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Humanitarian
Policy Group

Addressing chronic livelihoods vulnerability in Red Sea State, Sudan

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This paper was written by Dr. Mustafa Babiker and Dr. Sara Pantuliano. The views expressed in the text and its recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Oxfam GB. The authors take responsibility for any errors contained in the document.

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ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CNS	Comprehensive National Strategy
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
GNU	Government of National Unity
GOS	Government of the Sudan
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITCZ	Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
MSF	Medicins Sens Frontieres
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
N-PWG	National Poverty Working Group
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ROSP	Report on the State of Pastoralism
RSS	Red Sea State
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCLUWPA	Soil Conservation, Land Use and Water Programming Administration
SGR	Strategic Grain Reserve
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
S-PWG	State Poverty Working Group
SRC	Sudanese Red Crescent
TANGO	Technical Assistance to NGOs
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study was undertaken to help Oxfam gain a better understanding of the policy processes underpinning main livelihoods trends in Red Sea State in order to maximise the impact of its relief and development work in the state. The findings of the research were generated through a comprehensive review of academic publications, grey literature and existing policy documents at the national and state levels as well as through discussion with key informants and community groups.

The document describes the main geo-political characteristics of Red Sea State and its population. Red Sea State is described as a non equilibrium environment where there is no long term balance between the populations and other elements of the ecosystem. Some of the main features of this environment include high rainfall variability, scarcity of water, low natural productivity and extreme temperatures. The study describes how, in order to cope with such a complex ecosystem, Beja pastoralists have over the years adopted a set of dynamic and flexible strategies aimed at facilitating survival by allowing for the exploitation of multiple resources. Such strategies, such as mobility, herd diversification and redistribution and a strict body of customary rules, have ensured the resilience of the Beja pastoral system for centuries and have allowed people to bounce back and recover from the frequent droughts and outbreaks of famine which have repeatedly struck the region. However, these elements have been fundamentally weakened by a range of external factors which have contributed to undermine the resilience of the Beja livelihoods system. These include a number of discriminatory colonial and independent government policies which have considerably exacerbated the precariousness of pastoralist livelihoods throughout eastern Sudan as well as in other parts of the country. The study analyses how the long term impact of these policies has generated profound changes in the Beja livelihoods system and produced a shift from livestock keeping to an increasing reliance on a range of unsustainable activities such as charcoal making which were once used only as coping strategies at time of stress. These have become adaptive strategies incorporated into the normal patterns of activities. Today they generate the majority of the cash income and absorb most of the household labour allocation. Until recently very little has been attempted both by the national government and the international community to try to seriously reverse these trends.

The study analyses the general policy context in Red Sea State and thoroughly reviews the range of sectoral policies which have impacted on the livelihoods system of the Beja. Particular attention is given to the evolution of ministerial departments mandated to oversee pastoral development and to the range of land and agricultural policies introduced at national and state levels over the last 30 years. The lack of pro-pastoralists policies is discussed and some recent measures introduced to regulate livestock trade are examined in detail. A brief account of the shifting balance of power and of the emerging political context is provided which highlights the increasing influence of new groups such as the urban youth in the regional context. Current policy making processes in Red Sea State are reviewed and discussed with a special emphasis on the Red Sea State Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2005-2008. The study argues that while the plan indicates good intentions on the side of the new Red Sea State government in trying to address the lingering livelihoods crisis in the state, it fails to capture people's real priorities since it was developed in a non inclusive manner, not being the subject of wider debate involving civil society and other organisations and institutions representing the different communities of Red Sea State. This has generated doubts about the feasibility of its implementation, especially given the fact that the plan was designed by technocrats without clear provisions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation and adequate budget allocations.

Another policy process which has not so far been characterised by genuine participation is the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process in the Sudan has been very slow and has displayed a lack of direction on the part of the concerned authorities. This is reflected in the frequent changes of the body mandated to steer the PRS process and formulate the PRSP. Participation has been very low, limited as it has been to top government officials, with the involvement of civil society being almost non-existent to date. The study argues that the current global concern about poverty reduction strategies provides a novel opportunity that is worth trying to harness in Red Sea State. In particular, the paper points out that the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), the first step in the PRSP process, represents a collaborative relationship between government, civil society and other partners in a research process wherein research findings and additional outcomes can transform decision-makers' attitudes and practices as well as policies. Given the poor achievements of the PRSP process in the Sudan so far, the study argues that there is an opportunity for Red Sea State to play a pioneering role by planning and launching a state-

wide Participatory Poverty Assessment. The PPA should be carried out to inform the poverty debate within Red Sea State and to complement statistical data in a new analysis of poverty.

Oxfam's role and main recommendations

The last section of the study reviews the role of Oxfam in influencing policy in Red Sea State. While Oxfam has been notably active in generating detailed data and information on the livelihoods crisis in Red Sea State, this information does not seem to have been very systematically used to inform processes of policy formulation and implementation. Oxfam engages to some degree in areas of government policy, but it does not do so in a concerted manner and at formal levels. Oxfam's distinctive quality and potential advantage lies largely in the informality of the dialogue it can facilitate and in its capacity to act as a connector between local government and marginalised communities both in urban and rural areas. In light of the above, it would seem that the best options for Oxfam in the area of policy dialogue would be to continue to provide support to Beja groups capable of entering into policy dialogue and to facilitate informal links between community and local government. Oxfam should also attempt to find ways in which it can engage in national processes without exposing itself to undue negative attention. In this regard the PPA and the PRS provide important openings and Oxfam could play a key role in promoting the idea of the PPA within the local government in Red Sea State.

Oxfam could perform a dual function by supporting the government with technical expertise in carrying out the PPA and steering the PRS process as well as facilitating the engagement of local stakeholders from marginalised communities with which Oxfam enjoys a privileged relationship. The wide global expertise Oxfam has built in being involved in the PPA and PRS processes in other countries would ensure that adequate technical capacity could be made available to the Red Sea State team for this exercise. Involvement in the PPA and PRS processes should however be accompanied by continued support to institutional strengthening, something Oxfam has successfully been promoting over the last few years, as well as renewed support to the local communities to strengthen their livelihoods system. This should include both service provision and strengthening of the local economic and productive capacity based on both traditional pastoral livelihoods and alternative economic activities.

It is however recommended that Oxfam strive to continuously review the role it can play in promoting policy dialogue in the state on the basis of the opportunities that become available in the external environment.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The study was commissioned by Oxfam in order to help the Red Sea team gain a better understanding of the levels of chronic livelihoods vulnerability in the State and of the policies and institutions which influence such trends. The study focused on clarifying the policy processes which make the difference between positive and negative livelihoods outcomes in order to provide Oxfam with recommendations on how to influence positive change in a manner complementary to its relief and development work.

The research was conducted between 20th January and 28th February 2006 and included visits to Port Sudan, Tokar, Gunib and Aulib as well as a series of meetings in Khartoum. A combination of data collection tools was used which included:

- A comprehensive review of available secondary sources, including material on Red Sea State authored by the two consultants, academic literature on the subject, recent assessments, policy documents, key internal documents and grey literature on livelihoods trends and relevant policies in Red Sea State. The main findings of the desk review were then used to inform the development of questionnaires which were used for interviews in Red Sea State and in Khartoum.
- Primary data collection was based on interviews with key informants and community meetings with youth, women and men groups. Separate questionnaires for key informants and community groups were prepared. The key informants were selected on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of Red Sea State, whereas the selection of community groups was carried out in close consultation with the Oxfam team in the state. The interviews were complemented by direct observation and transect walks.
- The findings from the literature review and the community and key informants interviews were validated at a workshop with Oxfam Red Sea team which took place in Port Sudan from 18th to 20th February. During the workshop the team reflected on the priority policy areas for the main programme target groups, the local pastoralists, and discussed possible policy dialogue activities and technical interventions which could help reverse the negative livelihoods trends of the most vulnerable communities in the state. The team also drew a map of the institutional linkages the pastoralists have with other key actors in the state. The two main outputs of the workshop are attached in Annexes IV and V.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Geo-political overview

Red Sea State occupies an area of 218,887 km² and is located in north-eastern Sudan, bordering Egypt to the North, Kassala State to the South, River Nile State to the West and the Red Sea to the East. The State is sub-divided into eight *mahallias* (localities or districts): Port Sudan, Suakin, Gunub/Aulib, Sinkat, Hayya, Halaib and Tokar/Agig. The overall population of the state is estimated to be at 846,113 people (RSS, 2005:28).

Red Sea State can be divided into three distinct physical areas: the coastal strip, the hilly area and the flat western plains. The coastal strip is 20 to 50 km wide, flat and crossed by seasonal channels known as *khors* that run off the hills lying to the west. There are two major alluvial fans in the coastal zone: the Arba'at Delta, located just north of Port Sudan, and the Tokar Delta, located about 150 Km south of Port Sudan. The hilly area expands westwards from the edge of the coastal strip for about 50 km and is intersected by several *khors* and valleys, called *wadis*, of which the biggest is Diyyb, a large confluence which carries most of the hills' drainage to the Red Sea (Abbas and Tilley, 1991:78). The hills can reach a height of 1,200 metres above sea level. Settlements in the hills are invariably small and scattered over vast areas, the exception being Gebeit al Ma'adin in Halaib *mahallia* and Sinkat town. The plains lie to the west, where the hills decrease in number and height and the major *khors* converge. Given that some *khors* do not reach the sea, the area is prone to flooding when the rains are good. For this reason, the *kor* area is extensively used for *dhura* (sorghum) cultivation. Arguably a fourth area can be defined in the province, that of the south-western grazing lands of Tamarab, characterised by good pasture and water sources and relatively abundant rainfall both in winter and summer.

Four main types of soil can be identified in Red Sea State: saline soils along the coast, rocky soils in the hilly area, sandy soils in the western plains and silt and light clay in the *kor* area. Where the soil is fine and porous like around the *khors* there is a high degree of percolation that enhances groundwater resources which are used both to water grazing animals and for cultivation. In other areas, i.e. along the coast where the soil is saline or in the hills where it is mainly composed of rocks, sources of groundwater are scarcer and are usually confined to permanent wells or shallow wells dug seasonally.

Rainfall in the State is highly variable in quantity and distribution, though two main seasonal trends can be identified on the coast and in the interior hilly area. The coastal plains receive most rainfall in winter from November to January and heavy dew until the end of April. The winter rains are caused by dry winds that transport water vapour across the Red Sea to the coast, where they are deposited in the form of rain or dew. The interior hills normally receive rainfall earlier in the year, between July and August, as a result of the northerly movement of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), the same

meteorological system that causes summer rains throughout the Sudan. Precipitation both in the hills and on the coast can vary significantly from year to year both in terms of spatial distribution and quantity, with the degree of variability increasing to the north. The mean annual rainfall in the State ranges between 33mm in Halaib, 90mm in Port Sudan and 73mm in Tokar, with coefficient of variation being as high as 200% in Halaib *mahallia* as compared to 70% in Port Sudan and 68% in Tokar. Red Sea State is also characterised by extremely high water deficit on both monthly and annual scales, with annual moisture indices ranging between -40mm and -60mm (Pantuliano, 2000: 66-68).

Temperatures in the State are fairly high: the mean annual temperature is between 28° and 32°, with the hottest months being June and July (mean temperature: 36°) and the coldest January and February (mean temperature: 26°).

1.2 Population

The total population of the State is officially estimated to be at 846,113 people (RSS, *ibid.*), although other sources put it at between 728,000 and 800,000 people (UNDP, 2005a:2; 4) with an annual growth rate of 2.9%, slightly above the national rate. The area is primarily inhabited by Beja pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, although a wide variety of ethnic groups from across the Sudan can be found in the state capital Port Sudan, especially Hausa, Fallata, Nuba and other northern and southern Sudanese. 61.2% of the State population is estimated to be living in Port Sudan.

The Beja are a confederation of tribes united by a common language, *TuBedawiye*, a Cushitic idiom, and a common segmentary structure, the *diwab*, where each lineage is linked to a common ownership and use of land. The Beja have retained a distinct culture and their own language, *TuBedawiye*, despite having mixed for centuries with Arab immigrants into their region. The three main groups making up the Beja are the Bishariyyn, the Amar'ar/Atmaan and the Hadendowa. There is much discussion in the literature (Palmisano, 1991; Morton, 1989) and amongst Beja intellectuals over whether another group, the Beni Amer, can also be considered Beja, given that the large majority of them speak a different language, *Tigre'* (a Semitic language related to Tigrinya and Amharic) and have a different social structure based on a caste system rather than a segmentary structure (Pantuliano, 2005:11).

The difficulty of the physical environment has had a direct influence on the pattern of transhumance adopted in Red Sea State. Households move in small units of two or three families and people and animals are scattered over very wide areas. In most of the rural areas of Red Sea State the population lives in broadly dispersed hamlets that tend to be spread along the *khors* where the availability of water, pasture and agricultural land is greater. Road access between the hamlets is very limited. Several of these settlements came first into being as locations for the delivery of food aid during the

famine that hit eastern Sudan in the mid 1980s. Some have later received few basic services and as a result of the progressive abandonment of pastoral mobility, the population has increased and the hamlets have become small villages. Over the years much of the rural population of Red Sea State has moved to the state capital, Port Sudan. The features and the consequences of the ongoing process of urbanisation of the Beja population are discussed in detail in the following section.

2. LIVELIHOODS UNDER STRESS: CHRONIC VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTIVE CHANGES

2.1 The Beja livelihoods system

Like many other pastoral populations in the Sahelian belt, the Beja live in a dry environment with a dynamic, non-equilibrium ecology (Scoones, 1994:2). Unlike equilibrium environments, where there is a balance between populations, available resources and external forces like climate (Ellis, 1994:37), African drylands are categorised as areas where there is no long-term balance between populations and other elements of the ecosystem. Main features are high rainfall variability, scarcity of water, low natural productivity and extreme temperature. From the description of the main characteristics of the environment in which the Beja live presented in the preceding section it is apparent that Red Sea State is a case in point.

To cope with such a complex ecosystem, Beja pastoralists have over the years adopted a set of dynamic and flexible strategies aimed at facilitating survival by allowing for the exploitation of multiple resources. Such strategies have ensured the resilience of the Beja pastoral system so far and have allowed people to bounce back and recover from the frequent droughts and outbreaks of famine which have repeatedly struck the region. One of the key elements of this livelihoods system has been mobility. Like most other pastoralists in the Sahelian belt, in order to take more advantage of an environment where rainfall is scattered and scarce, the Beja have developed opportunistic strategies aimed at tracking feed supplies over vast areas. Movement patterns have varied depending on the availability and regularity of the rains.

Mobility has always been crucial to the survival of Beja pastoralists throughout the Red Sea region. Movement has traditionally been combined with diversification in livestock types to allow for the use of all available feed sources and to help minimise the spread of epidemics. Another important risk spreading strategy adopted by the Beja has been herd redistribution at *diwab* (lineage) level. Pastoralists traditionally build social security systems based on reciprocity in order to reduce problems of food security, especially in the case of drought or disease. In the case of the Beja, animals are generally redistributed through inheritance or payment of bridewealth. The Beja also have customary rules which encourage wealthy livestock keepers to transfer some head of the stock to *diwab* members in need of support, especially during periods of drought or food insecurity. Three main practices can be identified: *halagen*, *tait* and *dangeit* or *yahamot*. *Halagen* is the gift of animals that a young man receives or can ask from his friends or relatives when he gets married: these animals are added to those he receives from his father which constitute the bulk of the bridewealth. Animals can also be donated to a new owner in absence of a marriage: this arrangement takes the name of *tait*. A *tait* gift

bestows upon the new owner full authority over the animals as well as its entire offspring. This type of gift also creates a long-lasting relationship between the people involved in the transaction. The third arrangement, *dangeit* or *yahamot* allows for the loan of animals, especially milking goats, to poorer households between *diwab* members or neighbours. In this case, unlike the others, the borrower can only use the milk and must return the animals and the offspring to the original owner once the period of difficulty is over or their agreement has come to an end. *Yahamot* is not limited to milking goats: riding camels are also lent to dispossessed herders when they need a means of transportation to move to far away pastures or to go to the market in Port Sudan or other towns within Halaib Province.

In addition to the above listed survival mechanisms, economic diversification has always been an important strategy for the Beja to complement family income at certain times of the year or during periods of crisis. Multi-resource economies are characteristic of pastoralist societies and they imply the involvement of some members of the family in economic activities other than livestock keeping. Some of the main activities in which the Beja have for a long time been engaging are agriculture, fishing, mining, firewood collection, charcoal making and sale of rural products like milk, *ghee*, mats, baskets and leather goods. Labour migration to town, especially to Port Sudan as cash labourers on the docks, has also been a constant feature of the Beja economy. However, the scope of the involvement in these non-pastoral activities has dramatically changed over the years. There seems to be a more permanent shift to alternative sources of livelihoods as opposed to seasonal or crisis-related moves to increase family income (see 2.3 below).

Another important element of the Beja livelihoods system has been the existence of a complex but flexible body of customary rules based on Beja traditional values called *silif*. *Silif* regulates access to and redistribution of resources, reciprocal use of environmental resources (grazing land, water points, arable land or firewood), environmental protection (e.g. the prohibition of cutting live trees), conflict resolution and reciprocity around major social events (birth, marriage and death). Clear land rights codes embodied in the *silif* (*asl* and *amara*¹) have helped minimise conflict over land, supported by the mediation of the tribal authorities that were entrusted with the management of land rights. Over the last three or four decades, though, this system seems to have lost the capacity to secure people's livelihoods and to enable them to recover from the effects of drought and famine as a consequence of a series of external factors (Pantuliano, 2000).

2.2 External shocks

For many decades, the flexible mechanisms on which the Beja livelihoods system has been based have, to a large extent, proven effective in allowing them to sustain themselves and recover from

¹ *Asl* is the customary right over a piece of land and its resources inherited from the ancestors for the entire lineage; *amara* is the usufruct right given to non lineage members to use pasture, water and cultivable land on the *asl* of another lineage against the payment of a tribute called *gwadab*.

external shocks such as drought and famine. However this livelihoods system has undergone profound changes which have undermined their traditional capacity to cope with stress. The key elements of this system, mobility as well as herd distribution and diversification, have been fundamentally weakened by external factors and internal transformation, the latter often prompted by exogenous change. One of the main reasons behind the increasing abandonment of mobility strategies for raising animals by a large number of Beja in the Red Sea area has been the policies of colonial and independent governments. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium the Beja suffered from colonial policies which contributed to undermine the basis of their economic and social well being. A number of agricultural schemes, introduced by the Turko-Egyptian administration in the southern part of the eastern region (Gash and Tokar Delta), were considerably expanded by the British administration to increase cotton cultivation. The expansion of the schemes hindered the capacity of the Beja to resort to key pasture reserves when severe drought struck, undermining their resilience to combat climatic crises and laying the basis for the decline of their pastoral economy (Niblock, 1987:148). Access to key patches was also restricted as a consequence of the damming of the River Atbara for the irrigation of the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme, which reduced the amount of downstream water in the area occupied by Bishariyyn Beja. Bishariyyn mobility and livestock trade were later significantly constrained by the seizure of Halaib town by the Egyptian army in 1994 and the occupation of the whole Halaib triangle, which continues to date. At the other end of the eastern belt, in Kassala State, access to pasture has in recent years been hampered by the border fighting between Government of Sudan (GoS) troops and the Eastern Front, of which the Beja Congress is the main member, as well as by tension between GoS and the Government of Eritrea.

Another external factor has historically contributed to the weakening of Beja livelihoods security. The British colonialists imposed their Native Administration system on the Beja which did not reflect the established internal structure of the group. The system was hierarchical, rigid and did not take into account the essential flexibility of Beja leadership that had been adapted to the dynamics of pastoral life over the years. As a result, the newly introduced administrative policy created profound imbalances in the power system and undermined traditional leadership and the cohesiveness of the *diwab* structure. The overall consequence of the British policy was the creation of an artificial ruling elite which did not truly represent the Beja and very rarely advocated for the genuine interests and needs of the tribe. This elite ruled over the tribe until the 1970s, and maintained its influence until the beginning of the 1980s, notwithstanding the attempts of the Beja Congress, an indigenous political movement created in 1958, to oust them. The unrepresentativeness and inactivity of the Beja elite became untenably evident during the drought of the mid-1980s when they failed to mobilise the central government and international donor organisations to provide support in time to avoid disastrous losses of human life and livestock (Pantuliano, *ibid.*:189).

Adverse impact on the Beja livelihoods system was also felt as a result of the opening of mines for gold and other minerals in Halaib *mahallia* and most crucially with the creation of Port Sudan, which attracted Beja young men to seek wage labour in the new urban centres. These were not inherently fundamental threats to the security of Beja livelihoods. Indeed they provided opportunities which could have been built upon. Until the late 1960s rural-urban labour circulation allowed pastoralists to raise money to contribute to the rebuilding of the stock depleted by droughts and famines. Subsequently, however, labouring in town became a long term activity for pastoralists originating from various rural parts of Red Sea State, particularly for the very many who had lost a large proportion of their herd and were left with few animals in the aftermath of the famine of the mid 1980s. The absence of investment and development policies in the rural areas exacerbated the drive to town and the progressive decline of the Beja pastoral economy.

2.3 From coping strategies to adaptation

Traditional Beja migratory patterns in Red Sea State, with regular movement between the rural areas and the town, have changed character in more recent decades, with the sojourns of many young pastoralists in the urban centres becoming more protracted. This phenomenon has created shortages of labour for herding and distracted people's attention from maintaining traditional survival and recovery mechanisms that complemented and strengthened livestock-keeping. The loss of labour entailed by migration to town has reduced the capacity of rural Beja to resort to longer transhumance movements at certain times of the year or at times of crisis, when the ability to reach faraway pasture reserves is crucial for the survival of the animals. As a result, the nature of livestock-keeping has started to change and increasing numbers of people have shifted to more localised and market oriented forms of animal rearing, often focusing on small stock, particularly goats, which can be herded in restricted areas and are easier to sell or exchange for cash or other market commodities. The abandonment of a mobile livestock-raising strategy has though generated overgrazing processes around the main settlements in Red Sea State, where problems of environmental degradation are now prominent. To provide for their needs, people have in fact increasingly resorted to logging (to provide building materials), firewood collection and charcoal making, for which there is great demand from small urban centres in Red Sea State as well as Port Sudan. As such activities become a primary livelihood source for more and more Beja in the State, the natural resource base from which they are derived is steadily eroded and its capacity to provide for people's needs is therefore reduced, exacerbating the vulnerability of people's livelihoods in the long term (Pantuliano, *ibid.*:190).

In Port Sudan, Beja livelihoods are often based on precarious and piecemeal economic activities which bear very little or no relation to their pastoral background and rarely offer security. For the majority of those who have abandoned the pastoral sector and have limited their economic interaction with the rural areas, the urban economy of Port Sudan has not been able to provide viable alternatives. The fact

that Port Sudan was planned and built without taking into any account the pastoral nature of the people who inhabited the hinterland has had serious repercussions in terms of preventing a more positive interaction between the town and its rural surroundings. Although existing rural-urban networks constitute an important social capital for many people, they have not been harnessed to enhance the security of the Beja livelihoods system as a whole. Activities such as daily labouring on the docks, in which most of the urban-based male Beja have been involved until the recent mechanisation of the port, have helped them meet short-term food or clothing needs for the family, but they were highly dependent on the demand of the market and did not offer a stable economic base. Since it absorbed labour that could have been employed in more viable activities, stevedoring on the docks has contributed to undermine people's capacity to secure livelihoods in the longer term. Now that with the mechanisation of the port most stevedoring jobs have been lost, many Beja households have been left with very few opportunities to access additional income.

The majority of the population of Red Sea State is today experiencing severe livelihoods erosion and increasing vulnerability. The contextual factors mentioned above and the lack of development policies, basic services and infrastructure have seriously weakened the ability of most rural communities to maintain livestock, grow crops and sustain alternative sources of income, weakening the ability of Beja pastoralists to cope with and recover from drought and other external shocks. Animal husbandry and crop production, though still important, have been progressively relegated to the status of secondary livelihoods sources and people are increasingly relying on casual farming work, unskilled urban labour and selling of fuel-wood and charcoal. However, as said above, the opportunities for casual work are dwindling, both in urban and rural areas, because of the mechanisation of the port and irrigated farming, leading to an ever increasing reliance of many households on the sale of firewood and charcoal as a primary source of income.

Market forces are becoming significant factors of economic stress for the Beja livelihoods system. This is mainly because the population has become strongly dependent on purchased food. There is ample evidence to suggest that periodic fluctuations in prices of grain, livestock or charcoal have a profound impact on access to food. Given the fact that more than 90% of the food consumed is brought from outside sources, any changes in production in the supplying areas will influence the food security situation in Red Sea State. Moreover, rural markets are highly fragmented due to poor infrastructure and rudimentary public transport. This leads to unfavourable terms of trade for the remoter and more isolated communities in the rural areas.

The most vulnerable groups are among the remote rural communities, especially those whose livelihood is dependent on livestock rearing. Households with limited access to land and livestock such as those who have been displaced by drought or conflict are particularly vulnerable. Female-headed

households that have lost assets are also at risk because of limited access to education and alternative skills. This is especially true in the case of Beja women living in urban areas, where the levels of poverty are rampant and living conditions are extremely poor for the majority of the communities living in the urban slums. Poorer households tend to cope with food shortages through income diversification (selling wood and charcoal), changes in consumption patterns, selling assets and informal credit. These piecemeal strategies point to a chronic vulnerability of the livelihoods system and offer little resilience to cope with emergencies.

Available livelihoods options in Red Sea State appear inadequate to provide a cushion against external shocks. These options are though also influenced by a number of factors associated with poor access to services, education and income sources. The diversity and viability of livelihoods options are likely to increase if interventions are designed to take these relationships into account. There is ample evidence to suggest that there is a strong correlation between the literacy of the head of the household and the diversity and viability of livelihoods options. Improvements in education are hampered by cultural biases (boys given preference over girls), lack of facilities for separate schools for boys and girls, lack of adequate training and remuneration for teachers, inability of the poor to pay for school fees or to cover the opportunity cost of child labour and high drop out rates related to poverty.

Livelihoods diversity and viability are also influenced by access to water. Water supplies, especially hand-dug wells, have been negatively affected by low rainfall and low river flow. Households which depend on unreliable water sources have to sustain great costs to purchase water or spend considerable time fetching it. In some parts of the Red Sea State the cost of water accounts for more than 50% of the income of the household. To buy water these households have to sell their livestock, further depleting their assets.

From community interviews it has become apparent that the majority of households in Gunub and Aulib are reducing the variety and number of meals. This is a reflection of the appalling food security situation, which is further compounded by lack of stocks, increasing food prices and absence of government policies to stabilise markets. Community membership provides many chronically vulnerable households with access to a pool of resources traditionally created to mitigate the impact of food shortages. However, social safety nets are under increasing stress and many households do not have resources to share with kin and neighbours. Traditional herd redistribution transfers like *halagen* have progressively been abandoned because very few households both in the rural and in the urban areas are still in a position to offer livestock to their poorer kin. Access to credit has also diminished and in the rural areas most village shopkeepers who themselves borrow from urban traders with tight and limited credit lines have stopped bringing sufficient grain to their village.

The increased dependence on the sale of firewood and charcoal is not a sustainable livelihood option. There are indicators that in several rural areas people are moving increasingly longer distances from their settlements to procure wood. The hitherto enacted social sanctions against live tree felling, based on *sillifrules*, have been relaxed and the impact of such activities on the environment is already felt in some areas. However, charcoal production in mesquite (*Prosobis chilensis*) infested areas such as Tokar and Selloum is encouraged as measure to reduce the presence of this tree on farmlands and pasture.

The new livelihoods system which has emerged over the last two to three decades is based on increased reliance on strategies previously used mainly as a complement to livestock keeping. These were perceived in the past (and in some cases still are) as coping strategies used exclusively in periods of food stress, but they have in many cases now become *adaptive strategies* incorporated into the normal pattern of activities (Davies, 1996:285). In most Beja households these strategies today generate the major part of cash income and absorb most of the household labour allocation, but they are not able to provide a sustainable basis for future generations. An increase in vulnerability has characterised the evolution of the Beja livelihoods system throughout the second half of last century. However, the transition is not complete and although it is probably too late to help people to pursue their livelihoods strategies as they were, much can still be done to reduce their inherent vulnerability and make them more secure through appropriate policy and development interventions.

2.4 Livelihoods support interventions

Until recently, formal safety nets and recovery programmes that support livelihoods in Red Sea State have been minimal. Current government, UN and NGO capacity in the state is inadequate to tackle the complexity of the local livelihoods crisis. Most responses related to food and livelihoods security have tended to be emergency focused and small scale and have not successfully addressed the underlying causes of the crisis. Apart from WFP, the involvement of UN agencies in the State has been very limited until recently, with UNDP resuming activities only in 2005. The principal international NGOs in Red Sea State are OXFAM-GB, ACORD, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), MSF-Belgium, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Ockenden International. Their projects vary from food aid to micro-credit, agriculture and livestock development, women's education, vocational training, income generation and HIV/AIDS awareness. A number of local organisations are also involved in supporting household food insecurity and their contribution has been critical for maintaining public institutions such as schools, health clinics and mosques. Most localities have a mixture of such local organisations as credit/saving associations, farmers' associations, schools, health and mosque committees and youth groups.

The Red Sea State government, Oxfam and the Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC) provide emergency relief in the form of food aid, ACF is conducting supplementary feeding in Port Sudan and WFP supports the

Ministry of Health programme of supplementary feeding centres in the rural areas. Most of the food aid has been provided by WFP through its partners (Oxfam and the SRC). The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs is also providing food aid which is distributed through the localities. Food is also made available through school feeding, food-for-education, food-for-work and food-for-recovery programmes. The Red Sea State government has occasionally intervened to stabilise sorghum price increases through supplies obtained from the central Strategic Grain Reserve.

Recognising the need for livelihoods support, the government has recently allocated US\$10 million to clean 20,000 acres of mesquite trees in the Tokar Delta and has introduced tractors and improved seeds to enhance local agricultural production. The government has also introduced solar-powered pumps on a pilot basis in more than 70 remote villages to promote small-scale irrigation from local wells. In Sinkat and Rural Port Sudan localities 12 new primary schools are also being built and four water-harvesting systems have been constructed to improve pasture and access to clean water. In addition, the government has begun to provide support to fishermen along the coast through the provision of storage facilities, ice plants and communication equipment.

Notwithstanding the interventions listed above, there is a general consensus among the Red Sea State government, international organisations operating in the region and the donor community that the interventions carried out so far have not been strategic enough to tackle the causes of food and livelihoods insecurity in the State and that the current capacity to support local livelihoods is generally inadequate. This has been partly attributed to the absence of a co-ordinated structure to address the long-term problems of chronic vulnerability and livelihoods erosion. The need for a comprehensive development strategy for the area has been acknowledged by the Red Sea State government which has developed the Red Sea State Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2005-2008. However, the plan has been developed without the involvement of the local communities, civil society groups and international organisations operating in the State. In addition, most of the objectives set appear to be very ambitious and not adequately resourced, as it is discussed in more detail in the next section (see 3.5).

3. PEOPLE AND POLICES IN RED SEA STATE: A WIDENING DIVIDE

3.1 The general policy context

The relationship between state power and Beja pastoralists has been tense since the colonial times because of the adverse colonial policies illustrated in section 2.2 above. The discrimination felt during the British colonisation pushed a number of Beja elite to organise the Beja Congress in 1958 with the aim of drawing attention to the underdevelopment and marginalisation of the Beja areas and to advocate for more administrative and political autonomy. Grievances about the lack of political representation for the Beja, socio-economic underdevelopment and lack of services have continued since independence and have been exacerbated in latter years by the livelihoods crisis that has affected most Beja communities.

For most of its history the political leadership in Red Sea State (as in the rest of eastern Sudan) has either been imposed or controlled by the central government. Despite the introduction of a variety of local, regional and federal systems since the early 1970s, Red Sea State has continued to be effectively administered from Khartoum. The lack of genuine representation at the local level has translated into an almost total absence of investment in services and productive infrastructure as well as in the absence of appropriate policies in support of the rural and urban economies of the region. In addition, the cumbersome administrative set up associated with the central administration has contributed to the mismanagement of both the assistance allocated from the centre as well as the resources generated locally. As remarked by one informant, 'decentralisation has not been the decentralisation of decision-making powers but the decentralisation of powers to loot public resources'.

Beja communities are excluded from policy and decision-making processes at federal, state and local levels. Their nominal representation in some institutions is based on tribal affiliation rather than on the basis of membership to pressure groups sharing common development needs and interests. Even the Pastoralists' Union of Red Sea State is a quasi-government body, composed of elite and tribal leaders who are no longer directly involved in pastoralism and have assumed their positions through official appointment rather than democratic elections.

The lack of involvement of local communities in the policy making process is apparent when reviewing the sectoral policies implemented in Red Sea State over the last few decades. Most policies with a direct impact on the pastoral system have been premised on the assumption that pastoral management is an environmentally destructive and economically irrational activity. This has led to the introduction of strategies aimed at increasing the volume of livestock in formal markets to provide inexpensive meat for the urban population in Port Sudan as well as to earn hard currency through the

export of animals. Very little has been done to favour traditional transhumance strategies. To the contrary, these have been obstructed by the enclosure of land for agricultural activities. The mainstay of the national approach to pastoralism over the last decade is embodied in the 'Comprehensive National Strategy 1992-2002' (CNS, see 3.2 below) which set the following objectives for the pastoral sector: a) increase the number of livestock from 60 million to 180 million; b) increase livestock export 20fold; c) modernise pastoralism through commercial ranches; and d) integrate livestock in irrigation schemes (Manger, 1998:7). Before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the federal government embarked on a process of revision of the CNS and began formulating a 'Quarter-Century Development Strategy, 2005-2030'. However, that process was halted after the signing of the CPA to allow for the participation of other political forces in the policy revision process and so far has not been put into motion again, thereby leaving the CNS as the standing national development strategy.

Successive governments have engaged in repeated ministry and departmental restructuring that have tended to compromise pastoral interests. Particularly adverse was the restructuring of the Animal Wealth and Range and Pasture administrations. The status of the Animal Wealth Administration has been oscillating from full Ministry to an agency within a larger Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Wealth. On several occasions when Animal Wealth was separated from Agriculture, a dispute over the affiliation of the Range and Pasture Administration (manned mainly by agriculturalists) ensued. The institutional status and affiliations of the Range and Pasture Administration has witnessed even more dramatic and frequent changes which started with the separation of the Range Administration from the Ministry of Animal Resources, where range management and research were closely coordinated with Animal Health and Production, to end with the creation of a credible comprehensive alternative: the Soil Conservation, Land Use and Water Programming Administration (SCLUWPA). However SCLUWPA was dismantled by the Numeiri government, which elevated the two basic units (Range Management Administration and Rural Water Development Corporation) to a status higher than the mother institution. For a short period, the Range and Pasture Administration became part of the Rural Water Development Corporation, but the unified administration was later split into two separate bodies and coordination between the two has since been virtually non-existent (Shazali, 2002:24).

Currently the Range and Pasture Administration is an administrative unit under a larger General Administration for Natural Resources within the Ministry of Agriculture. The regional Range and Pasture Administration offices in the 16 northern states are under the direction of regional Directorates of Agriculture in unified State Ministries for Agriculture and Animal Resources). At both federal and state levels, the Range and Pasture Administration generally lacks capacity to develop or even positively maintain pastures, apart from the seasonal activity of opening fire lines, especially in Dar Fur (prior to the current crisis) and in Western Kordofan. The marginality of the Range and Pasture Administration

appears to replicate within government structures the marginalization of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the Sudanese political and economic context. It is important to underline that while it is the statutory mandate of the Ministry of Animal Wealth to develop pasture, the development and management of the acacia belt of Central Sudan gradually shifted from the Range and Pasture Administration to the Forestry Department. The mandate of the Forestry Department has since expanded and the Department has been promoted to the level of a National Corporation. Furthermore, with the Forests Act of 1989, formerly defined 'pastures' have been changed into 'forests' under the mandate of the National Forest Administration and the continuity of pastoral usufruct rights in waste forest and unregistered land has been rendered subject to the restrictions contained in the Forest Act (Shazali, *ibid*). Whilst these administrative and institutional arrangements have had wide repercussions on the livelihoods of pastoralists throughout the country, their effect has been particularly significant in Red Sea and Kassala States given the lack of political representation and the inability to influence local policy processes experienced by the Beja since colonial times.

The viability of the pastoral economy in eastern Sudan and the pursuit of traditional pastoral strategies such as transhumance have also been hampered by the adverse land and agricultural policies which have upheld the land grabbing initiated by the colonial administration. The promulgation of the Unregistered Land Act in 1970, which abolished customary rights of land use, led to deregulation and further seizing of land for agricultural schemes which cut into prime land of small farmers and nomadic pastoralists. The Act provided that all unregistered land of any kind (cultivable, pasture, forest, etc.), occupied and unoccupied, would become the property of the government and be deemed registered as such (LTF, 1986:4, emphasis added). The Act did not define the legal status of the current land users and gave the government ample powers of eviction. The Act also provided a legal basis for land acquisition for large scale mechanised agricultural projects (LTF, *ibid*), which in eastern Sudan State led to the expansion of the Tokar Delta, Gedaref, New Halfa and Gash agricultural schemes.

In 1975 the Mechanised Farming Corporation Ordinance was passed which gave bureaucrats authority to allocate land and issue licenses to individuals who wanted to invest in farming. These licenses were swept away by urban-based traders and bureaucrats who did not have previous land rights in eastern Sudan. Rich pastoralists also invested in farming and bought allotments where they have been farming fodder for their animals, while others bought grazing rights on the schemes. This has enabled them to keep large herds of animals which are often herded by destitute pastoralists. The Mechanised Farming Act was reviewed in 1990 and was confirmed and even strengthened by new investment laws (the Agricultural Investment Act decreed in 1990 and amended in 1991), which gave regional governors power to allocate up to a limit of 5,000 *feddans* in the rainland and 1,000 *feddans* in the irrigated land to private individuals wishing to invest in agriculture (Manger, 1998.:8).

To date there has been no federal legislation to sanction the entitlement of pastoralists to natural resources, particularly land. The Salvation Revolution government left it to the different States to promulgate their own legislation to deal with pastoralist entitlements. Prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, however, only two States had issued laws to this effect (which were though considered seriously flawed): the then Greater Dar Fur and North Kordofan States. No attempt to introduce any such legislation was ever promoted in Red Sea State or in the rest of eastern Sudan.

The lack of policymaking power of the Beja communities in Red Sea State has also been apparent in the water sector. The sector has long suffered from incoherent policy processes between the centre and the peripheries and the lack of an organic institutional structure. In 1969 the Rural Water Corporation, the body mandated to oversee water development, became part of the Ministry of Rural Development and Community Service. Its status was subsequently elevated to a national corporation under the Minister of Energy, and later became a larger national corporation that is also responsible for urban water under the Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources. In colonial times water and range policies were closely synchronised but from the 1970s onwards water policy came to be progressively formulated in virtual disregard of basic pastoral needs and requirements. The shift of policy formulation processes from local and regional to central levels further compounded the problems of water policy. Not only was the bias against pastoralists exacerbated, but the technical opinions of local level officials were often ignored (Shazali, *ibid.*:25). Instead of maintaining and deepening existing traditional wells along transhumance routes, recent decades have seen many examples of big projects based on the building of dams. In many cases such dams have been a failure and have been unable to provide water, while in others they have fostered human settlement which has increased pressure on the local fragile environment (Manger, *ibid.*:12). In addition, permanent wells have been dug in places technically feasible only for *hafirs* and both *hafirs* and wells were established in areas occupied by mechanized schemes, which are uninhabited except during the agricultural season. With the current privatisation drive, agro-pastoralists have to bear the full establishment costs of watering points and in addition pay fees to use the water (Shazali, *ibid.*).

3.2 The absence of pro-pastoralists policies

Trends in pastoral development in the Sudan can be traced along the various phases of development planning during the second half of the 20th century. Service programmes and water provision were not based on proper resource surveys, livestock counts or assessment of pastoral migration. During the 1950s and 1960s the government was committed to tackling the severe water shortage in rural areas. It started by drilling boreholes and constructing *hafirs*. This type of development had two adverse effects on pastoral welfare. First, as the new water sources were open to everybody, this complicated the use of grazing resources and caused localized overstocking. Second, improvements in water supply were

not accompanied with comparable improvements in range and pasture quality. Together these made the pastoral production system more vulnerable to climatic fluctuations, reflected in enormous livestock losses during times of drought. However, during this same period, settlement projects were launched in different parts of the country with the same dismal outcome.

In the 1970s development projects concentrated on high potential areas and large-scale government schemes. The pastoral sector received very little attention as it was thought to be of low potential and less likely to provide substantial returns on investment. In the process, more and more grazing lands were lost to large-scale mechanized farming. The loss of dry season grazing grounds by Hadendowa and Beni Amer pastoralists to the east of Atbara River is case in point. In the 1980s the severe economic recession had halted all development activities, especially in the pastoral sector. As a result herders were severely affected by drought and general environmental degradation. This is evident in the rapid loss of livestock which occurred at the time. The government however was more concerned with solving the problem of food shortage rather than supporting the recovery of pastoral strategies, still the major source of livelihood for a significant portion of the Sudanese people. Neither did pastoral development appeal to international capital because it was not thought to provide quick returns on investment in the manner demanded by foreign investors. Consequently, developments in the non-pastoral sectors (mainly large-scale irrigated and rain-fed mechanized farming) exacerbated pastoral problems by restricting access to dry season water and grazing resources.

The droughts of the last two decades of the 20th century were accompanied by massive transfers of livestock from herders into the hands of large farmers, as the former were forced to get rid of their stocks in order to meet basic needs. While the latter enjoyed the advantage of controlling land, crop residues and cultivating fodder, herders only had access to dwindling natural pasture resources. Those so-called *new pastoralists* were supported with massive credit facilities to cater for veterinary care, supplementary feeding and modern transport. The net result has been that more and more herders have been forced out of pastoralism, migrating to urban centres and agricultural schemes. The negative impacts of these processes on livelihoods are nowhere as evident as in the case of Beja pastoralists.

The livestock sub-sector started to receive more attention by the government during the 1990s. The Three Year Salvation Programme (1990-1992) and the Comprehensive National Strategy (1992-2002) recognized the importance of the livestock sub-sector and its potential to contribute significantly in promoting economic growth, food security and the enhancement of export expansion. During the 1990s the government undertook many policy reforms to promote livestock production and boost its export. As said above, the CNS aimed at increasing animal production by three folds, so as to meet local consumption and increase export of sheep and cattle by 20 times. To support the Strategy, the government launched a huge campaign for animal health. The most important achievement of this

campaign was the introduction of mobile clinics that were meant to move with nomadic pastoralists from one place to another following their seasonal movement.

Several macroeconomic and trade reforms were undertaken which directly impacted on pastoral livelihoods. Government direct intervention in livestock and meat markets was reduced to the minimum after the announcement of liberalisation policies in 1992. Tax levels and tax rates on livestock were effectively reduced and export of livestock was completely exempted from paying export tax. Moreover, the government monetary and credit policies generally favoured the agricultural sector against other sectors of the economy. The finance for livestock and meat production were given top priorities and commercial banks were encouraged to provide funds for the livestock sub-sector. The impact of these policies was a relative improvement in the prices received by livestock producers in the pastoral sector.

Although overall macroeconomic policies have moved towards liberalisation, there has been a setback in trade policies related to livestock export. In September 2002 the government signed an agreement with a Saudi multibillionaire which gave him a monopoly in livestock and meat exports from the Sudan. According to this agreement, no exporters were allowed to export livestock or meat from the Sudan unless they received acceptance from the official representative of the Saudi billionaire. The agreement was met with strong opposition by the Livestock Exporters' Union which persuaded its members not to co-operate with the representative of this new company. Because of this standoff the export of live sheep to Saudi markets dropped to less than 50% of their normal level in 2002. Under strong pressure from the Union, the government was forced to abolish the agreement and replace it with a revised version in July 2003. The new agreement allows the export of sheep to the Saudi market to become competitive during the *Haj* season and excludes the export of live camels from any restriction. Despite the amendments, however, the agreement continues to be strongly opposed by livestock producers and exporters.

The reduction in the volume of livestock exports has resulted in the depression of domestic prices, with traditional pastoralists being the main victim. The predicament of the pastoralists has been further compounded by the decline in export crop production (e.g. cotton, oilseeds and gum Arabic) and hence the drying up of tax revenues for both central government and local authorities. Since livestock remains the only viable export commodity, it has become the target of a plethora of federal and local taxes since the mid-1990s. Livestock is probably the most highly taxed commodity in the Sudan; traders pay up to 20 categories of taxes between the points of purchase to final exit. These taxes are seriously affecting the efficiency of domestic markets and the competitiveness of exporters. A high level national forum of all stakeholders is required to reduce and streamline taxes and fees to alleviate the burden of livestock traders and, by extension, pastoral producers who shoulder most of the marketing taxes as

they reflect negatively on the prices producers receive. Furthermore, taxes should be commensurate with the services provided and be used for improving market facilities and efficiency.

Whilst the absence of pro-pastoralists policies is a general problem throughout the Sudan, its impact is felt with particular effect in eastern Sudan, given the lack of genuine pastoralist representation in local governance structures which could help mitigate some of the most extreme consequences of the policy vacuum. The over-proliferation of livestock taxes is acute in Red Sea State where people complain of too many taxes being imposed at municipality, *mahallia* and state levels, often without authorisation from the centre. The lack of power of local pastoralist bodies and the absence of genuine representatives in institutions such as the State Pastoralist Union constitute a serious obstacle in the promotion of more conducive policies for pastoral livelihoods.

3.3 Shifting power: the new political context in Red Sea State

Local competition for power and resources has over the years made the Red Sea region vulnerable to the influence of the central government. This trend started in the 1970s when the introduction of the new land legislation and the restructuring of the Native Administration operated by the Numairi government started to shift the balance of power from traditional leaders based in the rural areas towards an urban educated tribal elite allied with the centre. As said above (see 2.2) this new class of Native Administration leaders failed to catalyse national attention to the famine which caused considerable loss of life amongst the Beja and killed 80% of their livestock in the 1980s, seriously undermining the long term viability of their pastoral system. The newly established Native Administration has maintained its loyalty to the centre over the years and has been shifting allegiances depending on who is in government, usually prioritising private interests over the collective good of the community. The failure of these leaders to advance the interests of the Beja and advocate for conducive policies for their livelihoods has led to a steady decrease of their power and influence, particularly in urban areas. In Port Sudan and in other urban centres in Red Sea State the Native Administration appears to have lost its leadership to a new and younger generation whose authority is not based on tribal loyalty. The new leaders are educated or semi-educated youth, usually sympathetic to the cause of the Beja Congress and the Eastern Front, who demand a greater involvement of the local communities in the sharing of power and resources and in the local decision making processes. The youth have organised themselves and are widely represented, especially in the bigger towns.

Other important changes in the political landscape of the Red Sea State include the diminishing influence of the Democratic Unionist Party, for which eastern Sudan had traditionally been an electoral stronghold, and a return to ethno-political parties such as the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions. It is important to remark though that these two parties have been trying to build a broader alliance with all groups based in eastern Sudan, including Southerners, Nuba and Dar Furis, particularly

in Port Sudan where these groups are well represented. These attempts have however failed so far, perhaps with the exception of Dar Furi elements from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) who have forged an alliance with the Eastern Front. Although Nuba and Southern IDPs suffer similar problems of marginalisation and lack of services, the attempts to broaden the Front have been scarcely successful so far, since the movement is perceived as being largely dominated by the Beja².

The political landscape of eastern Sudan is changing rapidly and the new dynamics pose new challenges for the governance of the region. It is important to remember to take into account these political developments and to give space to and involve the emerging forces demanding change when developing policies to address the livelihoods crisis in the state and throughout the region.

3.4 Ongoing policymaking processes

The government of Red Sea State has displayed deep concern about reversing the appalling state of livelihoods insecurity in the area. This is reflected in its continuous discussion of how to direct all development efforts towards enhancing people's livelihoods by improving their food security and their access to basic services. There are various development projects being promoted to increase livestock and crop production as well as efforts for rehabilitation and improvement of health, educational facilities and water sources. However, most of the plans and projects have not adequately addressed the root causes of the lingering livelihoods crisis and the successes achieved so far are far below both official and public aspirations.

In addition, the decentralisation process has so far not been translated into a true devolution of resources. The Red Sea State Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2005-2008 clearly states that human and financial resource limitations hinder poverty reduction processes in the state. Currently, there is a potential for addressing the poverty problems and its causes especially with the state government's financial and personal commitment to the process. Some international non-governmental organizations have been involved in poverty reduction but on very limited scale. The civil society organizations, unions and community-based organizations, despite their limited resources, have been trying to address the poverty challenges and implications.

While policymakers are attempting to deliver alternative administrative, economic, political and technical strategies and interventions, they are constrained by lack of human and financial resources, weak institutions and ill-defined governance responsibilities. These inadequacies cast serious doubts on the capacity of governance and institutional arrangements alone to overcome the constraints

² For a more detailed analysis of the evolving political landscape of eastern Sudan see S. Pantuliano '*Comprehensive Peace? Causes and Consequences of Underdevelopment and Instability in Eastern Sudan*'. NGO Paper. Nairobi, September 2005

associated with the uncertainty of the policy outcomes and by implication to strengthen the viability of the livelihoods systems they are meant to address.

The social, political, and economic environment within which policymaking takes place is critical to the type and nature of the policy formulated. There are various competing, conflicting and collaborative institutions, groups and individuals with interest and roles in policymaking processes. In Red Sea State public policies are initiated and formulated by various institutions within the government. The dominance assumed by the government in policymaking could be attributed to the weakness of pressure groups, professional organisations and political parties. The *Wali* (Governor) is the source of many public policies, which are normally contained in orders, directives and decrees. Government departments, including local government, formulate many public policies that appear in the form of local orders and bylaws.

In theory the Red Sea State Legislative Assembly can influence public policy in a number of ways: some policies can be initiated by its members; it has the power to approve, modify and reject policy proposals forwarded by the government and can hold the government agencies accountable for their actions. However, in reality the legislative assembly is weak and tends to rubberstamp government policy proposals. This may be attributed to the fact that the *Wali* appoints the members of the legislative assembly and hence these are not accountable to the constituencies they represent. In addition, they lack experience and expertise in legislative matters and have no technical advisory staff (aides).

External actors consisting of international NGOs and UN agencies are indirectly contributing to policy formulation through the supply of information and data, the provision of technical assistance and the spread of new philosophies and good practice, but their impact is rather limited.

Overall in Red Sea State, rather than an institutionalised political process, policymaking appears to be no more than hurried reactions to certain occurrences, characterised by the exclusion of the majority of stakeholders and lack of predictability, coherence and stability. This poses serious obstacles to policy analysis. First, there are no policy documents to facilitate an analysis of policy content. Policy statements are often only found in the minds of senior government officials and top political leadership. Second, most policy implementation documents are not based on meticulous planning informed by reliable and up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data. In reality, plans are no more than bills of quantities of the sort that is prepared for construction contractors. Finally, there is a total lack of documentation with regard to monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. This in turn makes it impossible to identify and assess with certainty the policies that have significant impact on the livelihoods of the poor.

There is a general consensus in Red Sea State, especially among donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and CSOs, that government policies do not reflect poor people's livelihoods priorities, needs and interests. This position is supported by the clear weaknesses in the different policy processes, namely policy formulation (i.e. problem identification, data and information gathering, and analysis and decision-making), policy implementation (planning, organising, co-ordinating, directing, staffing and budgeting) and policy monitoring and planning (generation of information, assessment and feedback).

Reliance upon government to address the enduring livelihoods crisis would yield little. Governance structures are in serious crisis and are incapable of dealing with the issues they are meant to address. First, local government and the various technical departments which deal with issues related to livelihoods (e.g. the Soil Conservation Department, the Range and Pasture Administration, the Forestry Department, the Animal Health Department and the Rural Water Corporation) are in a crisis. Besides being appallingly under-resourced, they lack the ability to coordinate planning.

Another issue concerns the legitimacy of the governance system and the extent to which ordinary women and men have access to it and are allowed an opportunity to influence public policies in a manner that serves their practical needs and strategic interests. In theory, the federal system adopted since the early 1990s includes provisions for popular participation in policymaking as well as monitoring and evaluation. However, the fact that state legislative assemblies, locality councils and popular committees' members are appointed by the authorities, and hence not accountable to the public, has undermined the significance of their role in influencing public policies.

De facto policies in Red Sea State are the combined result of actions taken by multiple actors, including government agencies, UN organisations and NGOs, operating through different stages of the policy process. Lack of co-ordination among those actors has led to inconsistent or incoherent policies and hence to the phenomenon of the 'balkanisation' of policies. This reflects a lack of co-operative interaction. There are many examples in which the actions of different ministries, different levels of government (national, provincial, municipal) or different donors operating over the same policy issue (e.g. poverty reduction) are poorly coordinated. A renewed attempt to ensure better co-ordination in policy-making and policy implementation through the preparation of the Red Sea State Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2005-2008 has so far borne little fruit.

3.5 The Red Sea State Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2005-2008

In July 2005 the Red Sea State Ministry of Finance published the socio-economic development plan for the first three years of the interim period stipulated by the CPA between the Sudan People's Liberation

Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP). The plan was designed along the following guidelines:

- Improvement of infrastructure (electricity, roads, dams, *hafirs*, alternative energy);
- Improvement of basic services (education, health, water, sanitation, housing, etc.);
- Human resources development;
- Generation of employment opportunities for graduates;
- Encouragement of investment, especially by harnessing opportunities for tourism

The general objective of the plan is 'to raise the standard of living of people, both urban and rural, culturally, socially, politically, and administratively, through improved livelihoods, education and health services' (RSS, 2005). The specific objectives include:

- Promotion of poverty reduction in line with international policies, with a focus on improved production and pro-poor interventions in the area of social services;
- Reduction of malnutrition rates among children to less than 10%;
- Reduction of illiteracy rates by 50%;
- Increase of the area under cultivation in Delta Tokar and Arba'at by 75%;
- Seawater desalinisation in all coastal towns;
- Creation of employment opportunities for graduates and those affected by the mechanisation of the seaports and industrial decay;
- Improvement of livelihoods in rural areas through the introduction of alternative energy, especially solar energy;
- Priority in the allocation of federal and state support for the least developed localities and those affected by war;
- Research on the potential and utilisation of untapped resources.

The document also contains general policy statements to guide the implementation of the plan. These include:

- Use of basic information in planning and programming at the locality level through the development of quantitative indicators to monitor and measure progress in the achievement of the addressed development targets;
- Capacity building of the General Administration for Planning and Development;
- Ensuring balanced development across all localities;
- Participation of rural people in the development process through their local institutions (bottom-up grassroots development);
- Implementation of local government laws, devolution of power to the localities and harmonisation of local, state and federal development initiatives;

- Improvement of the standard of living in the rural areas through the rational utilisation of resources and integrated rural development projects;
- Peace building through development projects, provision of basic services, economic inputs and voluntary repatriation of the displaced people;
- Local development as the main vehicle to build organisational, technical and human capacities in the economic, social and cultural spheres;
- Support for tourism and rehabilitation of archaeological sites;
- Use of literacy campaigns to develop a work and business culture and to raise awareness among the population.

At first glance the 2005-2008 plan objectives and policy guidelines reflect the good intention of the newly formed Red Sea State Government to address the root causes of the lingering livelihoods crisis that is negatively impacting on the majority of the population in both urban and rural areas. Despite showing some signs of being relatively progressive in terms of equity and justice with respect to the diversity of needs, interests and aspirations across the various social groups based on ethnicity, gender and age, the document still has considerable shortcomings. The plan has no popular backing since it was developed in a non inclusive manner, not being the subject of wider debate involving civil society and other organisations and institutions representing the different communities of Red Sea State. Most people interviewed are of the opinion that the implementation of the plan would not be different from the familiar story of past plans and annual budgets characterised as they were with urban bias, gender inequity and the exclusion of minority ethnic groups. There may be some truth in such pessimism given the fact that the plan was designed by technocrats without clear provisions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In a context characterised by almost infinite needs and very limited resources, a participatory planning process would have conferred legitimacy for prioritisation in implementation as well as guaranteed opportunities for accountability with respect to outcomes.

4. MAKING POLICY FOR LIVELIHOODS: HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

4.1 The Decentralisation Policy

A key political element in the governance of the Sudan is the transfer of political tasks, competences and decision-making processes to sub-national levels. Decentralisation is considered the framework for participatory local development. The structure of government was decentralised after independence, with administrators taking over the countrywide network of power already established during the colonial period. However, decentralisation has yet to make significant progress and the process has so far brought little real devolution of competences and resources to sub-national levels. In the Interim Constitution approved in July 2005 after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement there are clear legal underpinnings to ensure that states and localities have democratically elected legislative bodies, such as the provision for the localities to elect legislative assembly bodies. Such bodies should be ideal fora for a genuinely democratic development process with close linkages to the communities in each of the localities. This is conducive to institutionalised participation in policymaking, even though in reality a number of difficulties have to be solved.

Although the value of truly participatory decentralisation has been firmly established, the fact remains that the history of attempts to institutionalise participatory decentralisation on a wide scale is replete with failures rather than successes. The basic reason for this is the fact that politicians have often used the term 'decentralisation' as a rhetorical device to strengthen their own power in government. Not only is the centre generally reluctant to relinquish control, but it has also often arrogated people's power when grassroots initiatives to promote decentralised governance structures have threatened to dilute its authority.

Empowerment of the weak and the poor is considerably more difficult than it might be assumed at first glance. Equal rights and broadly institutionalised participation do not result automatically from decentralisation. The power structures and power gaps that are found countrywide are also duplicated at the local level. For instance, women at the local level are not automatically more easily able to participate in political decision-making processes. After all, the politics of local government cannot be divorced from the politics of national government. If patronage and rent seeking characterise the political process that determines the distribution of power in the centre, local level government can hardly be an arena of popular participation just because it is local.

In true decentralisation, possible solutions would need to be sought through devolution of power and resources (i.e. to include fiscal decentralisation). They would also need to be legitimated and

monitored by democratic structures at the community level. NGOs can perform a key catalytic role in this process. However, it should be acknowledged that neither the politician-bureaucratic nexus nor the traditional elite will voluntarily share power, let alone relinquish it, unless the poor themselves can exercise enough bargaining power to make them do so. The empowerment of the poor thus becomes the central agenda item in any programme for decentralising governance in a pro-poor manner.

The institutionalisation of decentralisation therefore requires radical changes in attitude to include explicit or implicit recognition by the government of the value that can be added to policy processes by devolution of power and resources. This appreciation extends to understanding decentralisation not only in terms of tools and methods, but also in terms of attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

Governance structures in Red Sea State as in the rest of the country are undergoing major reforms with renewed commitment to implementing federalism through decentralised decision-making at state and *mahallia* levels. This transition period provides both opportunities and constraints. The decentralisation of planning and implementation to the *mahallias* offers an opportunity to provide capacity building where it is really needed. The early phase of decentralization is though also a constraint, since *mahallia* departments are presently under-resourced and many positions are not adequately filled.

4.2 The Poverty Reduction Strategy

One important policy process which provides opportunities to promote strategies in support of the livelihoods of marginalised groups in Red Sea State (as in other parts of the Sudan) is the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process. The PRS in the Sudan has been very slow and displays a total lack of direction, if not commitment, on the part of the concerned authorities. The lack of direction is exhibited in the frequent changes of the body responsible for the formulation of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy as well as by the fact that Sudan has yet to produce its Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The preparation of the PRSP started with the issuing of the Presidential Decree No.235 on 10th April 2000, whereby a High Council chaired by the President himself was established, composed of 75 members including government officials and private sector and civil society representatives. The High Council was assisted by a Steering Committee chaired by the State Minister of Finance. The output of this effort did not go beyond a few meetings, the production of technical papers of suspect quality on some policy issues and the organization of a workshop of limited participation.

In June 2001 another Presidential Decree was issued (No.342) whereby the High Council was replaced by the present National Council chaired by the Minister of Finance rather than the President. In addition to the Steering Committee at the federal level, the Decree included provisions for the establishment of a Technical Committee in each of the 26 States of the Sudan. Despite these amendments, there was no

change in the mode of operation and the level of participation continued to be very low, limited as it was to top government officials and representatives of the Army, the Police, the State Security, the Judiciary and the National Fund for the Support of Students. At the local level, similar efforts were limited to the 16 northern states and government controlled areas of the South.

The policy content of the strategies outlined in a paper documenting the history of the PRSP process in the Sudan, recently presented to a workshop by the ex-Director of the Social Sector at the Ministry of Finance (the body responsible for coordinating the PRSP process) does not constitute a radical shift from the past (Holy, 2003). Some PRSP critics (McGee and Norton, 2000; McGee et al., 2001) contend that the whole approach is fundamentally flawed, being merely a new name for Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The core macro-economic elements have changed little from the old structural adjustment programmes with a continued adherence to privatisation, liberalization and a reduced role for the state. The paper clearly demonstrates that the PRSP process in the Sudan is increasingly resembling the SAP process with the overall emphasis on market based pro-poor growth at the expense of the social and economic development of more vulnerable groups. This is particularly worrying given the substantial body of evidence showing that structural adjustment programmes did not reduce poverty. Although the rhetoric in the strategies outlined so far is poverty focused, the actual policies included do not have clear poverty reducing consequences. The strategies focus on economic growth without, on the most part, addressing how this growth is to be redistributed to the poor, especially the marginalized minorities such as the pastoralists. So far the government has not facilitated debate and alternative views on these fundamental questions of economic policy. Even some government officials have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the extent of public involvement in the PRSP process³.

Interpretation of participation does vary depending on the actors, as do the roles played by them in applying the principle of participation to PRSP processes. In practice 'participation' has been limited to consultation, which seems to be the official understanding of the concept. However, a real participatory process can only take place through increased information sharing and by including civil society members in official PRSP task forces. Thus, broadening the scope of the PRSP process and enhancing its quality can only be attained if the causes and spatial and demographic distribution of poverty are adequately represented and addressed in its content.

The participation in economic policy-making to which civil society is being invited in the PRSP process is strictly limited. Apart from a few meetings with the National Congress controlled trade unions (Workers' Union, Farmers' Union, Women's Union and Students' Union), the participation of the civil

³ Mustafa Holy, ex-Director of the Social Sector, Ministry of Finance, personal communication

society in the PRSP process has been almost non-existent so far. Although the PSRP process provides a forum for changing the national poverty discourse in the form of increasing recognition and discussion in official documents, yet there is no evidence to suggest that poverty is being widely debated and discussed. Civil society ownership of the PRSP is weakened by the lack of serious commitment on the part of the government to enhance wider participation, for example by forging links between participatory processes and governance issues.

4.3 The role of PRSP process in influencing policy

The current global concern about poverty and poverty reduction strategies provides a novel opportunity that is worth trying to harness in Red Sea State. The Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), the first step in the PRSP process, represents a collaborative relationship between government, civil society and other partners in a research process wherein research findings and additional outcomes can transform decision-makers' attitudes and practices as well as policies.

A good PPA process is worth far more than the qualitative information it can generate. A well-designed PPA process can itself serve as a vehicle for sustained policy influencing, with poverty-reducing and empowering impacts. Extracting the full potential from a PPA process means designing it with due attention to the objective of policy and attitude transformation, implementing it without haste and with care to maximize learning opportunities and fruitful linkages between people and processes and monitoring its impacts on policy direction and effectiveness. Key ingredients for success are rooted in the fact that a PPA is a participatory research exercise designed primarily to understand poverty from the perspective of poor people and to bring these perspectives into policy processes.

However, the PPA exercise is a necessary but not sufficient condition for policy influence: responsiveness on the side of the state is also necessary. If the preconditions for significant policy impact do not exist, a PPA style exercise would achieve little beyond its merely informational function. Unless the voice of the poor is fed into a receptive institutional context and accompanied by transformations in attitude, relationships and spaces for interaction between policymakers and the public, no sustained improvement will be secured.

4.4 The RSS Government and the PPA

Given the poor achievements of the PRSP process in the Sudan so far, there is an opportunity for Red Sea State to play a pioneering role by planning and launching a state-wide Participatory Poverty Assessment. The outputs and benefits of the PPAs go beyond the research documentation (eight locality PPA reports and a one State synthesis report). The PPAs should be carried out to inform the poverty debate within Red Sea State and to complement statistical data in a new analysis of poverty.

Moreover, the PPA should not be seen as a one-off exercise, but it should be revised and updated on a regular basis.

The PPA research work should be sponsored by international agencies and NGOs working in partnership with the government in poverty alleviation at the grassroots level. This way the research would be embedded in ongoing relationships and dialogue with government at both state and locality levels. Linking this work to the national level through the establishment of a National Poverty Working Group (N-PWG, a coalition of relevant government ministries, donors and NGOs) would provide an important opportunity to involve federal government agencies in the analysis of poverty at a local level. The process would be a powerful mechanism to demonstrate the value of opening up direct lines of communication with poor households in planning for poverty alleviation. Importantly, the process would also mean that research findings would have an in-built link into government programming for poverty reduction and into policy making.

At the state level, the task of coordinating the PPAs could fall on a State Poverty Working Group (S-PWG). There would be many advantages to this arrangement, as the S-PWG would be actively involved and interested in the PPAs. The study agencies should be members of the S-PWG and should keep the S-PWG informed of progress. Red Sea State Government members of the S-PWG should attend local level PPA feedback sessions where findings would be discussed and debated. At these workshops State government officials would have the opportunity to engage with local leaders who have been living in the target areas their whole lives. Local leaders would have the responsibility of endorsing the PPAs and ensuring that they fully reflect the priorities of the local poor. This could also attract attention from policymakers at the very highest level to mainstream such techniques into other policy arenas.

At the locality level, each of the locality PPAs should be carried out in partnership with local authorities. In this case, local officials should be trained in participatory techniques and take part in the assessment. This means that Village Development Committees (VDCs), locality and State officials should be closely involved in the planning and analysis stages, but not actually in conducting the fieldwork. It also means that local authorities would have a chance to be sensitised about the PPA findings and about the importance of exploring ways of dealing with the problems raised. At the local level, government buy-in to the PPA findings would mean that these studies would have a real chance of influencing decisions relevant to poor households and various social groups. This would hopefully motivate local officials to start lobbying for improved and more sustainable financial sector interventions that could provide services adapted to the needs of the poor on a sustainable basis.

4.5 The role of Oxfam in influencing policy

Besides its significant role in saving human lives during recurrent droughts, Oxfam has been instrumental in the empowerment of urban-based educated Beja who have access to Oxfam material and intellectual resources. These groups, whether directly employed by Oxfam or as officials engaged in collaborative work with Oxfam through their government agencies, are playing a significant role in influencing public policies in a direction that is more responsive to the priorities, needs and interests of the poor in both rural and urban areas. In this regard, one should mention the effort of the East Graduates' Association in initiating public debate on development issues using the Monthly Forum of the Beja Club. The growing influence of Beja educated youth and its recognition by the ruling party has culminated in their domination of the recently formed Red Sea State government.

In 2003 Oxfam initiated a 12-year pastoralist programme aiming at improving the ability of pastoral communities to meet their development needs, access basic health and education services, access and control productive assets and resources and secure their rights. Besides material inputs, the programme works closely with project partners to bring about wider policy and practice change. This includes building alliances and promoting the capacity of the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) representing these communities for effective advocacy and lobbying.

While Oxfam has been notably active in generating detailed data and information on the livelihoods crisis in Red Sea State, this information does not seem to have been very systematically used to inform processes of policy formulation and implementation. Clearly, through its operations Oxfam engages in work that relates to policy discussion and thereby attracts the interest of most government departments and political leaders. However, some government representatives and political leaders would regard these interventions as falling essentially under their own sphere of responsibility. Oxfam engages to some degree in areas of government policy, but it does not do so in a concerted manner and at formal levels. Oxfam's distinctive quality and potential advantage lies largely in the informality of the dialogue it can facilitate and it should continue to work at this level, as it is well placed to act as a connector between local government and marginalised communities both in urban and rural areas.

Whilst recognising the advantages of informality, it is important to underline the limits this might entail. Informal policy dialogues can be both a weakness and a strength, as they do not directly influence policymaking as such, but they simply encourage key policy actors to reflect on alternative policy options.

Oxfam's perceived influence on state level policies seems to have generated different reactions amongst government agencies and political leadership, ranging from a mixture of interest and support on one hand to 'suspicion' and 'jealousy' on the other. Government interest in Oxfam appears to be

largely motivated by the access Oxfam provides to actors and sectors which the government itself, for a number of reasons, has difficulty reaching. This interest has become even stronger where those in government believe that Oxfam can be made to serve as a tool in advancing government's own objectives. However, when informal policy dialogue has been promoted under Oxfam's auspices, it has generated a degree of guardedness and uneasiness amongst some government agencies which are clearly reluctant to tolerate much by way of intrusion into what they see as their domain.

In light of the above, it would seem that the best options for Oxfam in the area of policy dialogue would be to continue to provide support to Beja groups capable of entering into policy dialogue and to facilitate informal links between community and local government. Oxfam should also attempt to find ways in which it can engage in national processes without exposing itself to undue negative attention. In this regard the PPA and the PRS provide important openings and Oxfam could play a key role in promoting the idea of the PPA within the local government in Red Sea State. Oxfam could perform a dual function by supporting the government with technical expertise in carrying out the PPA and steering the PRS process as well as facilitating the engagement of local stakeholders from marginalised communities with which Oxfam enjoys a privileged relationship. Given that the PRS process has already been approved at the central level and that there is an overall commitment to initiate the process in the states, this initiative would undoubtedly be seen with less suspicion by government departments in the state. The wide global expertise Oxfam has built in being involved in the PPA and PRS processes in other countries would ensure that adequate technical capacity could be made available to the Red Sea State team for this exercise. The team could also benefit from closer interaction with key regional Oxfam's initiative such as the Report on the State of Pastoralism (ROSP) and the Oxfam International Regional Trade Initiative on Livestock which can help inform Oxfam's policy dialogue in Red Sea State. Oxfam should however strive to continuously review the role it can play in promoting policy dialogue in the state on the basis of the opportunities that become available in the external environment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Active involvement in the PPA towards a comprehensive, participatory development strategy for Red Sea State

There is an urgent need to develop an inclusive comprehensive development strategy for Red Sea State, one that will address unemployment, the precarious nature of water supply, the increasing trends towards environmental degradation, lack of education opportunities (especially for women) and other constraints limiting income generation options. This requires high quality informed planning on the part of the Red Sea State government, UN agencies, NGOs and donor community. A key opportunity to help shape policy and practice will be to actively engage in and shape the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), which is a process that is relatively open to the involvement of external actors.

2. Facilitating community level engagement with government structures

One important role NGOs have played in Red Sea State has been that of mediators between isolated communities and government structures, especially in times of emergency. This role as advocate and mediator is still relevant and can be developed further to strengthen the relation between the centres of power and marginalised communities in the State, especially if pursued to promote and facilitate a PPA process for Red Sea State.

3. Strategic, co-ordinated policy engagement by international agencies and donors

Key national and international non-state actors should create a mechanism to foster improved co-ordination and joint action for engagement with government agencies in Red Sea State. This could stem from the PPA/PRS process. Fostering a shared analysis of what is required to improve food security and enhance livelihoods sustainability is needed if regional policy and practice are to cater to the needs of the vulnerable and the marginalised. Joint work will help avoid suspicion or hostility by government.

4. Institutional strengthening of representative structures

An increased level of participation and representation for institutions that genuinely represent local interests, particularly those of pastoralists for engagement in policy making processes at local and state levels, is essential for long term change. Oxfam has already been a critical actor in this regard and it should continue to engage in this way and find, in association with other actors, ways of continuing to develop capacity for constructive engagement with decision makers within the region. There is a need to influence the State Pastoralists' Union through a number of interventions to make it truly representative of pastoralists' concerns and aspirations. This requires intensive training in lobbying, advocacy and networking to facilitate the active participation in policymaking processes at all levels of

governance. Work at the state level should be complemented and informed by the activities promoted by Oxfam at the national level through the Pastoralist Initiative as well as by links to regional initiatives such as the Report on the State of Pastoralism (ROSP) and the Oxfam International Regional Trade Initiative on Livestock.

5. Strategic engagement of youth and women in policy dialogue

There is an urgent need to engage disaffected and marginalised groups in policy dialogue. In this regard, it is critical to embrace the concerns of the youth and to ensure that their leadership considers itself part of the decision making processes in Red Sea State. A further long term challenge is to work towards equal participation of men and women in policymaking and project design and management in the state. This is severely inhibited by cultural and legal constraints against women's participation and by women's relative lack of time and mobility caused by their workload and multiple roles. If development efforts are to benefit from women's contributions and meet the particular needs of women, a range of strategic and practical measures must be taken by Oxfam and other actors to overcome these barriers. Examples of such measures include: legal reforms granting women equal rights to land tenure and ownership, incentives to encourage the enrolment of more girls in formal education, and efforts to make government agencies more responsive to women needs and interests.

6. Influencing regional policy and practice around urban employment

Employment practices in government and the private sector are skewed away from the indigenous population and have been so ever since colonial times. Whilst it is recognised that some of the elements for human capital formation will require long term investment, there is also a prevailing culture that sees existing employment opportunities being captured by non native and particularly non-Beja groups. This is breeding up a stock of resentment, especially amongst the youth in urban areas, as well as serving to impoverish the majority group in the State. Such practices need to be gradually but systematically reversed.

7. Undertake research into economic diversification potentialities

Eastern Sudan has many untapped resources which can be utilised to improve the income capacity of the population living in the rural areas. The potential for using water around the *khors* for agricultural development through spray irrigation and micro-catchments and supporting the expansion of the fishery sector needs to be further explored. Interventions to increase the productivity of existing agricultural schemes and improving the processing and conservation of agricultural produce for marketing should also be considered. Oxfam could look at supporting enterprise opportunities that are already being tried such as honey production. Another possible area of engagement could be that of

charcoal production through the development of improved kilns; this could help manage the expansion of mesquite trees and turn it into a resource in areas which are unsuitable for pastoral and agricultural production. Such initiatives could be started as small scale, village based interventions and scaled up with appropriate market analysis and financial and marketing skills support in order to become more reliable income sources. Oxfam should however undertake further research into the potential for diversification of livelihoods and into the potential absorption capacity of alternative productive sectors before planning to support new productive activities.

8. Support key services in rural areas

To protect local livelihoods or their transition towards more stable activities, considerable effort needs to be directed towards education, health and water services, particularly in rural areas. Ultimately the supply of services remains a government function and the Government of the Sudan and the local authorities, with the support of the international community, should review the current availability of basic services (health, water and education) in rural parts of Red Sea States and endeavour to extend adequate provision, starting with areas where vulnerability indicators and mortality rates are highest. Service provision should however be accompanied by support to the strengthening of local economic and productive capacity.

9. Strengthen pastoral livelihoods

Ecological degradation coupled with the loss of key land resources has forced an increasing number of households to abandon the pastoral sector with no alternative economic opportunities. Strategic support should be extended to pastoral communities in order to prevent a further haemorrhage of households out of the pastoral sector, with the risk that they will end up in the already swarming urban slums. Oxfam could play an important role in working with local and central authorities to identify suitable support strategies, which could include tailoring of services to mobile households (mobile services, key service concentration points, boarding schools, etc. according to community priorities), livestock vaccination campaigns, eradication of mesquite trees from pasture land, reopening and rehabilitation of transhumance routes and support to marketing of livestock and animal products. In this regard the Oxfam Red Sea team should endeavour to strengthen its interaction with key regional Oxfam's initiative such as the Report on the State of Pastoralism (ROSP) and the Oxfam International Regional Trade Initiative on Livestock which can help inform Oxfam's policy dialogue on pastoralism in Red Sea State.

10. Strengthen early-warning system in collaboration with other key regional actors

A food and livelihoods monitoring system needs to be put in place to track grain and livestock prices as well as other indicators of vulnerability, building on Oxfam's recent experience. This should be part of contingency planning efforts to determine when formal safety nets implemented by the Red Sea State government, UN agencies and NGOs should be scaled up. With the rapidly increasing urban population in Red Sea State, there is a need for complementary food and livelihoods assessments to be conducted in urban areas. This requires that better co-ordination be fostered between the various agencies working in Red Sea State. Such co-ordination should focus on targeting criteria, registration, standardised inputs, work norms and exit strategies.

11. Maintain strategic grain reserves at both State and *Mahallia* levels

In Red Sea State where crop failures and consequent food scarcity are a recurring phenomenon, the government should seriously consider a policy of grain market stabilisation through the maintenance of a Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) mechanism. The aim of the SGR would be to avoid the onset of famine by protecting the food security of vulnerable groups. An effective SGR system in this context should be ready to release grains in the market in periods of partial or total crop failure, thus protecting poor consumers from depleting their livestock and other assets to purchase grain at inflated prices due to scarcity. Similarly, the SGR authority should ideally enter the market as buyer in periods of bumper and surplus food grain production to prevent prices from being depressed to levels that might be discouraging to producers. To be efficient and effective, there should be a central SGR at the Red Sea State level as well as local SGRs at district level.

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ANNEX I

LIST OF PEOPLE MET

Port Sudan

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 Omer Baniseir, RSS Government General Secretariat
 Abdalla Shingrai, RSS Food Security Committee and Chairperson, Beja Club
 Mohammad Hassan Abu Zeinab Shegeira, Director-General, Min. of Social Affairs
 Mohamed Elhassan Musa Mohamed, Deputy Director, RSS Water Corporation
 Sadig Abdel Marouf, Director, Planning and International Cooperation
 Aziza Abdalla, Deputy Director, Planning and International Cooperation
 Afrah Hussein, Planning and International Cooperation
 Nadia Nasir, Planning and International Cooperation
 Omer Adam Ali, Chairperson, Beja Youth Capacity Building Committee
 Mohamed Adam Hussein, Coordinator, Beja Youth Capacity Building Committee
 Abu Amna Hashim, Advisor, Beja Youth Capacity Building Committee
 Dr. O’Nour Seedi, Commissioner Gunob and Aulib Locality
 O’Haj Seedi, Director-General, Ministry of Agriculture
 Sayed Debeloub, Ministry of Agriculture
 Salih Orabi, UNDP
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 Eisa Yacoub, ACORD
 El Merdi Osman Ibrahim, Ockenden Venture, RSS
 Narine Hslanyan, Field Coordinator, MSF-B

Tokar

Idris Wda-Souk, Tokar Farmers Union
 Ali Mohamed Abdalla, Executive Director, Tokar Locality
 Mohamed Omer Osman Debbai, Executive Director, Agig Locality

Khartoum

Ahmed Malik Abusin, Partners in Development Services (PDS)
 Hassan Yousif Eissa, IRC

Institutions Contacted

In Port Sudan: RSS Government General Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Social Affairs, Planning and International Cooperation Administration, Gunob and Aulib Locality, RSS Water Corporation, RSS Food Security Committee, Beja Youth Capacity Building Committee, Beja Club, Beja Youth Centre, MSF-B, UNDP, IRC, ACORD, Ockenden Venture,

In Tokar: Agig Locality, Tokar Locality, Tokar Farmers Union

In Khartoum: Ministry of Federal Affairs, IRC, Partners in Development Services

ANNEX II

STUDY SCHEDULE

1. Literature review: 20-26 January 2006
2. Fieldwork in Red Sea State (Port Sudan, Tokar, Gunub and Aulib): 27 January - 5 February 2006
3. Collection of secondary data and interviews in Khartoum: 6-7 February 2006
4. Report drafting 7-12 February 2006
5. Port Sudan workshop: 18-20 February 2006.
6. Report revision and finalisation: 25-28 February

ANNEX III

Oxfam GB Red Sea Team Reflections' on Policy and Practice for Sustainable Livelihoods in RSS

WATER

Tokar

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Access to safe and clean water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve/rehabilitate existing water points 2. Technical training for local communities (maintenance) 3. Provision of maintenance tools 4. Build dykes (surface and sub-surface) 5. Carry out baseline technical study for water interventions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby RSS govt based on analysis of the situation on the ground 2. Lobby for co-ordination between NGOs/partners/GNU 3. Lobby the government for fair water services (rural focus) 	CBOs Physical Planning Ministry Locality MoF SPU Other concerned NGOs/UNDP

Rural Port Sudan

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Access to safe and clean water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRA for situation analysis to identify 'suitable interventions' 2. Increase/improve current activities 3. Training and support in care and maintenance 4. Support CBOs, PU, etc. to lobby govt. 5. Support water management user systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby for and support rural based water policies 	Water Corporation Locality CBOs NGOs (including 'potential' ones)

FOOD SECURITY**Tokar**

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Increase household access to food and income	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expansion of CFW 2. Cash grants and micro-credit (IGAs) 3. Support livestock health improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reseeding - range enclosures 4. Capacity building in management, processing, storage and marketing in relation to the points above 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby RSS government to reinstate Strategic Grain Reserves 2. Lobby for more genuine representation of pastoralists in State Pastoralist Union 3. Lobby the Range and Pasture Department for improvement of pasture 	MoA (Food Security Comm.) HAC CBOs SPU Animal Resources Dept. Range and Pasture Admin.

Rural Port Sudan

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Increase household access to food and income	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide technical support to RSS SGR initiative 2. Good quality grain banks 3. CFW 4. Goat restocking package considering survival and productivity (seeds, pasture rehabilitation, etc.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby RSS govt to maintain SGRs 2. Support and influence Range and Pasture policies regarding pasture rehabilitation 	Food Security Committee Range and Pasture Admin. CBOs Animal Resources Dept. MoA Vet Department MoF Planning Dept. CSI WFP

EDUCATION

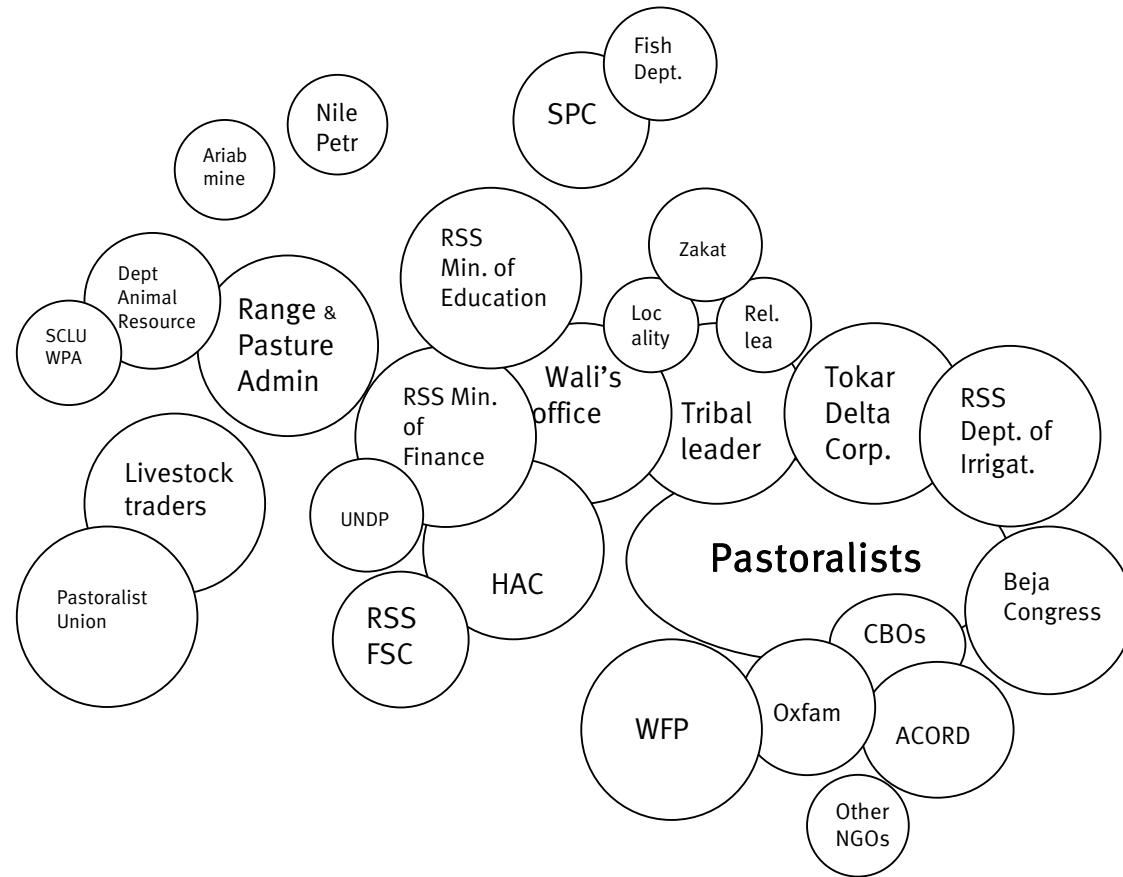
Tokar

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Access to better education - increase the enrolment of children in schools - reduce the number of illiterate people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support boarding schools through water and sanitation 2. Support teacher training 3. Support girl students 4. Continue class rehabilitation and construction 5. Continue support to adult education 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby the RSS government for curriculum review (pastoralist friendly; TuBedawiye) 2. Lobby the RSS government for establishment of a vocational training centre in Tokar 3. Lobby the RSS government to establish more boarding schools 	MoE Nomadic Education Dept. Girs' Education Unit CBOs SPU Locality Adult Education Dept.

Rural Port Sudan

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOME	TECHNICAL INTERVENTION	POLICY DIALOGUE	PARTNER INSTITUTION
Access to better education - increase the enrolment of children in schools - reduce the number of illiterate people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support Tu Bedawiye teacher training 2. Support government initiative for the establishment of boarding schools 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support RSS policies regarding free basic education and boarding schools 2. Lobby for adult education 3. Lobby to RSS government to support teachers' welfare 	MoE Adult Education Dept. Nomadic Education Dept. WFP CBOs UNICEF

ANNEX IV Red Sea State institutional map





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