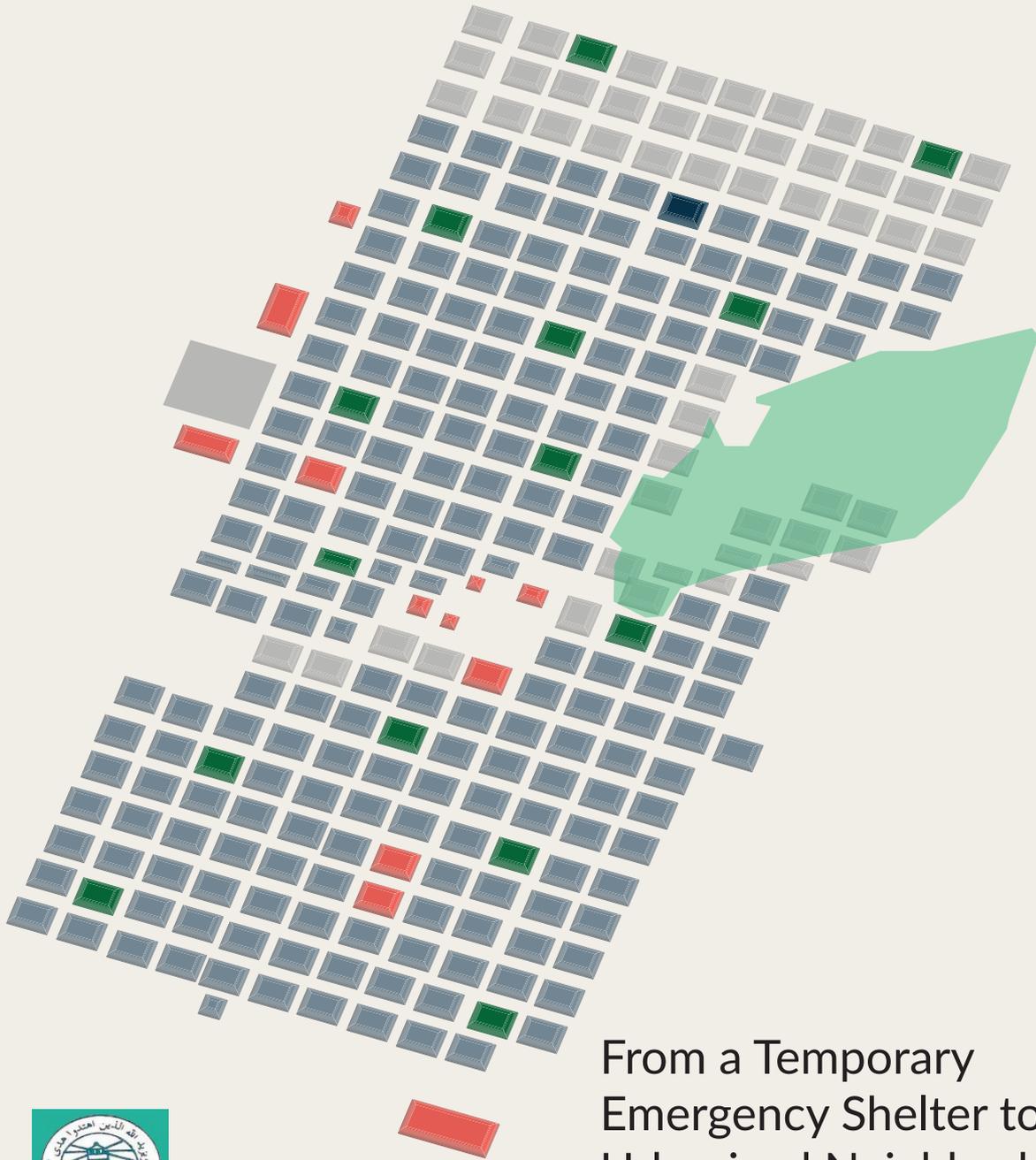


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From a Temporary
Emergency Shelter to an
Urbanized Neighborhood:
The Abu Shoak IDP Camp
in North Dārūr

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Illustration of the Abu Shoak camp: Kristen Børje Hus

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INTRODUCTION

In early 2003, two rebel movements (the Sudanese Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement) launched an insurgency against the rule in Khartoum. Supported by *Janjaweed* tribal militias, the government of Sudan responded with decisive counteroffensives. Mass displacement of predominantly rural people was evident from April onwards, increasing steadily throughout 2003–04. By May 2003, there were over 500 000 internally displaced persons in Greater Dārfūr, mostly in IDP camps at the edge of big towns (Minear 2004, 78). Most, if not all, of these camps still exist, because the causes that generated them are still very much present; i.e., insecurity in the rural home areas. Also to be noted is that towns have encroached on many of them.

There are many studies on IDP camps in Sudan, as shown in the subsequent paragraphs, but none of them offer longitudinal information which allows us to see processes of adaptation within a camp. The present article is a contribution towards understanding long-term transformations and how such camps end up not being temporary, as the word “camp” would suggest, but rather become permanent and part of the towns/cities they are close to.

This article is part of a longitudinal study of one group; namely, the IDPs living in the Abu Shoak camp¹ in the periphery of El-Fāsher, in North Dārfūr State. Following earlier work on this camp, the article looks at, and traces changes in the lives of, these IDPs since the inception of their camp in 2004. Specifically, the article looks at how displaced rural families adapted to the new urban life. This effort builds upon an assumption in urban sociology; that “urbanization as a way of life wreaks profound changes in virtually every phase of social life” (Wirth 1938, 1).

Primary data was gathered for the same group of people repeatedly over the past twelve years, through field visits in 2004, 2008, 2013, and 2016. Group and individual interviews were used every time with mostly the same group of IDPs, who played the role of cohort for the study. Most of these interviewees were heads of displaced families, officials in the camp administration and representatives of organizations operating inside the camp. The topics of the interviews included everyday problems, changes in production and consumption patterns, impact of the absence of husbands, working women and children, education, customs and traditions, positive and negative impacts of displacement, food assistance to families, and social facilities in the camp. The secondary data were derived by reviewing some newspapers, scientific reports, documents and statistics.

This was beside the repeated direct field observations of the camp environment, the nature of housing, the distribution and planning of residential sectors, and the behaviors and dealings among individuals within and outside the camp over the study period. Structured interviews using prolonged questionnaires with the heads of displaced families were utilized in three surveys (in 2004, 2008, and 2013), depending on a systematic random sample of 100 households every time. Sampling frames of households in the camp were obtained from the camp administration for the three surveys. The questions were about education, professions, number of household members, ownership and legality of residence, housing construction materials, water, electricity, sanitation, sources of income, and consumption.

The longitudinal approach allowed the authors of this article to detect developments and changes in the characteristics of the target population. It was helpful in making useful comparisons over time, distinguishing between short- and long-term changes, and establishing sequences of events in the Abu Shoak camp.

1 The Abu Shoak IDP camp is officially called “Abu Shoak Camp.” Locally, it is known as “Naivasha Camp” after the peace agreement that was signed between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Naivasha (Kenya) in 2005.

Importantly, at the regional level not much changed at all within that same time frame.

Previous studies, which dealt with the problems and changes of the economic, social, and cultural aspects of the life of those displaced to different urban areas in Sudan, are similar or complementary in their findings. Here, we follow about two dozen of the changes listed in seven studies conducted during the last two decades. Mona Hassan Osman's study, which focuses on the problems of displacement that the civil war in South Kordofan produced in some urban centers, details the problems that emerge in the life of IDPs: food shortage, poverty, loss of properties and income sources, disintegration of families, moving to environments different from the home ones, inability to adapt to the new situations, increasing school dropouts, and poor health services (Osman 2005, 8–9). A study undertaken in North Dārūr by Khalid Mohamed Ahmed concluded that IDPs had lost all their living supplies and become dependent on support, relief, and different informal sector businesses; a sort of dependency that resulted from the inability of displaced people to adapt to the new situations (Ahmed 2007, 7). Asia Abu Al-Qasim Al-Hassan conducted a study among IDPs from South Sudan in Khartoum State and reached the conclusion that concrete shifts had taken place among them in consumption patterns, health habits, organization of weddings and funerals, eating and drinking habits, decorations, and use of Arabic and urban ways of dealing (Al-Hassan 2007, 9). Muneer Al-Yaas Abdellah, who conducted his study in El-Damāzīn town, concluded that there were some changes in the lives of those who had been displaced by the civil war in Southern Sudan, such as the decrease in household income for the lack of employment opportunities and fixed assets (e.g., agricultural land and livestock), the shrinking of the traditional roles of civil administration, the increasing access to basic services, and the desire for settlement in the town (Abdellah 2006, 11). Nada Al-Madani Ahmed, who focused on the adaptation to the urban environment of displaced women in the Al-Salaam and Jebel Awliyya camps in Khartoum State, reached the conclusion that these women resort to new means of livelihood that are completely different from the ones in their original homelands, engaging in the informal economic sector as servants in households or selling food and teas in markets. This economic change is followed by a change in social relations with economic dimensions, besides family disintegration, child homelessness, psychological stress on the displaced women, and increase of the displaced women's responsibilities for providing to their families, strictly the responsibility of men before displacement (Ahmed 2000, 6). In her study on the displaced Southern Sudanese in the Ed-Daien camps of Southern Dārūr, Ilham Malik Sulaiman discussed the appearance of families without men-breadwinners, the great reliance on aid and relief, and the many life challenges facing IDPs, particularly children whose rights are violated (Sulaiman 2002, 11). Shawqi Abdelhamid Mahdi, in his study on the displaced Southern Sudanese in urban centers in Northern Sudan, maintains that some squatter settlements, to which the displaced people resorted, have become areas of grassroots conflicts, crimes of immorality, robberies, and alcohol and drug smuggling (Mahdi 1995, 34). Bakheita Himmat investigated the socioeconomic and environmental impacts in West Omdurman of IDPs who had been displaced by drought and other pushing factors from their original homes in Kordofan. She concluded that dense population pressure affected the already meager vital services in the host area and also generated conflicts between IDPs and the original inhabitants, and IDPs resorted to cutting trees in order to secure their daily living needs, which in turn resulted in the environmental degradation of the area (Himmat 2007, 66, 70, 77).

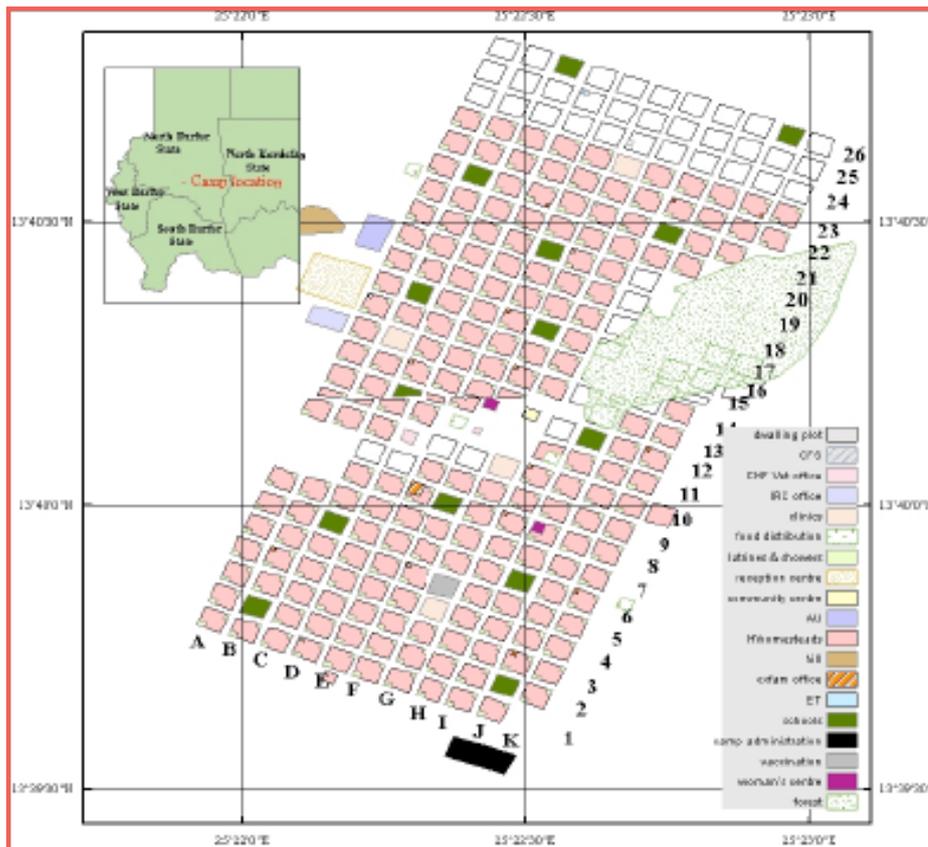
Most of the problems and changes listed above could be associated with short-lived difficulties, which IDPs commonly encountered in their emergency camps and in adapting to new urban environments. However, the three studies conducted by Al-Hassan, Abdellah and Ahmed show in a connotative manner the occurrence of substantive transformation as a result of staying in an urban setting for a prolonged period of time: shifts in consumption patterns, health-seeking behaviors,

organization of weddings and funerals, eating and drinking habits, decorations, use of Arabic and urban ways of dealing; shrinking of the traditional roles of civil administration; resorting to new means of livelihood; and change in social relations with economic dimensions. The studies open the floodgates for the understanding of how people, displaced from rural areas in different parts of Sudan, might be affected by the complex traits of the urban mode of life (i.e., urbanism). There is a need of supplemental studies that could help reveal the complete picture of the limits and depth of this substantive transformation. The present article attempts to partially meet this need.

ESTABLISHMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE ABU SHOAK CAMP

One of the outcomes of the escalating grassroots conflicts, as well as of the conflict between the Sudan Government and the armed rebel movements in Dārūr in 2003, was the state of insecurity and increasing population displacement throughout the region. The majority of families in the rural areas were forced to move and to settle in camps and in the outskirts or centers of towns, where there was at least some level of security and where basic necessities could be met. In North Dārūr State, and based on a decision of its governor, five main camps were established for IDPs in 2004: Abu Shoak, Zamzam, Halloof, Kassāb, and Fatta Barno.

The Ministry of Urban and Physical Planning in North Dārūr State prepared the plan of the Abu Shoak IDP camp, which was drawn according to the system of “Blocks and Squares.” The plan showed 11 blocks organized alphabetically from A to K. Each block consisted of 26 squares taking serial numbers from 1 to 26. About 25 homesteads and some shared latrines and showers were found in every square. An area of 10 square meters was set apart for each homestead. Water-pumps, health centers, and schools were distributed in the camp. Streets were considered in the plan (see Map No. 1, below).



Initial map of Abu Shoak IDP camp

Source: Ministry of Urban and Physical Planning, North Darfur

54 000

People living in the Abu Shoak camp
on the opening in 2004

38 000

People living in the Abu Shoak camp
in 2013

The Abu Shoak camp was officially opened on 20 April 2004. In the first year of its establishment, it occupied about 12 km², just 2.5 km away from the northwestern corner of El-Fāsher town, which lies at latitude 13.5° N and longitude 25.25° E, with a population of approximately 450 000 people, including IDPs. The total population in the camp in late 2004 was about 54 000 persons: 10 000 men, 22 000 women, and 22 000 children approximately. Women and children were the majority in the camp (82% of the total population). Men represented the lowest percentage, for they constituted about 18% of the total number of IDPs in the camp. These ratios back the observation that a considerable proportion of households was headed by women. Also, there were a considerable number of displaced families headed by children or relatives (like patrilineal or matrilineal uncles or stepfathers).² All the families lived in about 7 150 tents donated and distributed by ICRC and by the Al Zubair Charity Foundation. This means that there were 7 150 families in the camp, with an average of approximately 8 persons per family. The total number of IDPs registered in the Abu Shoak camp decreased from 54 000 in 2004 to about 41 000 in 2008 and 38 000 in 2013.³

Most of the IDPs in the Abu Shoak camp came from the areas of Kutum, Tawilah, Tarni, Dubbo, Rokro, Jebel Si, Korma, Jadara, Fatta Barno, and the rural areas of El-Fāsher (Sarafāyah, Birka and Abu Dilig). More than 90% of the total number of displaced families in the camp came out of their homes when the armed conflicts started escalating in 2003 and reached a peak in 2004. The number of displaced families coming to Abu Shoak decreased in 2005, when some armed movements signed a peace agreement with the Sudan Government. The number of displaced families coming to the camp increased by 5% again in 2006.⁴ There was a significant percentage of individuals who were separated from their families during displacement. These individuals either went to other areas inside or outside the country, remained settled in their original homelands, could not be found or died.

The Abu Shoak camp is ethnically mixed: more than 50% of the people there are Fur, and the rest are from Tunjur, Zaghāwa, Berti and other ethnic groups in Dārfūr. Generally speaking, until recently, it was impossible for groups of Arab and non-Arab origins to reside in one IDP camp anywhere in Dārfūr due to the polarization of the entire population into “Arabs” and “Africans” and the old armed conflicts between the two. For this reason, no groups of Arab origin were residents of Abu Shoak or any other IDP camp in Dārfūr. This trend becomes clearer in what one of the informants said in 2004: “I have two wives, one is Arab and the other is non-Arab. I should find a home in the town for my Arab wife in order to take care of her life. The other wife lives with me here in the camp.” The distribution of the homesteads in the camp was arranged in accordance with IDPs’ former residential areas, ethnic affiliations and native administrations. That arrangement, which took social characteristics into consideration, was used by the camp’s administration to avoid tensions and conflicts between the different groups.

IDPs moved into the camp accompanied by their native administrators (18 Omdas and 217 Sheikhs). This sheds light on the nature of the movement of IDPs, as they involved whole villages, including native administrators and their subjects. The camp’s administration, which was appointed by the local administrators at the El Fasher Administrative Unit, sought the help of these native administrators in the management of the camp (i.e., guaranteeing order and facilitating the dealings with

2 A sample of 100 displaced families taken in 2013 from the Abu Shoak IDP camp showed that the heads of 44.2% households were husbands, followed by wife-headed households (43%), son-headed households (8.6%), and households headed by other male/female relatives (2.4%).

3 Source: Administration of the Abu Shoak Camp, El-Fāsher, November 2013.

4 Source: Administration of Abu Shoak IDP Camp, 2007.

individual IDPs).⁵ The camp's administration deals directly with Omdas, the Omdas with Sheikhs, and the Sheikhs with individuals—according to the traditional native administrative system. Native administrators are key in dealing with their followers. They have been useful in registration and enumeration of IDPs; solving problems of the ethnic groups and talking on behalf of them; coordination with the camp's administration, organizations, government and other concerned bodies; and distribution of residences, relief and other services. IDPs themselves express their complaints and problems through their native administrators. Nevertheless, the native administration does not take part in planning and programming activities in the camp.

Some important observations need to be added here. First, a few poor families from El Fasher town moved in 2004 and 2005 into the Abu Shoak camp in order to get relief food and other services. Second, some of the IDPs who had managed to rent or buy houses in town also had tents in the camp to collect relief food distributed there. Some of them let their newly arrived displaced relatives into these tents. Third, in late 2004, the camp's administration started to receive new IDPs via the so-called "Hospitality System," which means placing the newcomers with their old-timer relatives in the camp, taking food and other aids into account.

Relief and services at the Abu Shoak IDP camp in 2004 were provided through 12 international and 14 national and local organizations⁶ in a specialized manner. Most of these supporting organizations were expelled by the Sudan Government in 2011, and therefore withdrew from the camp, except Oxfam America, Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS), the World Food Program, and the Al-Zubair Charity Foundation. As a result of the previous and current support, free basic services (water, health, education, watching clubs⁷ and security) for IDPs still exist in the camp, including 45 water pumps, 3 water tanks and a main water pipeline extending from the Shaqra area, in the western part of El-Fāsher town, into the camp to provide drinking water; 3 health centers for therapeutic and nutritional services; 18 kindergartens, 52 Quranic *khalāwi*, 18 basic schools (9 for girls, 8 for boys, 1 mixed), 4 secondary schools (1 for girls, 2 for boys, 1 mixed), and one office for the department of education; 65 watching clubs; 83 mosques and Quranic *zawāya*, and an Islamic center sponsored by the University of El-Fāsher. The camp is secured by an inside police station, which operates in cooperation with native administrators and the United Nations-African Union Mission in Dārḥūr (UNAMID). Also in the camp is a microfinance firm funded by the Ministry of Finance. This firm finances quick-return projects for IDPs. Given the number of services listed, it is not a surprise that many displaced people think water, health and educational services are more readily available in the camp than in their original home areas.

There are two public transportation routes, to and from the two main markets in El Fasher ("Hajar Gaddo" and "El Mawāshi"). Means of public transport are at the service of IDPs, their relatives and friends, employees and others when moving to and from the camp. Some IDPs use animals (donkeys and camels) to get to town or other areas. Many IDPs, particularly the secondary school pupils, walk because of their inability to pay for any form of transport. Today, internally displaced people in the camp own more than 800 vehicles.

5 In 2013, the director of the camp was still a local administrator from the El-Fāsher Administrative Unit, assisted by 28 Omdas and 257 Sheikhs.

6 These include: UNICEF, IRC, SCF (UK), WES, Al Zubair Charity Foundation, German Red Cross, Saudi Red Crescent, Egyptian Mission, Action Contre la Famme, Oxfam America, and SRCS.

7 A watching club is a big marquee used—mainly by young male people—for entertainment. Three to five televisions, supported with satellite receivers or DVD players and small chairs and tables can be found inside such a marquee. There is a guard permanently stationed at the entrance who collects specified fees from the customers and prevents children under the age of eighteen from entering. Besides watching sports or movie channels, the attendees may play cards or dominoes. There is always a woman selling tea/coffee at each watching club.

Facilities in the camp

45

Water pumps

3

Water tanks

3

Health centers

18

Kindergartens

52

Quranic *khalāwi*

22

Schools

65

Watching clubs

83

Mosques and Quranic *zawāya*

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF BEING DISPLACED

Initially, it was too difficult for most IDPs to live in the camp or adapt to the new urban environment because of the many challenges they encountered. Below we list a total of eight of the short-lived problems they faced.

The first problem was the small size of the residence and the residential plot allotted to each family. The homestead in the camp consisted in all cases of one tent on an area of 10 x 10 meters. This was too small a space to hold seven family members. Importantly, sexual intercourse was impossible in such tight quarters. This was reflected in folkloric flicks that were in circulation among adults in the camp, such as: “*Al rujāl da El Janjaweed shāl rajālto wa fāt*” (the Janjaweed have taken our men’s masculinity and went away). Additionally, the donated tents were not suitable for all seasons, and did not protect against cold nor hot weather. The majority of IDPs did not have blankets nor beds. They usually lied down on the sand inside their tents.

The second problem was the lack of firewood, charcoal or other similar resources. These resources were only available in remote areas where women risked being raped by soldiers.

The third problem was related to food. IDPs were not accustomed to the relief food available. Some IDPs would sell their camp quotas in the market at trifling prices in order to buy their traditional foods. Also, the relief food was always insufficient for the family.

The fourth problem was a result of worsening health due to poor hygiene conditions, lack of food and malnutrition (especially among children and elderly people). Diseases like pneumonia, malaria, dysentery, typhoid, and diarrhea were widespread among both adults and children in the camp. Many cases of inflamed urethra appeared among adults. Diarrhea, malnutrition, and pneumonia in particular resulted in high infant mortality. In 2004, the camp’s first year, the number of dead children reached about 140, while the number of adult deaths reached 100.⁸

Fifth, fetching water was problematic for women and children because of crowds, long queues, and frequent quarrels at water pumps. Either because many IDPs did not have enough containers to collect water or because some water pumps frequently ceased to work, there was a general scarcity of water in the camp.

The sixth problem was that the majority of displaced families, with their rural background—in most cases associated with the agro-pastoral production—did not have the skills or qualifications required for working in the economic sectors typical of the urban population. They could not find lands to cultivate. Some of them grew watermelon, sorghum and millet within the small areas of their homesteads. Many qualified and skilled IDPs (medical assistants, schoolteachers, drivers, clerks, etc.) could not secure jobs within the new urban setting. Their job applications, in and outside the camp, were usually rejected for unknown reasons. Besides this state of rampant unemployment among both men and women, most of the families lost their livelihoods and economic assets (e.g., animals, pastures, arable lands) through robbery and killing and fled empty-handed to the town. The family income dropped to less than one-third of the income before displacement. Therefore, these families were led to a state of extreme poverty, which forced wives and minors to engage in various fields of work, like shoe-shining, working in restaurants, carrying loads on wheelbarrows, and selling vegetables at the sides of the inner town roads) in order to contribute to their family income.

The seventh problem was the change in the patterns of consumption, with the cost of consumption increasing for almost all displaced families in the camp. When

8 One of the authors of this article (Osman Mohamed Osman Ali) personally counted the graves of these dead children and adults in December 2004.

in the village, the family usually depended on high-income agricultural and pastoral activities; but, after its displacement to the town, it abandoned these activities. This change was reflected in the standard of living of most displaced families, as their meals were reduced from three or more per day before displacement to two or less per day (breakfast and dinner). Also, they became dependent on relief food, which consisted of small amounts of lentils, sorghum, wheat, soya oil, and “food mixture,” instead of meat, milk, dairy products and millet, vegetables, fruits, onion, okra, tomato sauce, and “*kawal*,” which used to be part of their diet. It turned out that the amount of food provided by the humanitarian aid organizations was not sufficient for most families. In terms of quality, the families were of the opinion that these relief items were unfavorable and irregular and therefore they had to buy their traditional food from the market. This, in itself, was a financial burden. Moreover, new unfamiliar expenses became the norm, such as local public transport, clean water, communication costs and electricity. In many cases, the families would have to closely monitor their expenditures, borrow or sell assets to buy certain things (e.g., dried meat, onions, and dried okra). These were signs of the collapse of the household economy among IDPs.

The last problem was the extreme level of insecurity and unease among IDPs in the Abu Shoak camp, particularly in its early years and particularly among those who were displaced more than once (for example, those who moved from Jebel Si to Korma and then from Korma to El Fasher). The sense of uncertainty was displayed most of all in children, who would be visibly distressed when a military airplane flew over the camp for instance. The unwillingness of many IDPs to repatriate to their original homelands was a clear sign of their unease. Their desire to voluntarily repatriate to their homelands during the first years of their displacement depended on improvement of the security situation, and availability of basic services within the homeland itself. These conditions have not been guaranteed to date; therefore, IDPs prefer to remain in their camp or in El-Fasher town.

Both the Sudan government and the international community initially paid attention to the negative impact of displacement on towns in Dārūr. However, with the passage of time and the only lukewarm interest in addressing the daily problems of IDPs, families in the Abu Shoak camp soon found themselves alone and confronted by the problems of managing their life in a new urban community. From here began their interaction and adaptation with the style and conditions of life in the adjacent town. They soon started integrating into that urban life. By 2013, most of the challenges listed earlier in the paper no longer existed in the Abu Shoak camp. Almost all people managed to deal with them.⁹ To trace this process, a comparison between past and present socioeconomic and cultural aspects of life is essential.

Displacement in its early stages led to disintegration of the rural traditional extended family, whose members were usually more than a dozen, into nuclear families, composed mostly of the parents, their children, and the nearest in kin. Members of many extended families were dispersed. The children who could, went in search of alternative livelihoods in other locations. The remaining members of the nuclear family did not exceed half a dozen. Many men had been killed in fighting and the fate of many others was unknown.¹⁰ The male heads of most families were missing, either because they were traveling or because they had died. Families,

A comparison between past and present socioeconomic and cultural aspects of life is essential

9 Source: A follow-up survey done by the authors of the present article, assisted by fifth year (honor) students at the Department of Sociology, University of El-Fasher, 2013.

10 Estimates of death related to conflict in Dārūr varied from 7 000 by the Sudan authorities, to 300 000 by a UK parliamentary committee, and nearly 400 000 by the Coalition for International Justice. The particular estimates that caused the most widespread alarm in the humanitarian community were those made by a WHO official in October 2004 of 70 000 deaths and by UN Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland in March 2005 of 180 000. The latter figure was especially vigorously disputed by the Sudan Government, which portrayed it as part of a campaign to discredit the regime (Minear 2004, 78).

therefore, lost their reproductive function. The split of the extended families into nuclear ones that had no male heads led to redistribution of authority, emergence of a new division of labor, and changes in the social roles and statuses. The social statuses of men and women in particular have changed. The awareness of displaced women in the camp of their rights and the rights of women in general has increased as a result of attending many continued and intensive training courses organized by several local and international organizations working in this area. However, these changes altogether have often made women responsible for the family management, increasing the burdens on women, especially female heads of households, whose numbers have increased in the camp. The displaced women are now forced to work as cooks, cleaners, and the likes, for those who live in town. This is besides performing their traditional tasks at home. Nonetheless, increasing the burdens and responsibilities of women has given them a bit of freedom and an opportunity to share with their husbands in the decision-making sphere.

The majority of these families changed their economic activities gradually and out of necessity after their displacement

The main pre-displacement profession for most families in the Abu Shoak camp was cultivation of food and cash crops, followed by grazing and trade. Also, before displacement, women used to only do chores, such as washing clothes, cooking, and fetching water and firewood. They were assisted by their daughters who used to have lesser access to local schools generally. Boys used to either attend the Quranic *khalāwi* and schools or take care of their families' herds. The majority of these families changed their economic activities gradually and out of necessity after their displacement. A small percentage of them kept practicing farming and grazing seasonally in their areas of origin. Also, many of their members began practicing trade or getting involved in small industries; others became school teachers, government employees, laborers, guards or cleaners in town. Some of them worked in sun-dried brick industries at the fringes of the camp, or on the construction of homes within the camp, digging latrines, distributing drinking water, and washing vehicles. A part of the income of many families also came from migrant labor, remittances, donations, and other sources. Accordingly, most of the displaced families diversified the sources of their income, which—as a consequence—has increased recently, even in comparison to the incomes in their original homelands before displacement.¹¹

When the Abu Shoak camp was established in 2004, its market had not yet been planned. Members of the host community and IDPs soon started its construction with local materials. It developed as a very small market at the southern side of the camp. The few shops offered a variety of consumer goods such as clothes, meat, firewood and charcoal, local building materials, fodder, sheep, local medicine, kitchen utensils, as well as services such as tailoring, hairdressing, radio and recorder repairing, coffee rooms, eating rooms and metal work. Some kiosks and flat-roofed shelters were placed in the camp, offering the same goods and services for sale. These shops were owned by IDPs. Once the camp market reached a certain number of shops, the El-Fāsher Locality administration allocated kiosk and flat-roofed shelter shops to individual traders. That was in 2005. In 2010, the same administration remodeled the camp market, converting it into a formal one. Since then, annually renewed rent contracts and commercial licenses and the payment of the related fees at El-Fāsher Locality headquarters have become requirements for titling and registering shops

11 A sample of 100 displaced families taken in 2013 from the Abu Shoak IDP camp showed that before displacement the income of these families was as follows:

47% households: SDG 1201–1600,
25% households: SDG 108–1200,
14% households: SDG 401–800, and
13% household: < SDG 400.

After displacement, the income of the same families could be broken down as follows:

12.8% households: > SDG 10000,
55.7% households: SDG 5000–10000, and
31.5% households: < SDG 5000.

in the camp market, which is managed by the Chamber of Commerce.

Before displacement, most of the rural families living in the Abu Shoak camp, did not care about the education of their children, especially the girls. They involved their children in farming and grazing activities. The home areas for many families were free of, or far away from, schools. After displacement, the interest of these families in education began to grow, increasing the enrollment ratio and regular attendance of male and female children in schools, as well as adult education. After ten years in the outskirts of El-Fāsher town, the illiteracy rate among IDPs has become very low, as many of them attend classes at Quranic *khalāwi* or the elementary and secondary schools. The proportion of IDPs with university qualifications has also increased. Availability and proximity of schools, the free education services, and the awareness of the importance of education all contributed to the increase. The contact with the urban community also had a profound effect.

Conversely, theft cases, which occur on a daily basis, are probably the result of the rampant unemployment rates among young people who spend most of their time playing cards or football, or in clubs. There are also frequent quarrels in the camp between couples and among children, particularly quarrels over water and relief distribution centers in the camp. Illegal pregnancies and childbirths, which in three months only (in 2013) reached 96 cases, also trigger police involvement, as do reports of rapes.¹² Although the majority of these police cases and complaints are still solved via customary laws and institutions, in collaboration with the native administrators, IDPs in the Abu Shoak camp have started to accept official state laws in addressing conflicts and behavior.

After spending a decade on the edge of El-Fāsher town, traditional practices, such as birth, circumcision of girls, marriage and communal work parties (*naḥīr*) changed. Before displacement, the pharaonic circumcision was a rampant custom; now IDPs have started to abandon it, as there are many young girls who are not circumcised in the camp. Endogamous marriage was prevalent before displacement. Now marriage is mostly based on the free choice of a spouse. Also, the rural communities of these IDPs used to depend on communal work parties, part of the non-money exchange relations in Dārḥūr and other parts of Sudan. After displacement, self-reliance became the norm.

In 2004 and conformably with the traditional division of labor, women and children started building alternative homes with wood, grass, mud, and sun-dried bricks found in the camp. In 2008, displaced families that used tents as their homes were about 66% of the total number of families in the camp. The rest of the families were living in houses built with local materials (thatches, sticks, and woven reed mats) or in buildings constructed with bricks and zinc metal sheets. Today, all families in the camp live in houses.

About 30% of the displaced families (i.e., 16 000 IDPs approximately)¹³ that lived in the Abu Shoak camp during the first years of its establishment, moved, in time, into El-Fāsher town. As said before, the number of IDPs in the Abu Shoak camp decreased from around 54 000 in 2004 to about 41 000 in 2008, and to about 38 000 in 2013. This decline started with the increasing movement of families into houses inside or at the edges of town due to improvement in their financial statuses. There is a strong trend today towards the allocation of residential plots and means of production to IDPs to help improve their financial statuses and their integration in the urban community further.

During a tour inside the Abu Shoak camp in 2013 a number of other changes were noted: (1) the numbering of houses had disappeared; (2) most of the houses and all shops in the market were built with hard materials (like bricks and cement); (3) a

After spending a decade on the edge of El-Fāsher town, traditional practices, such as birth, circumcision of girls, marriage and communal work parties (*naḥīr*) changed

¹² Source: The police station of the Abu Shoak IDP Camp, October 2013.

¹³ The birth and death rates among the population of the camp have not been considered in the calculation.

“Abu Shoak camp initially was a human museum, but has recently been converted into a rural resort for entertainment.”

large number of traditional brick factories and pet corrals had appeared; (4) a small number of families of Arab origin also had appeared in the camp; (5) the various ethnic groups living in the Abu Shoak camp had started to accept each other; (6) many goods and animals at prices lower than those offered in El-Fāsher town had become available; (7) there was a daily interaction between the residents of the camp and the town—many residents of the camp worked or studied in town, and many of the town’s residents frequently visited the camp for shopping or for other purposes. Vehicles constantly moved between the camp and the town or the nearby villages; (8) trade between the camp and the villages had become prosperous, as a considerable number of the male camp residents periodically went to their original home areas to practice cultivation and returned with various products. This explains what many residents of El-Fāsher say: “Abu Shoak camp initially was a human museum, but has recently been converted into a rural resort for entertainment.”

Louis Wirth’s classical definition of the city and its explications helps us conceptualize what exactly has happened in the Abu Shoak IDP camp. Wirth defines the city as “a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals” and then explicates and connects each of these characteristics with significantly different social consequences (Wirth 1938). In conformity with his main ideas, the large numbers of population in El-Fāsher town and in the Abu Shoak camp itself involved individual variations (as in occupations), relative absence of intimate personal acquaintanceship, and segmentalization of human relations which are largely anonymous, superficial, and transitory. Like the original urbanites in the town, every one of the IDPs meets many people in highly segmental roles, depending upon more people for the satisfaction of life needs and thus associating with many social groupings. Also, the high density of settlement in both the town and in the camp has produced diversification and specialization of IDPs and their activities. IDPs have become segregated spatially more by virtue of differences in income and social status than by choice or attraction to people similar to them. The frequent close physical contact, coupled with great social distance, has fostered competition and frictions. To counteract irresponsibility and potential disorder, formal controls were frequently resorted to. So, competition and formal control mechanisms have furnished the substitutes for the bonds of solidarity and the traditional customary laws and institutions that IDPs had relied upon to hold their rural communities together in the past. The heterogeneity of inhabitants and group life in El-Fāsher town and in the Abu Shoak camp has broken down the rigid traditional social structures, increasing social mobility and affiliation of the individuals with a variety of intersecting and tangential social groups with a high rate of turnover in group membership.

CONCLUSIONS

Generally, the impact of the urban environment on the displaced rural families could be felt in all long-term transformations: social relations and institutions, gender roles, traditional cultural practices, economic activities, values and behavioral norms, behavior of many displaced children, means of social control, ambitions, ethnic relations, intellectual and material culture, and other aspects of IDPs' social life. Surely, these are repercussions of displacement and indicators of profound change within the displaced families. This change goes in the direction of the modes of life recognized as "urban" and linking the displaced families to the host urban community. All short-term impacts that appeared at the beginning of displacement were negative; but over the years, and with the increase of the IDPs' capacity to adapt to the style and conditions of the new urban life, far-reaching positive impacts started to emerge. After a single decade, the internally displaced rural families have become urbanites; their camp has become a part of the El-Fāsher urban setting, adding to the town encroachment.

IDPs had their own way of processing change. They overcame many problems and adapted to the new circumstances through innovation and initiative. They did not surrender to extreme poverty, suffering, powerlessness, and many other negative consequences of being displaced from their original homelands due to the armed conflicts. They turned losses into gains. Of note is that there was almost complete absence of strategic planning and knowledge of IDPs' culture and way of thinking on the part of engineers, administrators and politicians in the establishment, organization and management of the camp. Many of these engineers, administrators and politicians still look at the Abu Shoak camp as a legally unplanned residential area. As this view survives even after the camp has become one of the urbanized neighborhoods of El-Fāsher, the camp will of course be reckoned as an informal settlement.

Nevertheless, the influences of the town have been, until now, unable to completely wipe out the IDPs' pre-urban modes of life. Their present socio-cultural life still bears the imprint of earlier rural settlements, characteristic modes of which were the farm, the pasture, and the village. This historic influence is reinforced by the circumstance that the El-Fāsher population itself is largely recruited from the countryside. El-Fāsher historically has been a melting pot of people from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and thus a place of biological and cultural hybrids. Hence, we should not expect to find abrupt and discontinuous variation between urban and rural types of personality in the Abu Shoak IDP camp.

After a single decade, the internally displaced rural families have become urbanites

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