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Case Study Information Sheet

Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Country: Sudan

Title: Resource Access: A Major Cause of Armed Conflict in the Sudan. The Case of the Nuba Mountains

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Other Information: (i) Original language: English; (ii) Partners: International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Abstract: This paper analyzes the causes of armed conflict in the Sudan, particularly from the perspective of the Nuba people. The authors begin with the argument that recent research has indicated that ecological degradation can act as a catalyst of violent conflicts. Hence most efforts of conflict resolution aim at tackling the causes of such natural resource degradation, which are mostly technical in nature (like soil conservation, reforestation, better water management, etc.). However, in the process “issues of the economy, state and politics are inadvertently pushed aside”. They go on to show, with the case history of armed conflict in the Nuba Mountains, how persistent inequities in resource allocation and access are brought about by the more deep-rooted political and economic structures of society. In addition the introduction of mechanized farming by international donors led to encroachments on Nuba smallholder farming which further exacerbated the conflict. Some of the conflict resolution agreements arrived at did not last for very long due to vested interests of different parties and the concerted efforts by the government in sabotaging them. The authors end by arguing that while violent conflicts arise over material resources, when they extend over long periods of time, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations transform into “contestable material social resources” and hence become the object of social strife.

Theme: 4

Subsistence Practices (prioritized): Agriculture, Shifting cultivation, Pastoralism, Gathering, Hunting

Resource Types & Ecosystems (prioritized): Domesticated animals, Land, Wetlands

Key Terms: Conflict management, Multi-ethnicity

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