in Egypt face particular problems because the special historical relationship between the two countries means that Egypt does not award refugee status to Sudanese. This is the reason why the UNHCR only recognises about one thousand Sudanese refugees in the country, while there are in fact at least one million Sudanese resident in Egypt, many of whom fled from Sudan for political reasons.

Many of the problems and challenges of refugees and exiles in the Arab world are similar to those of refugees in East Africa, except that most of the people concerned are from Northern Sudan, and the cultural and educational influences are Arab-oriented rather than African-oriented.

The following problems need to be addressed:

1. The difficulties of Sudanese acquiring refugee status in Egypt is an anomaly that should be rectified.
2. Many Sudanese refugees and exiles in the Arab countries will need assistance in order for them to return home and reintegrate into Sudanese society.
3. Sudanese who have attended schools and universities in Arab countries may feel that their education is suitable for life in Sudan. But an exclusively-Arab oriented schooling is a distortion in multi-cultural Sudan. Those who are committed to a united Sudan will have a responsibility for providing educational and cultural orientation for returning refugees, so that they can learn about the true diversity of the country.
4. There are sharp disparities in income, prospects between professionals/businessmen and those without good jobs. On the whole, it will be the poor and vulnerable who will seek to return home in the hope of a better life.

Refugees in Europe and North America

The phenomenon of Sudanese refugees in Europe and North America (and in fact in virtually every country in the world including Japan and New Zealand) has only occurred for the first time under the NIF Government. These refugees include many of Sudan's professional elite. Some of the problems that these refugees encounter now, and will encounter in the future, include:

1. Major problems of acquiring refugee status, including the threat of being returned unwillingly to Sudan. Very long delays in obtaining residence, social security benefits,

housing, travel documents, etc. If there is peace and a transition to democracy, the difficulties and uncertainties of the asylum process will only increase, as many host countries will feel that this is the opportunity to relieve themselves of Sudanese refugees.

2. Social exclusion, racism and poverty, in countries of asylum. Particularly for older refugees, this has often been a very disorientating and demoralising experience.
3. The problem of younger generation growing up with a very different set of cultural experiences and values to their parents, and their peers who have remained in Sudan. Existing problems between the generations in exile will become a wider problem when refugees and exiles return to Sudan.

Need for a Comprehensive Plan

The challenges of returning refugees will be vast. After the end of the war, it is likely that many refugees and exiles will return voluntarily. But many will be too poor to return without assistance. Clearly, the problems of return will be so complex that there will need to be central coordination. On the other hand, the days of strict central planning are now past. No government can draw up a plan and impose it on its citizens. Instead, what will be required is a central comprehensive set of guidelines, under which the government and its agencies, the international community, donors and NGOs, can all operate and coordinate.

One of the main principles for comprehensive planning is to acknowledge and support diversity. Returning refugees will have a great diversity of educational skills and professional qualifications. Rather than trying to create uniformity—for example by only recognising certain types of educational certificate—the Sudan government should try to utilise this diversity to best advantage.

Expatriates

A large number of Sudanese outside their own country left in search of improved job opportunities, especially in the Middle East. The number is probably about two million.

The remittances of this group provide an essential source of foreign exchange for Sudan, and some leading Sudanese politicians have even argued that it is better for expatriate Sudanese to remain abroad, because their earning power is so much higher. The positive and negative aspects of these expatriates needs to be carefully examined, as a prelude to drawing up a national policy.

On the positive side we can identify the following aspects:

1. Relatively high income and remittances. In the 1980s, the 350,000 Sudanese professionals employed in the Arab states were estimated to be earning an income of about \$5.5 billion—i.e. equivalent to about 75% of Sudan's gross domestic product. The expatriates sent a considerable portion of this income back to their relatives in Sudan. This income has been essential to keeping Sudan's economy afloat during the crises of the 1980s and 1990s. If most of the expatriates were to return, Sudan would experience a serious loss of national income and especially foreign exchange.

2. Education. Sudanese abroad have been able to acquire levels of education that can no longer be obtained inside Sudan. Even unemployed refugees and asylum seekers in Europe have been able to provide their children with a relatively good education up to university level.
3. Cultural diversity. Sudanese are now found in every country in the world. Sudan's cultural diversity and tolerance used to be one of its greatest strengths. That diversity has now been multiplied, with Sudanese in such varied places as Jeddah, Los Angeles, Amsterdam, Warsaw, Kampala, Kuala Lumpur and Tokyo.

On the negative side we can identify the following aspects:

1. Brain drain. The most qualified of Sudan's professionals are outside the country. Sudan is exporting expertise in terms of doctors, lawyers, engineers, university lecturers, and entrepreneurs. Most of these people will not return to Sudan unless their rights can be guaranteed and their livelihoods secured, and therefore their skills are likely to be lost to Sudan for ever.
2. Export of capital. Sudanese expatriates have contributed to massive capital flight from Sudan and the accumulation of substantial investments abroad. Some of the income from these investments may be sent back home, and some Sudanese who make their fortunes abroad may want to invest back in Sudan. But in general, the fact that some successful Sudanese entrepreneurs are making money outside the country tends to encourage others to take their money abroad and follow the same path.
3. Intensification of internal inequality. The remittances of expatriates are directed overwhelmingly to the major cities of Sudan. This creates greater urban-rural inequality, and sharp socio-economic division between those who have access to hard currency, and who that do not.
4. Loss of Sudanese culture. A whole generation of Sudanese is growing up cut off from Sudanese culture. Among those in the Arab world, this is cultural Arabisation: the assimilation of a substantial proportion of Sudan's professional elite into the Arab world has intensified the Arab orientation of Sudan. The Islamist orientation of Saudi Arabia has also helped intensify the Islamist colour of much Sudanese politics. Among those in East Africa there is a comparable Africanisation, helping to intensify the cultural polarisation of the country. Among those in Europe and America, there is an assimilation to the dominant global culture (mostly American), which cuts off Sudanese children from the culture of their parents and grandparents.

These social, economic and cultural changes are realities that no government can reverse. The experiences of other countries that had large refugee populations (Eritrea, Palestine) suggests that the experience of exile profoundly changes the national character. What is perhaps unusual in the Sudanese case is the sheer diversity of the exile experience, which has further increased the socio-cultural diversity of the country.

A future democratic Sudanese government should try to gain the greatest benefits from the positive aspects of the global Sudanese diaspora. Policies that should be considered include the following:

1. Provisions for dual nationality. Sudanese who have acquired (say) British or Canadian passports are unlikely to want to give up this status. They will want to keep some stake in

their new homeland. They are much more likely to participate in Sudan's social, economic and political rehabilitation if they can be *both* Sudanese *and* British or Canadian at the same time. The current government has already introduced a nationality law that allows for dual nationality. This should be retained.

2. Civil and political rights should be extended to refugees and expatriates who decide to stay abroad, at least for an interim period. These rights could include the right to vote in national elections.
3. Flexible provisions in the Sudanese educational system that will enable foreign qualifications to be recognised in Sudanese schools and universities, and which will allow for Sudanese schools to teach elements of foreign curricula so that Sudanese expatriate children can continue their education in Sudan without too much interruption.
4. Tax advantages for Sudanese expatriates wanting to remit money home and (especially) to invest in Sudanese business ventures.

Internally Displaced Persons

The number of IDPs in Sudan today is estimated at more than four million. This is the highest proportion of the entire population of any African country, and one of the very highest in the world. This exceptionally high level of displacement is the outcome of the war in the South, Nuba Mountains and East, and famine and impoverishment in various parts of the country.

Although the sheer level of displacement is unprecedented, large-scale migration is not new in Sudan. The following factors need to be taken into account in order to understand the phenomenon of IDPs.

1. The Sudanese population has historically been mobile. The 19th century witnessed large-scale nomadic migrations, massive displacement caused by war and slavery, and the forced migrations of the Mahdist era.
2. Since colonial days, central Sudan has relied upon cheap migrant labour. This has been supplied, in succession, by West Africans, western Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, and now Southern Sudanese. The Gezira scheme is one of the world's largest planned settlements.
3. The gross disparities in income across Sudan's regions attract migrants and displaced people to the main cities. Approximately 50% of Sudan's national income is concentrated in Khartoum, which is why the city can support such a huge population of displaced people.
4. Unless the gross disparity in income across regions is changed, it is unlikely that the IDP problem will be resolved in the long term. Poverty will drive people out of rural Sudan and Khartoum will attract them.
5. War, famine, dispossession of land and insecurity have forced millions to flee in the last fifteen years. Many want to return home.

IDPs in Northern Sudan

Millions of displaced people are encamped around cities in Northern Sudan, and especially the three towns of Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North. About 1.8 million are resident in and around the three towns—more than 40% of the population of the capital. This is one of the largest concentrations of IDPs in the world.

Four formal ‘peace camps’ have been created by the government, which contain about 250,000-300,000 people. The majority live in vast unregistered displaced camps that contain more than 1.5 million people. Angola is the largest of these. Originally founded by displaced Nuba from Angolo (hence its name), it is now a truly cosmopolitan city-within-a-city, with residents hailing from all corners of Sudan.

Conditions in the Khartoum displaced camps are not good. A March 1999 UN report summarises their situation:

About 1.8 million displaced from southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains live in four official displaced camps and squatter settlements around Khartoum. The ongoing civil war in the south and recurrent droughts and floods are the main causes of their displacement. Of these 1.8 million people, 820,000 are estimated to be vulnerable and nutritionally at risk. With no land to cultivate, they are entirely dependent on wage labour, petty trade and relief. 80% of the IDPs earn only enough to meet 50% of their food needs. The high prevalences of malnutrition in new camps and squatter settlements (mainly women and children) are of serious concern. The most vulnerable group are considered to be the IDPs in squatter camps who had their dwellings demolished as part of the GoS ongoing relocation exercises.

The camps are social disasters. Malnutrition rates among IDPs are extremely high. According to UN and NGO surveys, between 12 and 24 per cent of children under five are malnourished—rates that are comparable to the poorest rural areas during food shortages. Only about one third of IDP children attend school.

The Sudan government distinguishes between ‘squatters’ (who arrived before 1984) and ‘displaced’ (who arrived since). ‘Squatters’ are given modest residence rights, ‘displaced’ are given none. The distinction roughly corresponds to the difference between the drought-displaced from other parts of northern Sudan, and the war-displaced from the South and the Nuba Mountains.

Relocations

Generally, governments have regarded IDPs as a socio-economic burden and a security threat. These attitudes have often been reflected in wider Sudanese urban society. For this reason, harsh measures against IDPs have often been popular among city dwellers. In reality, the fears of threats from the IDPs have not materialised. IDPs have provided cheap labour to the cities, and the major incidents of organised violence in squatter settlements and displaced camps have been instigated by the security forces, notably when they have demolished people’s houses without notice and forced them to move.

The policy of relocation of displaced persons to camps outside the city was begun in the 1980s, floated by both the Nimeiri government and the elected government of Sadiq el Mahdi. The elected government had an additional motive for relocation: it feared the electoral consequences of IDPs’ votes. This factor may influence a future elected government, which may prefer to distribute the IDPs in different locations so as to break up their voting power.

It was in the 1990s under the NIF government that the relocation policy was implemented most systematically.

There is a genuine need for urban planning. But the relocation programme has been implemented without due process, and often with considerable brutality. Conditions in the new 'peace cities' were also very poor, especially in the first years. A basic principle of law was abrogated when the programme began in 1990 with the Amendment to the Civil Transactions Act. This prohibited appeal against land adjudications made by the government, including striking off all cases currently before the courts. This principle of law needs to be reinstated, and the Amendment to the Civil Transactions Act reversed.

The problem of IDPs cannot be solved in isolation. It needs to be solved in the context of a policy that allows for voluntary return to the areas of origin—which in turn will be possible only with peace and economic rehabilitation.

Cultural change among IDPs

Although they have stayed within Sudan, many IDPs have undergone dramatic cultural changes, as great or even greater than the changes that have affected refugees outside their own country. An entire generation has grown up in a wholly new environment. In this environment, all the traditional forms of livelihood—agriculture, livestock, etc—no longer exist, and people survive by working in the informal sector, or by crime. Traditional forms of family and social organisation have also broken down. There are many families headed by women. The displaced camps have witnessed the development of a new version of colloquial Arabic, 'randuk', which is replacing customary tribal languages. There is a growing phenomena of drug abuse, with street children abusing toxic substances such as glue and gasoline. Levels of HIV infection are reported to be high.

In place of traditional societies, new kinds of social organisation have developed, often structured around churches or Christian or Islamic missionary organisations. The government has also tried to recognise chiefs, with the aim of building up some form of administrative structure that can assist with control of the camps. These structures have sometimes generated tensions within communities. For example, the government has chosen the chiefs that it believes will support its policies, rather than those who are more independent. In some cases, Islamic Da'awa relief organisations have tried to indoctrinate children into their extremist belief systems as a condition for providing education, so that communities are becoming ideologically or religiously divided according to which assistance organisations are present.

These new structures have acquired some strength and legitimacy simply because they have existed for some years, and there are no alternatives. Any new government will have no option but to work with them in the short term. But there is a pressing need for providing good democratic representation of IDPs, to enable them to elect their representatives and participate in both local and national democratic politics.

Sudanese electoral law provides the right to vote to anyone who has been resident in a particular location for six months or more (with special provisions for nomads). Under this law all 1.8 million IDPs in and around Khartoum are entitled to vote. This is correct. There should be no means of circumventing this by, for example, relocating IDPs within six months of an election. But the sheer number of IDPs will demand special provisions such as additional constituencies dedicated to IDP settlements.

The democratic representation of IDPs will create dilemmas for Sudanese democrats. With IDPs representing perhaps 40% of the potential electorate of the national capital, the potential for a major shift in political power away from Khartoum's traditional electorate is clearly evident. This reality cannot be ignored. The IDPs cannot remain disenfranchised, and they cannot be removed by force. The Sudan government will simply have to face the political consequences of decades of war and neglect of the regions.

Return, Resettlement and Re-integration of IDPs

How can the IDPs in the North be expected to return home? Even with peace and some economic development in their places of origin, it is likely that many will choose to remain in and around Khartoum and other cities. The economic factor will remain a strong motivation to stay: the income available in the major towns, although small, will still be greater than the possibilities in rural areas. If a substantial proportion of IDPs leave, the relaxation of pressure on the labour market may also make it more attractive for the remainder to stay. The socio-cultural factor will also be important. For many IDPs, especially those under twenty, there is no other life experience. 'Returning' to Southern Sudan or the Nuba Mountains would be to move to a new and alien environment, to a place in which they do not have the linguistic, social or technical skills to survive. There are displaced Dinka youths who have never herded a cow; displaced Nuba youth who have never tended a field of sorghum. There is no alternative but to recognise that many IDPs will, in time, become full citizens of the national capital, with full democratic rights there.

But for very many IDPs, their greatest hope is to return to their areas of origin. For the authorities in the North, this is a solution. For them, once the IDPs are out of sight they are out of mind. But two major issues arise.

1. How will the people be received on their return? Will they be suspected by the local political authorities? Will they be well-received by the communities? What changes in attitudes will they bring? The challenge of return and reintegration will be social, economic and cultural.
2. Will the returnees stay in their areas of origin? Counter-migration back north can be expected for some. This has already happened with some return programmes—returnees find that the situation at home is not what they expected, and leave.

As with the case of returning refugees, solutions to the crisis of IDPs requires a comprehensive, coordinated approach. The government will not be able to impose a blueprint on the IDPs. Instead it will be necessary to negotiate a framework with the IDPs themselves and with the international community, who will probably have to finance much of the assistance programme.

IDPs in Provincial Sudan

The displaced population around the major cities is the most visible, but the numbers in rural areas and around provincial towns is also very significant. There are substantial numbers around

towns in western Sudan including ed Daien, Nyala, Muglad, El Obeid and numerous others. In the Nuba Mountains, especially in the vicinity of Kadugli, Lagowa, Dilling, and the eastern areas of the mountains, there are numerous IDP camps. These are highly militarised settlements. A UN report of June 1999 summarises:

There are estimated to be seventy-two peace villages with an estimated population of 173,000. Sixty percent of the inhabitants are estimated to be war-affected Nubians. Forty-one of these villages, and 105,000 of the population, have been identified as most vulnerable. Crop production in peace villages barely reaches subsistence levels and is constrained by insecurity and the lack of access to fertile land. Health services are generally very poor and there is inadequate water and sanitation.

The official OLS review (1996) speaks of “an uncomfortable connection between the Sudan Government’s economic development policies with regard to agriculture, its policies concerning the war-displaced, and its assertion of control over land in the context of internal warfare.” It is alluding to the way in which the government has forcibly displaced rural Nuba from their villages to the ‘peace camps’, where it can control them, and use them as a labour force on mechanised farms.

The problem of IDPs in South Kordofan can only be overcome with an end to the war and the adoption of policies that enable the residents of the region to return to their villages of origin, and resume ownership and cultivation of the land that they and their ancestors formerly farmed. The rehabilitation of the war-affected areas of South Kordofan will require the removal of land mines, the reconstruction of basic infrastructure, policies to support livelihood security, and policies that ensure security of land tenure to the inhabitants.

There are more than 60,000 IDPs in eastern Sudan, around Tokar, Kassala, Port Sudan and other towns. Their problems too can only be addressed in the context of peace and rehabilitation.

In Southern Sudan there are large numbers of IDPs around garrison towns and in rural areas, especially where OLS has been providing food assistance. Experience shows that IDPs are always the lowest priority in food distributions and other assistance programmes, under whatever authorities exist. Once again, the short-term problems of food emergencies and the longer term problems of return and resettlement require a comprehensive programme of peace, local security, rehabilitation, demining, and assurance of land rights.

Freedom of Movement

The most common reaction of Sudanese governments to the challenge of IDPs has been to try to restrict freedom of movement. Quite apart from the violation of civil rights, this has never worked. As a result, it is important that a future democratic government in Sudan guarantees freedom of movement and freedom of residence and provides IDPs with identity papers. Sudanese citizens should be permitted to move and reside where they like within Sudan, and there should be no restrictions on the right of Sudanese expatriates and exiles to come and go as they wish.

Return, resettlement and reintegration of IDPs are certain to be basic policy goals of a future transitional government in Sudan. But participation in these programmes must be solely on a voluntary basis. There should be no forcible return.

Root Causes

The problem of IDPs will only be solved when the two main root causes of mass migration are resolved. These root causes are:

1. War.
2. Massive inter-regional inequality in income and life chances.

The fact that millions of Sudanese citizens are living in appalling conditions in displaced camps and squatter settlements in major cities is an indication of just how bad things are in many rural areas. There are no possible policies to prevent migration in Sudan: people who are desperate will always find a way of travelling to where some food or money are available. No wall can keep displaced people out of Khartoum; no resettlement or relocation programme will stop them coming back to the city if that is where they can earn an income. The only solution is to make it attractive for them to stay in the rural areas, or return there.

Implications

Sudan is a multi-cultural nation. The experience of mass displacement, flight to foreign countries and prolonged exile has made Sudan even more multi-cultural than before. After peace and a transition to democracy, the streets of cities such as Khartoum, Juba, Kassala and Kadugli will be filled by Sudanese citizens who have had very different life experiences in Sudan, in neighbouring African and Arab countries, and across the entire globe. It will be a big challenge to cope with the economic demands of assisting returning people and ensuring that they can reintegrate into Sudanese life once more. There will be political sensitivities because of the very different levels and kinds of education and professional qualifications of different people. There will be enormous social and cultural challenges to integrate these diverse experiences into a single nation.

This paper is far too short to be able to enumerate the many detailed policies and programmes that will be necessary for an effective response to the problems of refugees, exiles and IDPs. But three basic principles can be stated:

1. Sudan's refugees, exiles and IDPs are an asset and not a burden. The diversity of experience, cultural exposure and outlook, and ways of life should be seen as a positive contribution to the country in the 21st century. It is widely recognised that we are entering a phase of globalisation, in which those with the widest cultural horizons will be the most successful. Sudan must take advantage of the increased socio-cultural diversity that has arisen as a result of the sad experiences of the last decades.

2. A comprehensive set of guidelines for response to the challenges of refugees, exiles and IDPs will be needed. The days of comprehensive state planning are now past. But the problems of successfully returning, resettling and reintegrating literally millions of poor citizens are so vast that a comprehensive framework will be necessary. This cannot be imposed by a government. It must be negotiated carefully with the international community, NGOs (international and Sudanese) and above all with the refugees, exiles and IDPs themselves. This means the recognition of the fundamental principle that participation in all programmes must be solely on a voluntary basis.
3. The crisis of refugees and IDPs will only be overcome when there is a solution to the root causes of mass migration. Achieving peace and respect for human rights are essential, but not sufficient. Redressing regional imbalances in development and service provision, and providing sustainable development to rural areas are also essential.