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**Social and Solidarity Economy**

# **Applying Principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy for Reconstruction in Darfur**

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## Abstract

Darfur has been ravaged by genocide, war and environmental destruction for decades. A peace process underway since the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur in 2011 has had limited participation by the local population and not all movements involved in the uprising have signed the agreement. This paper summarises how it may be possible for a global organisation, WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO), consisting of Darfuri refugees living in various diaspora communities, together with members living in urban and rural areas of Darfur (including IDPs), to participate in the reconstruction of Darfur, using the principles of the social and solidarity economy to achieve the SDGs. WIO has prioritised education, restoration of natural resources and raising finance (the emphasis is on the latter in this paper) for reconstruction of destroyed villages and infrastructure, emphasising that these activities must take place within a governance structure that enables widespread participation by all, including women. While there is scope for this to be done at a micro-level, i.e. in individual villages and possibly at the meso-level, i.e. extend it to some districts, extension of SSE principles to the macro-level would require international solidarity, the importance of which has not been sufficiently emphasised in the renewed interest in SSE.

## Keywords

Darfur, Reconstruction, Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

## Bio

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## Introduction

This paper summarises how WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO), a global initiative by Darfuri refugees living in various diaspora communities, together with members living in urban and rural areas of Darfur (including IDPs), intend to participate in the reconstruction of Darfur, using the principles of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) to achieve the SDGs. This would initially be on a smaller scale, subject to the security situation, governance structures and land ownership situation, all of which vary from place to place. As shared ownership of certain assets through cooperative structures and other aspects of the SSE have the potential to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience (Birchall, 2013), SSE principles have been adopted to guide the work of WIO.

Land issues are essential to understanding and resolving the conflict in Darfur and to achieving the SDGs, so the paper starts with a brief explanation of the traditional land management system. This is followed by some background on the crises and genocide in Darfur and a summary of key international aid initiatives there. As the strategies of WIO are aligned with the principles of SSE, the paper includes a summary of these, particularly in the context of recovery from disasters, before an introduction of WIO, its policies and strategies, with emphasis on sustainable finance, a component of SDG 17. That section also incorporates subsections on how WIO intends to facilitate the implementation of SSE principles and the challenges of applying them for achieving SDGs in Darfur.

## Land - conflict, management and ownership in Darfur

Land ownership and use have been key sources of intercommunal dispute in Darfur, particularly between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders. Historically, land and water disputes between them were resolved peacefully, according to a set of customary rules that evolved over centuries (Kasfir, 2005). This flexible and intricate way of sharing resources through the traditional Hakura system prevented land disputes from escalating into major conflicts, but this system was gradually undermined and disrupted by the Sudanese government (Unruh, 2014 & Abdul-Jalil, 2014), which increasingly acted in favour of the herders (Kalu, 2018).

This system has been further undermined by farmers fleeing, following attacks on villages, looting and banditry (Müller & Bashar, 2017). Draughts, scarce resources and conflict have led to considerable environmental degradation, which must be considered in addressing the conflict and achieving the SDGs. The latest peace agreement purports to reaffirm the restitution of land to displaced villagers in line with the law of the land and the government has claimed that the Darfur Land Commission has preserved rights of IDPs and refugees to their land. However, many returnees face a different reality, returning home to find new settlers occupying their villages (UNSC, 2019). There have also been land grabs for mining.

At a state-sponsored conference in December 2018, purportedly for IDPs, the government urged them to return to their villages. However, the main group representing IDPs was not represented and has urged IDPs not to return voluntarily until several conditions have been met, including disarming all the pro-government militias, expulsion of new settlers from villages, trials of the perpetrators and compensation to all affected by war (Radio Dabanga, 18/12/18).

Before addressing how it may be possible to introduce principles of the SSE to achieve the SDGs in this environment, we provide some background to the conflict in Darfur.

## Background to the crises and genocide in Darfur

Located in southwestern Sudan, Darfur covers an area approximately the size of France, with three main tribes: Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa, of which the Fur is the most populous. Prior to its incorporation into Sudan in 1917 by Britain, it was a sultanate (Takana, 2016). The Sudanese government had neglected Darfur when the current conflict, dating back to the mid-1980s with intermittent violence, escalated in 2003 (Muller & Bashar, 2017) following a surprise attack by the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army on the airport at El Fasher, killing about 100 soldiers. A key catalyst was that Darfuris did not benefit from the oil discovered there in the 1970s and the increasing marginalisation contributed to ethnic consciousness (Kasfir, 2005).

Sudanese military and police, together with the Janjaweed, a Sudanese militia group, recruited mostly among Arabised Africans, took up arms against the local land-owning, sedentary, African, non-Arab, Darfuri population (Tomasson, 2016). This counterinsurgency conducted a brutal campaign of mass killing and ethnic cleansing, culminating in genocide, and adopted scorched earth tactics (Bellamy and Williams, 2006).

A UN (2005) report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur found that ‘.... *the Government of the Sudan and the Janjaweed are responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law amounting to crimes under international law*’. The Sudanese government was implicated in numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity (Bellamy and Williams, 2006).

There are different explanations for the war, ranging from disputes over scarce water and grazing land between African farmers and Arab pastoralist communities, to an attempt at Arabisation of Darfur – hence the definition of the conflict as genocide (US Department of State Archives, The Crises in Darfur, Sept 2004<sup>1</sup>).

In 2007 a hybrid UN/African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID), acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter was deployed to protect civilians and monitor human rights abuses. The UN estimates that between 200,000-300,000 people have died, 2.7 million have been displaced (UNICEF website<sup>2</sup>) and some 4.7 million people of a total population of around 6.2 million, have been directly affected since 2004. A 2013 report by Amnesty International illustrates what the Darfur population had to endure:

*Civilians continue to face attacks by government forces, pro-government militias, and armed opposition groups. .... The government .... has continued to carry out indiscriminate aerial bombardment and deliberate attacks against civilians* (Amnesty, 2013, p.3).

Violence has also been committed against Darfuri students in Khartoum (Amnesty, 2017).

Five International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants remain outstanding for Sudanese officials, including former president Omar al-Bashir, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as forcible transfers, extermination, murder, rape and torture. Civilians still face fighting, razing of villages, displacement and human rights violations. Sexual violence and the

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<sup>1</sup> Accessed on 26/12/18 from <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/36042.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Accessed on 26/12/18 from [https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan\\_darfuroverview.html](https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan_darfuroverview.html)

threat of it are significant and affect livelihood opportunities of women, restricting their movements (UNSC, 2019).

Except for some sanctions by the west, consistent with the UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005), major powers have not contributed much to resolving the conflict; Russia and China have material interests in Sudan and the US found the regime useful in its “war on terror”. Taking advantage of sanctions by the west, China has made considerable investments in oil extraction, the proceeds from which enabled Sudan to double its military budget since it began exporting oil in 1999. China has also assisted with building weapon factories in Sudan (Kalu, 2018).

The latest in a series of failed peace agreement is a ceasefire pre-negotiating agreement between the government and two of the armed groups, signed in Berlin in 2018, to be followed up with a more comprehensive agreement in 2019, based on the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Abdelwahid El Nur, which controls much of the Jebel Mara mountain range in central Darfur, did not participate in the peace process, despite being urged to do so by those responsible for the implementation of the agreement, including the Sudanese government, UNAMID, some western countries, Chad, China, Japan and Russia (UNSC, 2019).

Disunity between Darfuri movements has aggravated the conflict, which has severely impacted the demographics, economy, governance and natural resources, issues not properly addressed in peace agreements, which also lack strategies for achieving the SDGs.

## Overseas Development Aid to Darfur

In late 2018, 1.76 million IDPs still required humanitarian assistance (USAID, 2018). The government sponsored violence has extended to aid and humanitarian workers (Kalu, 2019), with International NGOs facing expulsions and many of those remaining being harassed, together with IDPs in camps (Kasfir, 2005). Aid agencies have been prevented from providing support in some areas, despite international calls for unimpeded access to populations in need of emergency assistance (USAID, 2018).

With few exceptions, international aid focusses on emergency food assistance, health and nutrition support, protection, relief commodities, water, sanitation and hygiene. USAID/OFDA coordinates multi-sector assistance, partnering with major UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UN Women and WHO as well as local partners in Sudan, some of which form part of major aid organisations. The extent of local involvement in deciding priorities for this aid is not known. One area with at least some local community involvement is pilot water projects, mainly funded by the EU and implemented by UNEP, Practical Action and others (Ochieng, 2018; UNEP, 2018).

As one of the key mediators in this humanitarian catastrophe, Qatar has provided assistance independently of the USAID/OFDA coordination, including reconstructing 70 villages for returnees who it was claimed regained their land within the framework of the voluntary return program. This program appears to have been designed without involvement of potential returnees, similar to another program ran by the Qatari government to construct a secondary school and a health centre (The Peninsula, 25/12/18). UAE has established the Sheikha Fatima

Field Hospital (The Gulf Today, 13/1/19). Another source of international aid is becoming available from UNAMID facilities as it withdraws, consistent with its requests that they be used for institutions to meet critical needs of health and education, benefitting the local population (Sudan Tribune, 22/12/18).

A 2017 Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation conference supported the holding of consultations among IDPs to incorporate their views (UNAMID, 24/12/2018), but there has not been much participation by IDPs. Neither has there been much community development activity for self-reliance to achieve the SDGs, let alone the skills required for reconstruction. This is an area in which the WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO) is focussing its attention, emphasising the importance of human-centred development with an ecological dimension for reconstruction. It has adopted principles of SSE for achieving the SDGs, ensuring that all projects meet the needs of individuals and improve their quality of life.

## Social and solidarity economy in the reconstruction of societies

There is a growing recognition that SSE principles can be effective for development on small to large scales for disadvantaged and marginalised groups. When applied to the SDGs, they can be useful as a starting point for planning reconstruction and strengthening fragile societies, particularly those plagued by genocide (Koehler, 2016).

SSE forms part of the framework of the social economy (Quiroz-Nino and Murga-Menoyo, 2017), but what constitutes SSE is contested, so there is a range of definitions within the economic and social science fields. We find it productive to use the concept described by Utting (2016), as the coming together of the social economy ('third sector', such as voluntary and community organisations) and the solidarity economy, which aims for '*redistributive justice, deep sustainability, active citizenship and a more profound reconfiguration of power relations*' (p.1). Although SSE initiatives are not necessarily established for the purpose of poverty reduction, they often are, whether created for production or exchanging services or goods. As they commonly do so autonomously from the state and prioritise well-being, solidarity and cooperation (Utting, van Dijk and Mathei, 2014), they are well suited where the state has failed to provide the necessities for a decent quality of life.

Encompassing organisations of a diverse nature, SSE initiatives generally aim at bridging and transforming social divisions by addressing power relations, but can also reinforce existing power imbalances and be subject to elite capture, if not implemented in ways that overcome these (Borowiak, et al., 2018).

While principles of SSE would have existed for a long time in human history, the 'modern' version has its roots in the cooperative movement that began in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish Mondragon is a well-known cooperative movement, but as it has become entrenched, there appears to be increasing tension around the concept of solidarity (Altuna-Gabilondo, 2013), as there is in the Israeli kibbutz movement (Çeli and Özpek, 2016). In early implementations of the solidarity economy, the focus was on the economic sphere, sometimes at the expense of the environment, but more recently it has been linked to a wider approach to sustainable development, incorporating climate and environmental considerations as well as social well-being and economic sustainability (Ofreno & Hega, 2016).

An example of an SSE organisation responding to disasters is Buklod Tao in the Philippines, which works to reduce vulnerabilities by monitoring water gauges for early warning, skills training in disaster risk reduction, rescue operations, distribution of relief goods, post-disaster needs assessment, as well as facilitation of rehabilitation work. SSE organisations also sustain livelihood projects, such as PATAMABA (National Network of Informal Workers), another Philippines organisation involved in group-based production (Ofreno & Hega, 2016).

A recent implementation of SSE principles where an area lacks official formal institutions is the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava, which has seen the implementation of a ground-up direct democracy, incorporating gender equality, socially-owned means of production (Knapp, Flach and Ayboga, 2016; Cemgil and Hoffman, 2016) and economic diversification. This process started in 2011 when Syrian forces withdrew to other areas to fight the uprising. Rojava has been supported by US forces, dispatched to assist in the fight against ISIS. Afrin, one of the cantons of Rojava was occupied by Turkey in early 2018 and Turkey has threatened action against other parts of Rojava, following the announcement in December 2018 of US plans to withdraw. This illustrates the requirement for something that has not had much focus in the renewed interest in SSE – international solidarity. While there is some regional and international cooperation in the SSE space (Utting, van Dijk and Mathei, 2014), this does not seem to extend to solidarity with people oppressed by their own or neighbouring governments, an issue of great relevance to the people of Darfur.

## WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO)

In 2015, a Darfuri refugee living in Lebanon initiated an internet-based group, mainly for the global diaspora originating from the Kutom area in Darfur and named the group WAREFUR. Initially, the group members shared news and other information, discussed ideas and issues as well as helped each other, family members and others in Darfur. The group grew and became difficult to manage, so a group Administrator was appointed, who introduced rules to manage activities. A female refugee from Canada suggested that all refugees, including those in camps, IDPs and others in Darfur should be invited to join so that the group could contribute to the peace process and reconstruction. The group then grew exponentially during the following six months, from a handful of members to 1,000. The rules were amended to accommodate this growth and different subgroups were established to facilitate management. Registered as WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO) in France in 2017, it had some 5,000 members in January 2019 and is growing on an almost daily basis. It coordinates its activities via skype, emails and social media.

WIO's overall aim is to pursue justice and enable Darfuris to take the destiny of their region into their own hands to the extent possible by participating in its reconstruction and promoting a secure and equitable society, based on equality of opportunities and outcomes. Equal representation of women in leadership positions and their involvement in all aspects of development, including design of appropriate infrastructure and other village technologies is an essential element. WIO's policies for Darfur aim at promoting production and consumption patterns that are compatible with social justice and environmental sustainability, the latter a critical issue in the context of the environmental devastation following decades of war and displacement. Wanting to build an equitable society, incorporating social and climate justice, WIO has adopted SSE principles in its underpinning philosophy for the management of the economy and wider society.

In the short term WIO effects change by providing aid, e.g. sending medicines and offering financial assistance to enable critically ill people in Darfur to get treatment.

While it is unlikely that the SDGs can be achieved in Darfur by 2030, WIO uses these, together with SSE principles to guide its work, which will be informed by a social contract in the areas where it operates. Based on the premise that SSE holds considerable promise for addressing the economic, social and environmental objectives and integrated approaches required for the reconstruction following natural or human made disasters, WIO has adopted this approach as a key element influencing its strategy, which incorporates the core elements of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. In striving for inclusive development, WIO recognises the importance of poverty reduction and meaningful participation by all sectors of society

Figure 1 shows the preliminary structure of WIO at the global level. The core group deals with strategies, organisational, constitutional and other legal matters, including regulations, peace and security, finance, foreign affairs and overall coordination. Members of the core group also participate functional areas, such as agriculture, education and health, culture, infrastructure and women’s affairs, preparing plans on the practical implementation of applying the SSE to achieve SDGs in respective functional area, where appropriate. The process of establishing local chapters of WIO has started and it is intended that these collaborate with NGOs operating in countries where there is a WIO chapter.

While the application of SSE principles would be relevant for most functional areas, this paper focuses on sustainable finance, which forms part of SDG 17, and the implementation of SSE principles in Darfur.

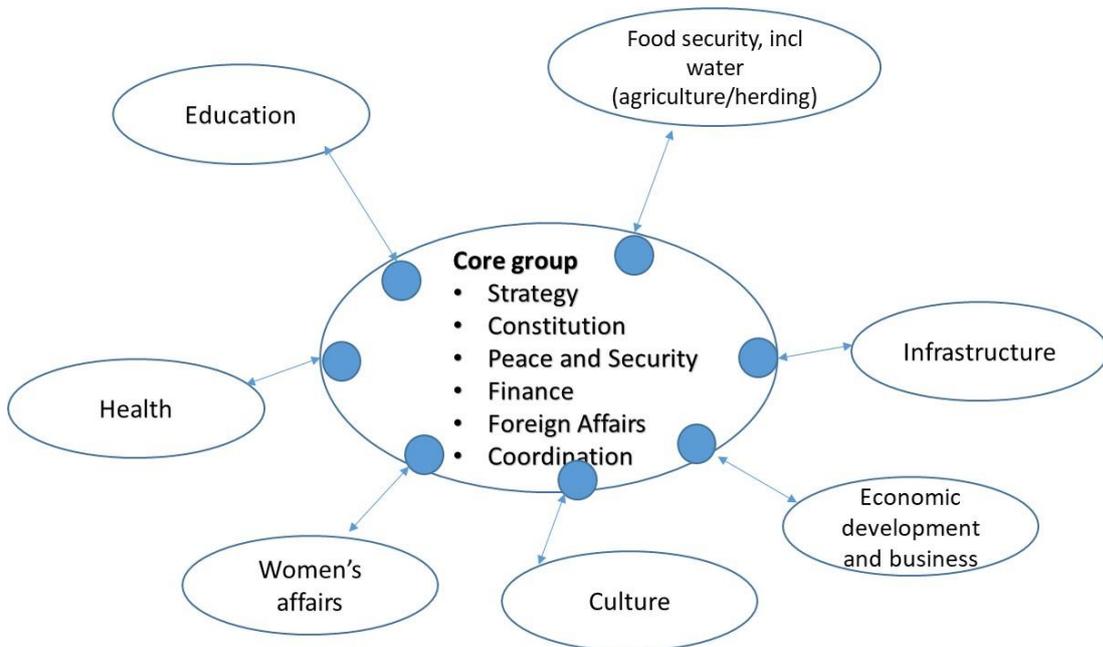


Figure 1. Preliminary structure of WAREFUR International Organisation (WIO)

## Sustainable Finance (SDG 17)

Recognising the importance of several forms of capital and their interdependencies, including those of the sustainable livelihood framework (human, social, physical, financial and natural capitals) (DFID, 1999), the focus of this paper is on financial capital.

Funds are required for the operation of WIO and for projects on the ground. For the former, funds are used to pay communication and other costs associated with participating in WIO via various electronic means for IDP members and those living in refugee camps outside Darfur. Those funds are raised through recurring membership fees, which are also used to fund emergency health for families of members. Where required, additional funds are raised from members with greatest capacity to pay. In the medium to long term, WIO will raise funds for development projects in Darfur. Before starting any projects, WIO will engage with residents on project design and to gain an understanding of relevant traditional practices and how these fit with SSE principles and could be modified, as well as what the impact of any change might be.

In reorienting the economic structure to SSE principles in its operations on the ground, WIO intends to build on and strengthen some of the traditional Darfuri practices that have elements of SSE: **Jené**, **Towsé** and **Sandooq**.

**Jené**, a form of gift or donation given on four main days in a person's life: day of birth, naming day, circumcision day for boys and wedding day, can be viewed as 'starting capital', given by relatives. These gifts, mainly in the form of cows, goats and sheep, are reared by the donor until the child reaches the age where the gift can be claimed, usually 13, at which time the gifts would have increased in number. WIO's policy is to revive this tradition, at least where land ownership has been restored for the returnees, by providing each family with two cows and two goats as starting capital as well as training to revive skills that may have been lost whilst living away from their villages.

**Towsé** is a collective way of farming, which Darfuris resort to when an individual or a family is facing difficult circumstances, e.g. due to illness or death that leaves a single household member with children to manage a farm. During the active farming periods, people in a village volunteer for a day or two each to assist farmers facing difficulties, performing tasks such as sowing and harvesting. WIO intends to build on this tradition, extending it to perform the work required to remedy the environmental degradation that occurred during the time of war (Castro, 2018) and is still continuing.

Similar to small, informal rotating savings and credit associations (Utting, van Dijk and Mathei, 2014), **Sandooq** is an old practice in Darfur. Each member of a savings group contributes an equal amount of money on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis and when the pooled money reaches a pre-agreed amount, it is distributed to each participant in turn. The benefit is that a member will receive an amount that he or she is unlikely to otherwise have been able to save. The Sandooq saving groups are mainly managed by women, but men can also become members. WIO intends to encourage the extension of the Sandooq system so that the savings are used for cooperative enterprises based on SSE principles for income-generating activities, rather than just private investments. This will be done particularly for those without land as a way of creating self-employment where decent work is unavailable. Where the state fails to provide

adequate education and health, the Sandoq funds would also be used to complement such services, as they are critical for the well-being of communities and to operate business enterprises. The Sandoq system will provide the foundation for WIO activities on the ground.

Several finance related issues, such as currency and taxation will depend on the outcome of the political developments in Sudan and the extent to which Darfur will have some form of autonomy. If so, WIO will explore the benefit of using a community currency, e.g. a cryptocurrency rather than the Sudanese Pound or the USD and present an appropriate currency approach to whatever institution is established for this purpose. Use of cryptocurrencies is under review by the administration in Rojava (Mittal, 2018). WIO will explore this development, should the opportunity arise.

WIO recognises the importance of trade, foreign investment, international aid and remittances as essential financial drivers that can mutually strengthen each other. WIO will explore the establishment of a framework through which villages can pursue funding through carbon credits by planting trees. This has financial as well as environmental benefits for the degraded environment.

To the extent that the various financial channels affect the local population in a particular area, WIO considers it critical that they participate in setting priorities and other aspects of spending, whether the funding is through international aid or other sources. The most marginalised people in the most marginalised areas will be the highest priority for WIO involvement until they have reached an acceptable standard of living.

WIO has established an economic and finance committee, the purpose of which is to offer financial and business advice to those intending to start or expand businesses, assist with feasibility studies and business plans as well as building implementation capacity and mentoring entrepreneurs. WIO's approach to implementation is summarised below.

## Implementation of SSE in Darfur

Villages and their equivalence in urban areas will become the strategic entry points for, and play a central role in the implementation of SSE principles. The situation on the ground, which has been fluid since the political changes in Sudan in early 2019, including which organisations and institutions control specific locations, will influence the implementation. The proposed steps outlined below may have to be modified, subject to realities on the ground.

Having identified the most marginalised areas, and assuming IDPs and external refugees are able to return to their villages, the question is how to prioritise the activities required to restore a decent living standard. WIO proposes to do this through principles of direct democracy using participatory deliberations, in collaboration with those institutions that are respected by local residents, such as the village Sheikh (village leader).

WIO intends to encourage all villagers, including the most marginalised, particularly women, youth and people from different tribes, to participate in deliberations, leading to the setting of priorities through collective decision making. Such deliberations are compatible with how village leaders operate in Darfur and several other areas in Africa where much of their legitimacy and authority is derived from their ability to make decisions that comply with values

and norms of community members (Swidler, 2014). WIO will also pay attention to the risk of inequalities being amplified through elite capture, which often pervades participatory development (Kapoor, 2005).

Once the priorities have been set and action plans agreed upon, everyone will be encouraged to join various committees established to implement the activities. WIO will place special emphasis on urging participants to aim for equal representation of genders, age ranges and tribal affiliation in these committees. It is envisaged that there will be committees dealing with services normally provided by governments and necessary for the achievements of the SDGs, such as education, health and nutrition, food security and sovereignty, housing and infrastructure. Convenors of these committees will be encouraged to serve on a village-wide co-ordinating committee, similar to a local government council.

Some members of these committees would in turn represent their villages in a federated structure with other village committees. Recognising the interdependence between different villages and urban areas, WIO plans to facilitate the establishment of networks between neighbourhoods and villages as well as an institutional structure for networking across larger geographic areas. The responsibilities of the inter-village institutions would be to co-ordinate activities such as infrastructure covering larger areas and the establishment and management of a complementary currency.

In addition to the need for farm inputs such as seeds and tools required for food security and sovereignty, food storage and processing facilities must also be established. While any collectivisation of farms would break with tradition, this is not the case for post-harvest activities, which lend themselves to be done through cooperative structures. These will be encouraged for functions such as food processing and distribution, including transport and retailing through shops and markets, particularly where existing retail outlets have been destroyed. Whatever is still functioning in a particular location will be encouraged to continue, as long as it is not exploitative.

Financing of these activities would be through the Sandoq system or community banks, funded through the diaspora community and international aid.

## Challenges to implementing a solidarity economy in Darfur

The overriding challenge to implementing SSE principles in Darfur is the security situation and associated land and property rights issues. With the traditional property rights disrupted, e.g. by settlers having taken over the land of IDPs and refugees, the foundation upon which the SSE can be built is somewhat shaky in many locations. Another challenge is the risk that the highly traumatised population have raised expectations that their involvement with WIO in the implementation of SSE principles will yield quick results. It will also be difficult to extend the benefits and gains from implementing SSE principles to the most vulnerable people in the remotest areas of Darfur in a cost-effective manner.

While WIO may be successful in facilitating the implementation of its vision of effective democracy and participation at the micro-level, in villages where it has members and to which IDPs have been able to return and have their property rights restored, a key challenge would be to extend it to the meso-level, i.e. to districts within Darfur and eventually to the whole of

Darfur. This would require political legitimacy for applying SSE principles to achieve the SDGs and the building of new institutions, both in terms of governance and implementation of policies in respective functional areas.

There are challenges at the macro, global level, related to international solidarity, which, except for the early stages of the conflict, deployment of UNAMID forces and some aid, has been absent for much of the conflict period. Despite the ICC arrest warrants, the former president was able to travel to some African countries and China. Following attacks on Chinese-run oilfields in late 2007, Chinese policymakers became concerned that its interests were targeted. While China attributed the conflict to poverty, resource scarcity and the effects of global warming, arguing that development is key to solving the Darfur problem (Large, 2018), its policies did not contribute to development. Furthermore, it urged the international community to avoid interfering in Darfur and not to overlook the Sudanese government's efforts to address the conflict (Barber, 2018).

Despite challenges, there is reason to be optimistic that the implementation of SSE principles can be realised, at the micro level initially, followed by the meso-level, should the security and political environment be conducive. Potential political change, arising from the 2019 uprising underway as this paper is written, including some form of autonomy for Darfur, could open the door for the introduction of democratic institutions, which are the foundation for SSE. Regardless, WIO is ready to be an influential voice, offering policies and strategies it has formulated for using SSE principles for achieving the SDGs. WIO is also planning to explore, through participatory approaches, what research evidence is required and how to obtain it to assess the success of this approach. Importantly, to borrow the terminology from Dinerstein (2014, p.2), WIO intends to use SSE as a tool for "*organizing hope*".

## Concluding remarks

To better comprehend the dynamics at work in the reconstruction of Darfur and place the proposed SSE initiatives into a context of existing aid activities, WIO plans to conduct further study, mapping these activities both geographically and conceptually to explore how it can insert an SSE perspective into the work of other organisations where this does not exist and also how to expand beyond the micro level.

One unfortunate consequence of the long conflict and the Sudanese divide-and-rule policy is disunity among different groups in Darfur. In this environment, the voices of people have been drowned out by the violence. While WIO has support among diverse groups within Darfur for applying SSE principles, it is competing with many other approaches to restoration and development. By spreading the idea about the SSE, WIO can gain support and contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for change in this direction.

The progress towards an SSE environment also requires international solidarity, which seems to have been a missing ingredient in much of the current debate about SSE, and must become more central in order for the benefits of SSE to reach beyond people already living in relative security compared to those subjected to oppressive regimes.

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